

The Triumph of the Lamb and the People of God



The Christian Asks: Where are we and how did we get here?

- 1. God Creates all things and Creates Humankind in His Image**
 - a. The Triune God is the sole actor.
 - b. His purpose was the Manifesting of His Glory.
 - c. The Crown of His creation was Humankind. They alone were to image Him.
 - d. It was all very good.

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2. Covenant Failure

- a. Adam, the head of the human race, rebelled as the image bearer; he failed to faithfully execute his role. He broke the Covenant (of works) with God.
- b. A curse results. Humankind will know an ongoing rebellion against and separation from God. They will also die physically; that death is a constant reminder of the reality of our spiritual death.
- c. The creation will also experience the consequences of the covenant curse as well.

Where are we and how did we get here?

3. A New Covenant Promise

- a. In the midst of the pronouncement of curse, God promises salvation. There will be one who shall come. He shall be mortally wounded, but he shall crush the enemies of God and reconcile God to His people.
- b. This New Covenant of Grace is administered throughout the OT by means of various Covenant arrangements (Noah, Abraham, Moses, David). All of those covenant arrangements point to a last Adam, a perfect Adam, who shall fulfill all righteousness and by that shall save His people from their sin. The people of God (a remnant) continue to wait in hope for that One to come. They put their trust in Him even though they don't know His name. They live by faith (Hebrews 11).

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4. The Substance of the Covenant of Grace Comes.

- a. In time, the eternal Son comes, sent by the Father and ministered to by the Holy Spirit. He is the Mediator of this Covenant. He is obedient unto death, even death on a cross. He is priest, sacrifice, and temple for His people.
- b. He is raised from the dead, ascends into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
- c. The Holy Spirit – proceeding from the Father and the Son - is poured out on God's people. The Spirit brings them from death to life (effectual call/regeneration) and works repentance and faith in them and they are joined to Christ. They rest and receive Christ and all the blessings of the Covenant that His obedience secured (Justification, Adoption, Sanctification, Perseverance, Assurance).

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5. Christ Rules, Provides for, and Protects His People.

- a. Those who are united to Christ come from every tribe, nation and tongue, and are gathered into a single, catholic, invisible church.
- b. That invisible Church has visible expressions – the local, temporal churches on the earth.
- c. Christ, by His Spirit, feeds these bodies by giving them His Word (through appointed officers) and exhibiting to them His Word (the Sacraments).
- d. Christ gives gifts to His people that they might use them to build up those whom He loves.
- e. Christ also appoints officers to rule in these bodies by serving, and by that He further loves, cares for, and protects His beloved bride.

The Christian Then Asks: So What's Next?

Much like our time, there were considerable differences among those represented in the Assembly on the particulars of this question. Some thought Christ's return was imminent; others were less convinced. But what they wrote was what they held in common. Here's what Christians are to expect.

1. Death (for all but a few)
2. Resurrection
3. Judgment, and
4. Life in the Presence of God Forever.

Death (WCF 32)

1. The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption: but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.

Death (WCF 32)

Key Points:

- There is a distinction between body and soul, but there is no war between them. This is not a physical/spiritual dualism.
- The soul is immortal by God's appointment, but NOT eternal. The body is, by God's decree, also ultimately immortal too.
- At death, the body and the soul, temporarily separate.
 - The body decays – from dust it came, to dust it returns.
 - The soul does not sleep, but goes immediately to God (Luke 23:43 – Jesus' words to the thief, "Today you shall be with me in paradise." and Eccl. 12:7 - "the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.").
 - The souls of the believer and the unbeliever are separated: (1) Highest heavens (Coram Deo) and (2) Hell. No third option.

Resurrection (WCF 32)

*At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up, with the selfsame bodies, and none other (although with different qualities), which shall be united again to their souls forever. **WCF 32.2***

Key Points:

- There will be a resurrection of the bodies of **ALL** the dead; the bodies of **ALL** those alive “at the last day” will be changed.
- The resurrection body will be uniquely the body of the person who died (or is still alive). It will be recognizable in some way. But, the resurrected body will also be different; it will have “different qualities.”
- There will be a reunion of the body (now resurrected) with the soul for each and every person. That union of body and soul will last forever.

Resurrection (WCF 32)

The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonor: the bodies of the just, by his Spirit, unto honor; and be made conformable to his own glorious body. – WCF 32.3.

Key Points:

- While ALL shall know a resurrection, the Confession [using the language of Scripture “righteous – wicked” (John 5:25-2) and “just – unjust” (Acts 24:15)] makes clear that different consequences will befall those who are counted “righteous/just” and those who are counted “wicked/just.” That distinction is addressed again in Chapter 33 – Judgment.
- The “just” and the “unjust” are raised by different power: The “unjust” by “the power of Christ,” and the “just” by “his [Christ’s] Spirit.” It signals two things: (1) union with Christ for the “just;” (2) Christ as only Judge, not Savior, for the “unjust.”

Judgment (WCF 33)

*God hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world, in righteousness, by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father. In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged, but likewise all persons that have lived upon earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds; and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil. **WCF 33.1***

Key Points:

- The Scriptures make clear that Christ is the Father-appointed Judge/King. John 5:22-29; Acts 17:31; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10. He will judge.
- The judgment shall be all inclusive: every act; every failure to act; every word; every thought. “If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you, there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.

Judgment (WCF 33)

*2. The end of God's appointing this day is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of his justice, in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient. For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fullness of joy and refreshing, which shall come from the presence of the Lord; but the wicked who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. - **WCF 33.2.***

Key Points:

- The purpose of the judgment is, like Creation, to manifest the Glory of God. The judgment manifests the “glory of [God’s] mercy” in salvation and “the “glory. . . of his justice” in condemnation.

Judgment (WCF 33.2)

Key Points cont'd:

- For those who are righteous in Christ, their immortal soul and immortal body will receive “that fullness of joy and refreshing, which shall come from the presence of the Lord”
- For those who are not hidden in Christ and His righteousness, who do not “know God” and do not “obey the gospel of Jesus Christ,” there is eternal torment and an everlasting destruction that comes from being away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His might. 2 Thess. 1:7-10.

Judgment (WCF 33)

*3. As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin; and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity: so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come; and may be ever prepared to say, Come Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen. - **WCF 33.3***

Key Points:

- The Lord Jesus purposes for **ALL PEOPLE** to be certain that He shall return in judgment for two reasons: (1) that knowledge will deter believer and unbeliever from engaging in more and more sin; and (2) to comfort the believer in the midst of any present adversity.
- The Lord Jesus purposes that **ALL PEOPLE** *not know* the day of his return to shake off carnal security and be prepared to say “Come, Lord Jesus.”

Come, Lord Jesus, Come Quickly, Amen