

FIRST CLASS: Module II

Death and Afterlife: The Eschatological Mystery

Review of Module 10: The Divine Service

Here are the summary points from Module 10. If you have any further questions and want to dialogue, please contact one of Trinity's pastors!

- *The high and holy worship of God is faith in Jesus Christ. Such faith is created and sustained by God's Service to us. It is in the Divine Service where God has promised to come to us in His Word and Sacrament to bless us with His own divine gifts of forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life. The Biblical definition of such a worship assembly of believers is not primarily about what we do for God—thanksgiving, prayer, praise—but what He comes to do in service for us. The “liturgy” is God's work. He gives, we receive.**
 - *In the Biblical definition of worship, since we are primarily receiving God's Word and many other blessings, the rhythm of our worship is from Him to us, and then our response to Him. His Words and gifts to us are from Him who is holy and pure, divine and heavenly gifts. The only way we can give Him back something holy and pure is if we simply say back to Him what He has said to us. Therefore our worship service is not informal and spontaneous, but based on the Word of God and true doctrine.**
 - *For these reasons we remain faithful to the Biblical injunctions for corporate worship, seek to be connected to God's work over 20 centuries of Christian life together, and strive to avoid change for the sake of change (out of boredom!), creativity just for the sake of novelty, and experimentation on doctrine and practice. Within the faith and the Church are amazing depth and substance that God Himself has designed and still uses to reach all people on our planet. Faithfulness in teaching truth and in loving the neighbor is built by Christ Himself on solid foundations.**
 - *Yes, God commands believers to assemble together for worship, fellowship, and work, and that alone is a viable reason for regular attendance at your church, but God's commandments are also for us believers loving invitations to things that are good and healthy for us. That's an even better reason to make it a priority to regularly worship!**
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Before beginning the final lesson of First Class, read in the Explanation to your Catechism, pages 181-183 (Question 169), and pages 223-229

2

In this final Module of First Class, we will explore the doctrine of eschatology, the study of death and the afterlife. In the Christian faith and doctrine this is not an afterthought—it is the crown and goal of the believer. In the Christian faith, this doctrine is not the end of the line—it is the beginning of eternity with Christ. In the Christian experience of life, the day of our deaths will be the greatest moment of our earthly lives. . .until the Last Day when Jesus comes back to earth for a Second Advent, in all power and glory. And does He ever have the Best of the Good News planned for all of us who are found with faith in Him!

So this last lesson is also a great investment in the future, and one you don't have to earn or even take to the bank. It's all been secured for you on your behalf. Your account is already open and waiting for redemption day, when you will receive it and inherit everything in the new heavens and earth!

Please write your observations and questions along the way in this outline of what the Bible says about the last things. . .oh, and also enjoy!

I. (De morte temporali) TEMPORAL DEATH

- 1: **Physical death is not annihilation of existence, but the separation of the soul from the body. There is no annihilation of the soul. . .**

“And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit. [Matthew 27:50]

“But God said to the rich man, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you. . .[Luke 12:20]

or of the body “(Jesus said) ‘do not marvel at this for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear the voice of the Son of God and will come out” [John 5:28]

Notes:

- 2: **Etiology of death is not first and ultimately due to the constitution of the human body, but = sin** “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’ [Genesis 2:16-17] “And to Adam God said, ‘because you have. . .eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, you shall not eat of it. . .by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” [Genesis 3:17-19]

All CODs (causes of death) = consequences of sin

***Immediate specific medical cause (what is written on certificates)**

***Intermediate causes (disease, old age, natural calamities, accidents, homicides, war)**

***Adam (& Eve)** “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man,

and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned. . . many died through one man's trespass. . . because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man. . . [Romans 5:12, 15, 17]

***The Devil** "He was a murderer from the beginning." [John 8:44]

3

***God** "For we are brought to an end by Your anger; by Your wrath we are dismayed." [Psalm 90:7]

G.K. Chesterton: *Fairy tales don't tell children that dragons exist; children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children the dragons can be killed.*

Notes:

3: Universal and absolute character of death see above Romans 5:12

4: +Why do Christians have to participate in the curse of sin and death if they belong to God now and are counted as His children? "You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. . . But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. [Romans 8:9-10]

+But the dying of Christians is no longer death in the full sense, because they have been delivered from the thing that makes death the terror of all terrors "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." [Corinthians 15:56]

*** "Scripture has a lovely manner of speaking of death and of the Christian deceased. . . we must therefore learn a new speech and language of speaking of death and the grave" (Martin Luther)**

"Truly, truly I say to you, whoever hears My Word and believes Him who has sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." [John 5:24] "Lord, now You are letting your servant depart in peace according to Your Word. . . [Luke 2:29] Jesus said, "Go away, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping." And they laughed at Him. . . He went in and took her by the hand and she arose." [Matthew 9:24-25] About Lazarus who had been dead and buried for four days, Jesus said about him, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." [John 11:11] "We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope." [1 Thessalonians 4:13] "For whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from His; let us therefore strive to enter that rest. . . [Hebrews 4:11] "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I would choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better." [Philippians 1:21-23] "The Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into His heavenly kingdom." [2 Timothy 4:18] "And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." [Revelation 14:13]

Notes: What are some of the things people say to others who are grieving the loss of a loved one that are not Biblically true and sometimes, