Blueprints for Belief

Laying the Theological Foundations for Constructing Your Faith

Westminster Confession of Faith 32.1-3 – The Afterlife

- After death, our bodies decay and return to the dust.
    - "for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3:19)
- Our souls do not die or sleep, but live forever.
    - "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43)
- Souls who die in Christ are taken to heaven to be with God until the resurrection.
    - "My desire is to depart and be with Christ" (Phil 1:23)
    - "We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord." (2 Cor. 5:8)
- Souls of the wicked are put into hell until the day of judgment.
    - "Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged" (Rev. 20:11-15)
    - "the Lord knows how…to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment" (2 Peter 2:4-10)
- There is no third option, such as purgatory.
    - "it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Hebrews 9:27)
- On the last day, people who are still alive will not die, but be changed.
    - "The dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed." (1 Cor. 15:51-52)
- People who have died will be resurrected with the same bodies (though with different qualities), and their bodies will again be joined to their souls, forever.
    - "we groan inwardly as we await the redemption of our bodies" (Rom. 8:23)
- The bodies of wicked people will be raised to judgment.
    - "for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment." (John 5:28-29)
- The bodies of the righteous will be glorified.
    - Jesus "will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body" (Phil. 3:20–21)

Discussion Questions

1) What are some common errors you've heard about the afterlife?
2) What difference does the doctrine of bodily resurrection make for how Christians think about grief, hope, and judgment?

Westminster Confession of Faith – Chapter 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.