

Life After Death Pt. 2: Why Do Some Evangelicals (Stott, Pinnock, etc.) Deny Jesus' Teachings on Hell?

Life After Death

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Bible Text: Revelation 7:13-17
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Well, good morning. Please turning your Bibles to Revelation the seventh chapter. The text is... begins in verse 13. We will read to the end of the chapter. Revelation seven beginning at verse 13.

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.¹

So beautiful, so beautiful, so very, very instructive.

Here in Revelation 7:13-17, coupled with some other passages with the, you know, with the Lord's will we will study this morning, we get a great deal of instruction of assurance, comfort about what awaits the Christian after death. And they serve as a chilling warning to the unbeliever. And my sermon plan for these verses, as I mentioned before in a previous sermon, is to better understand death and the afterlife. And to do that it is going to take several sermons and this would be sermon number two in our mini series within our larger series on Revelation, our mini series on life after death.

Last week I said my plan is to see what God's Word, the Bible, says about various questions. Some of these questions are: If God is all together good, why is there death? What happens to the Christian when he or she dies? And what happens to the person who is not a Christian when they die? Is there such a thing as reincarnation. We looked

¹ Revelation 7:13-17.

at that last time. Of purgatory, is that scriptural? Is heaven actually a real place? Is hell a real place? What is the difference between hell and the lake of fire as we see in Revelation? Why would a good God condemn people to eternal torment forever, eternally, obviously. After you die, another question, do you have the opportunity then to accept Christ or to receive Christ? And what are our loved ones doing in heaven right now? Are they conscious or are they.. are their souls asleep?

But other questions we hope to look at in this mini series on life after death is: Do the dead remember their time on earth is another question. Do they remember their loved ones? Do they know what is going on in their lives? Do they know about events on earth? Do they know about, you know, 9/11 and those kind of things? Do they communicate with the living? What does the Bible say about that? Do they guide or protect them? Do they worry about them? Can we contact the dead through prayer or through mediums or meditation or séances or some other way? And what about ghosts? What about hauntings? Are they really or just some people's over active imaginations? And if ghosts are real, are they actually the spirits of dead people?

Those are questions we are going to take a look at through the lens of the Bible, God's holy Word, the Lord willing.

Now last week, as I said, we looked at reincarnation which hundreds of millions of people believe in and found that the Bible flatly denies there is such a thing. You know, it is given to man once to die and then the judgment. We looked at the questions of why a good God would permit death in his creation. We looked at where death comes from, why even Christians who have all their sins forgiven in Christ still have to die physically. We said that the Bible tells us there are three kinds of death: physical death when the body dies and returns to the dust from which God made it, spiritual death which is the state of the human soul that is not redeemed by Christ and eternal death which is spiritual death made permanent, the separation of the non Christian not only from his body, but his soul separation from God and his punishment in hell forever. So three kinds of death: physical, spiritual which is people who are spiritually dead walking around today. Their bodies are still alive. They experience spiritual death. And if they die in that state, they experience eternal death, spiritual death made permanent.

We know that death is the result of sin as we talked about last time, namely the sin of our first parents Adam and Eve. Death is the doorway to being with Christ. In this way God turns death into a blessing.

You know, the Bible teaches that death is the separation, that physical death is the separation of the soul from the body.

For example in Ecclesiastes 12:7, "The dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."²

Or, in James 2:26, "The body without the spirit is dead."³

² Eccles 12:7.

So a dead body is simply an empty shell cast off because the person who used to be inside that body no longer needs it. And the Bible also teaches that death is the beginning of a new life for the soul.

Now don't jump to a conclusion. This new life may be one of unimaginable blessings. For example in 1 Corinthians 2:9, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."⁴

But death may be the beginning of a new life of unimaginable horror. For example in Revelation 14, "He shall be tormented,"⁵ this is the unsaved. "He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever,"⁶ despite what many evangelical leaders apparently say. "And they have no rest day nor night,"⁷ the words of Jesus Christ.

Now which new life you will have, of course, is entirely determined by one thing in this present life, whether or not you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. The Scripture promises in Romans 10 you will be saved if you do that.

Now many, many people believe that when you die you go out of existence like when a light bulb burns out. Now the idea that death is the end of your conscious life is called Annihilationism. And it is your soul is supposedly annihilated when you die. This is contrary to every teaching about death in the Bible. It is based in wishful thinking. I mean, after all, if this life is all there is and there is no heaven and no hell, then there is no judgment for anything you do in life, so just do whatever you feel like, Annihilationism.

Now Annihilationism is Atheism. It flatly denies there is a God who requires anything of us. It flatly denies there is anything like hell. And therefore if there is no judgment and no hell, then we don't need Jesus Christ, do we, to die for our sins. Annihilationism is, therefore, satanic.

For a Christian that is pretty easy to understand and accept. What may be hard to accept is that Annihilationism or, at best, a form of it is gaining ground in, of all places, the evangelical church. *Christianity Today* reported on a 1989 conference of 350 evangelical leaders which was held at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and in the article it said, quote, "Strong disagreements did surface over the position of Annihilationism, a view that holds that in this case unsaved souls will cease to exist after death." Still with the quote from *Christianity Today*, "The conference was almost evenly divided."

³ James 2:26

⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:9.

⁵ Revelation 14:10.

⁶ Revelation 14:10-11.

⁷ Revelation 14:11.

Now you may know the name Clark Pinnock who is certainly prolific evangelical author, a former professor, by the way, at Trinity Divinity School among other schools. In an article in the Spring 1990 Issue of the *Criswell Theological Review*, Clark Pinnock denied the existence of a hell that lasts forever. He wrote, quote, “How can Christians possibly project a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness whose ways include inflicting everlasting torture on his creatures, however sinful they may have been? Surely a God,” continuing to quote, “Surely a God who would do such a think is more nearly like Satan than like God, at least by any ordinary moral standards and by the gospel itself.”

So, in other words, Clark Pinnock, based on this, his own statement, is denying the Scripture. And he is putting his own moral standards upon God’s law. That is the bottom line. He is saying, well, he says here, “At least by any ordinary moral standards this is wrong.”

Well, whose moral standards? Clark Pinnock’s moral standards? The fallen human moral standards? Yes. But those... God’s ways are higher than our ways, as Scripture says, and his thoughts higher than our thoughts. And this is a... we can never put our own ideas of justice upon God because that is saying that you know better than God. In other words, you are saying you are God and isn’t that what the serpent said would exactly would happen to Eve and Adam when they sinned?

“Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”⁸

In other words, you will determine good and evil, not allow God to do it. You will determine what is good and what is evil, what is right and what is wrong for yourself. And this is exactly what is going on here in this quote.

And, of course, then, this Clark Pinnock is in agreement with the Jehovah’s Witnesses, a satanic cult. Herbert W. Armstrong’s World Wide Church of God, Christian Science teaches the same thing. Mormonism teaches the same thing. And it is all comes straight out of the pit of hell and the new age movement, of course.

Another name I am going to throw out to you that you will be shocked possibly to hear, very likely you know the name John Stott. In fact, when I first joined a reformed church I joined the Presbyterian Church in America in Virginia back in the... well, a long time ago. You don’t need to know how long ago that was. I was given a book by John Stott by one of the ruling elders who apparently gave that to everybody who came into the church, *Basic Christianity*, I believe it was.

Anyway, John Stott is one of the best know and most admired evangelical leaders anywhere in the world. He is also another evangelical Annihilationist. You may have read *Basic Christianity*. A lot of people have. The same John Stott who was one of *Time* magazine’s 100 most influential people in the world in the year 2005. He is the same John Stott who is an editor of *Christianity Today* magazine. He has been knighted by Queen Elizabeth I understand. I have read that he is a Bible study teacher to president

⁸ Genesis 3:5.

George W. Bush. He was called by Billy Graham the most respected clergyman in the world today. This is the same John Stott who wrote in his book *Evangelical Essentials*, quote, “The ultimate annihilation of the wicked should at least be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded alternative to their eternal conscious torment.”

Let me read that again. John Stott, quote, “The ultimate annihilation of the wicked should at least be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded alternative to their eternal conscious torment.”

Does this tell you that Stott does not believe in hell and does not believe...? Let me back up. He says, to be fair, “...to be accepted as a legitimate alternative to their eternal conscious torment.” So let me just say, does this not say that he questions, to be charitable, hell, that he does not believe Jesus Christ’s statements about hell or certainly questions them which is not to believe them, not to mention the rest of God’s Word?

The same John Stott writes, by the way, in his book *The Cross of Christ*, “Nor as we have seen,” this is a quote. “Nor as we have seen has Christ by his sacrifice prevailed upon God to pardon us.”

Now that is so astounding. And I urge you to get the book. Get the book and read it. *Evangelical Essentials*.

“Nor as we have seen has Christ by his sacrifice prevailed upon God to pardon us.”

Well, isn’t that the central teaching of Christianity?

Now my reason for citing this is not to make a personal attack on John Stott or these other men. I sincerely hope God saves them. I quote them to demonstrate that Annihilationism, like so many other satanic doctrines, has infiltrated the evangelical church at the highest levels.

And my point for saying it is: Be on your guard. Be warned. Pick up the Sword of the Spirit.

We have seen that death means the separation of the soul or the spirit from the body. Well, what happens next? Often people think that death will be like going to sleep and waking up at some other point such as the resurrection on the last day. Now this is called soul sleep. The Anabaptists, the great enemies of Calvin believed this in the 1500s.

Today it is taught by Seventh Day Adventists and a cult known as the Christadelphians and the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Actually their teaching on this is closer to Annihilationism since they believe the soul is extinguished at death and on the last day God creates a new soul for you, a carbon copy, if you will, of the one that died.

So, by the way, if a Jehovah’s Witness knocks on your door, ask him to explain from the Bible what happens to a person after death. Ok? Go through the Bible with him and ask

him to explain what happens to a person after death. This might force him to see that what their cult teaches can't be found in God's Word.

You know, it is better than even what a... something I heard about somebody doing he said when a Jehovah's Witness knocks on his door he grabs the kids and gets his wife's lipstick and writes 666 on their forehead and has them answer the door. But this is even better.

Ask them to explain from the Bible what happens to a person after death.

Now if you want to know more about the evangelical Annihilationism movement, I suggest a book to you called *Eternal Christianity* by a man named Jim Cronfel. And you can get that at Amazon.com, BarnesAndNoble.com and it has got a lot of very interesting information. You may be shocked when you read it. Jim Cronfel, *Eternal Christianity*.

But this core teaching or rather the core teaching of Annihilationism and sometimes it is called by evangelicals conditional immortality. You may have heard that term which is a ridiculous term. It is the same thing. Conditional immortality, Annihilationism. It is two fold. The core teaching is two fold.

Number one, the souls of the reprobate, the unbelievers, are extinguished at death, ok? In other words, Annihilationists who don't believe in heaven say that everybody's soul is extinguished at death. The evangelical Annihilationists say it is the souls of the reprobate that are extinguished at death, but Annihilationism has that in common that the soul, somebody's soul is extinguished at death, either everybody's or the... those who don't believe in Jesus Christ.

Second point is this annihilation is permanent. But the Bible teaches there is no such thing as Annihilationism or, you know, call it what you will, soul sleep, conditional immortality. In fact, there is no break in self awareness at all. You close your eyes to this world and you open them in the next.

Please turn to 2 Corinthians chapter five verse one.

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the

body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.⁹

So he says we know the Lord, the Holy Spirit speaking through Paul says, “If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”¹⁰

We close our eyes to this world. We open them in the next. If we are Christians we open them with Jesus Christ.

Now this, what the rest of that that I read applies, obviously, only to the believer in Christ, so the best we can say here is that there appears to be no break in self consciousness when a believer dies. He is here one moment on earth and with the Lord the next.

Another verse that testifies to this and we are going to be looking at this several times in this and upcoming sermons, the Lord willing, is Luke 23:43 when Jesus said to the repentant thief on the cross next to him, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”¹¹

The very day of his death Jesus said, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”¹² The very day of his death he was with Jesus in paradise.

By the way, the Jehovah’s Witnesses and some other advocates of soul sleep or conditional immortality or whatever try to put a comma there between today and shalt. And so what they are claiming to say is that Jesus is actually saying, “I tell thee today, comma, you will be with me in paradise.”

Well, that is simply forcing the text. There is no exegetical reason for that at all. There is nothing in the next that indicates that there should be a comma there. It is, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”¹³ It is very plain. The day of his death he was with Jesus in paradise.

By the way, Lord willing, next week we will look at that word “paradise” and that has tremendous implications. You will be... I was... I mean, I think you would be shocked when you hear about this. But anyway. You have to wait till next week for that.

These passages that I have read here teach that if you trust in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, that means your soul is cleansed by him. We have read in Revelation seven, “Washed in the blood of the Lamb,” and you are with him.

⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:1-9.

¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:1.

¹¹ Luke 23:43.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism question 37 asks, “What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?”

And the answer is, “The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory and their bodies being still united to Christ do rest in their graves until the resurrection.”

So the souls are made, at their death, are made perfect in holiness. Our souls aren't perfect now. It says in 1 John if you... a person who says he has no sin is a liar and the truth is not in him. So we are not perfect. Nobody is perfect. There is no one perfect but God, Jesus said.

The souls of believer are at their death made perfect in holiness so we can go be with Christ. Our perfection comes from Christ doesn't it, on the cross? And to immediately pass into glory and their bodies, our bodies being still united to Christ do rest in the graves until the resurrection.

Please take a look at 1 Thessalonians 4:13, another verse we are going to be looking at several times, the Lord willing, in the next couple of weeks.

1 Thessalonians chapter four beginning in verse 13.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep [meaning dead], that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.¹⁴

Now, this teaches us a great deal, but what I want to focus on this time is verse 16 regarding the resurrection of the dead.

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.”¹⁵

Now this happens, obviously, when the Lord returns at the end of time. Until that time the dead are asleep in Jesus.

¹⁴ 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

¹⁵ 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

Now, we have the Jehovah's Witnesses, again, and those who believe in soul sleep say, "Oh, it says that they are asleep, right?"

Well, don't get side tracked by that word is sleep. This is not soul sleep. There are several Greek words translated in our English Bible as the word sleep in the New Testament. This one is κοιμᾶω (koy-mah'-o) and it is used often as a metaphor for death. It is the same word as found in John 11.

Please turn over to the gospel of John chapter 11. In John 11 beginning with verse 11 this is about Lazarus dying, ok?

These things said he [Jesus]: and after that he saith unto them [the disciples], Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. ¹⁶

In other words, well, if he is sick, he needs to sleep.

Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. ¹⁷

See, Jesus says, "Lazarus is asleep and he will waken him out of sleep." And his disciples thought he meant that Lazarus was literally asleep, not dead. And said, "Well, if he is sick, sleeping is a good thing for him."

So Jesus makes it clear that when he uses the word sleep κοιμᾶω (koy-mah'-o), he means death.

"Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. ¹⁸

So don't let anybody get away with using this as some kind of proof text for soul sleep, ok?

Now this passage from 1 Thessalonians that we read a few moments ago speaks of a future resurrection, the dead coming alive again. It specifically speaks of those who died in Jesus, that is those who died believing in Jesus as their Savior.

Please turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 beginning in verse 35. I am going to read the New King James Version here. It is still translated from the received text and I think it is a little more clear to our modern ears.

1 Corinthians 15 beginning in verse 35.

¹⁶ John 11:11-12.

¹⁷ John 11:13-14.

¹⁸ John 11:14.

But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.¹⁹

Of course, there is a tremendous amount in these verses, but I want to focus on just one thing right now, the fact that there will be a resurrection, that we will be given new bodies and it will be on the last day, what the Bible calls the last trumpet, verse 52.

“For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”²⁰

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:35-58.

Now since the resurrection is in the future, on the last day what does that tell us about the state of believers whose bodies are dead now? They are alive. We have already seen the Bible teaches that. No soul sleep now. No annihilation. But their bodies are in the ground. So where are their souls? Well, the answer is found in 2 Corinthians 5:8.

“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”²¹

And in Luke 23 where Jesus said to the believing thief on the cross, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”²²

Those who die believing in Christ are with him now. But they are with him in their soul only. They don’t yet have their new physical body, the body they and we if we are Christ’s will get at the final resurrection, the glorified body.

Now this is what John means in 1 John chapter three verse two. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”²³

The Lord Jesus has his resurrection body right now. He ascended into heaven with it. He didn’t put it off, the gospels, the first chapter of Acts testifies to that. His followers will also receive their resurrection body on the last day. Right now the souls are with him in heaven, but heaven as it is now is not their permanent home. We are going to be developing this over the next couple of sermons, Lord willing.

You know, many Christians think that when a believer dies they go directly to heaven and they are there forever. Very important for us to understand God’s Word says, “No, they are not there forever. If we belong to Christ, when we die, yes, we go to heaven. We are with Jesus or paradise. But that is temporary. It is theologically called the intermediate state where we are in our spirit or our soul but without a body at least as far as we know. It is not the normal condition for us, not the final state.

When I say, “As far as we know,” we will get into this a little bit later. But basically think of it as a soul without a body. And that is not the normal condition. That is not the final state.

At the last day when Jesus returns to earth to put an end to time and the created universe, that is, as it is now, believers will receive their glorified bodies or their physical resurrected bodies. That is the condition in which believers in Christ will live forever with the Lord.

²⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:52.

²¹ 2 Corinthians 5:8.

²² Luke 23:43.

²³ 1 John 3:2.

Hear how the Westminster Shorter Catechism explains this biblical teaching.

It says, “The souls of believers are at their death...” We just read this a little earlier, but I wanted to re-emphasize it. “...are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory. And their bodies being still united to Christ do rest in their graves till the resurrection.”

See, it doesn't matter if our bodies are in the grave, preferably yes. We don't... the church has never endorsed cremation. Cremation is based on a pagan idea of soul annihilation that when... so they annihilate the body as well. Well Christians have always rejected that and therefore we believe in, when it is possible, for a burial. But it doesn't matter if a Christian's body is in the grave or if it is consumed by fire or an explosion or eaten by a fish which is eaten by another fish which is eaten by another fish which is eaten by a man. The Lord who made every person out of the dust of the earth, that is, he put the atoms... he put the atoms... he created the atoms. He put them together to form the earth and then he put those atoms together to form our bodies. Well, he knows where every one of those atoms is. And he is certainly able to put them all back together to give us our resurrection body.

You know, science is flawed in many of its assumptions, but the first law of thermodynamics is right out of Scripture. Matter cannot be created by man or destroyed.

Our text in Revelation, Revelation seven, tells us something about what the saints in heaven are doing right now. Again, we will, Lord willing, we will expand upon this in future sermons. They are, quote, “before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.”²⁴

They are conscious. They are aware of their surroundings. In fact, their senses are heightened to a far greater degree than they have ever known. Any physical ailment or handicap they had is gone. They are completely happy, a happiness no one on earth has ever known. The mind is part of the soul or spirit, certainly not of the brain and, therefore, it is immortal. At death we don't lose our minds. We don't lose our knowledge. We don't lose our mental abilities. We don't lose our memories. They are perfected. Our souls are perfected.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism again.

“The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness.”

Now we don't become all knowing, of course, because only God is omniscient. But since the mind is no longer weighted down with the baggage of the body, which causes us to be tired, causes us sickness, causes other problems and the soul is no longer saddled with the effects of sin which are in the body, the temptations and the corruption we had. Well, the saints in heaven find that they are more alert, both mentally and spiritually than they have ever been in their lives.

²⁴ Revelation 7:15.

And I believe that those who die are also aware of what is happening on earth and I think the Bible teaches that, too. We will get into that later, Lord willing.

I want to show you where all these things that I have said are found in the Bible and a lot more. But to handle the Scriptures faithfully, to get as much out of what the Bible teaches about the intermediate state of heaven we are going to have to wait until next Lord's Day to go more into it.

Until then, please meditate on this. Those whom you love who died in Christ, they are with him now. You know, though it is perfectly right to grieve at our loss, we are not to grieve like the unbelievers do who have no hope from 1 Thessalonians 4:13.

See, we know where our loved ones are who died in Christ. We know that they are not dead. Only their bodies have died. They are still alive. They can never die. The person they was can never die.

You remember when Jesus appeared in his resurrected body to the disciples and said, "I am not a ghost." We will talk about this next time, Lord willing. "I am not a ghost. You know, touch me. A ghost doesn't have flesh and bones like I do."

And he says.... he makes an amazing statement. He said, "It is I myself, I myself."²⁵

He died and yet he said, "It is I myself."²⁶

So the people that we know, the people that we love who have died in Christ are still themselves. They are still themselves. If they could appear to you now they would say, "Hey, it is me. It is me. It is I myself. I am everything I ever was and much more without sin."

They are still alive. They can never die. We haven't lost them. People talk about, oh, losing somebody. No, we haven't lost them. We just won't see them for a while. It is going to be a fairly short time. They are at a place so indescribably joyful that our Lord calls it paradise. We will be there with them and with the Lord Jesus Christ and it is going to happen sooner than we think.

Let me finish with a quote from Puritan Richard Baxter.

"We who have gone through the day of sadness, shall enjoy together that day of gladness."

Let us pray.

²⁵ Luke 24:39.

²⁶ Ibid.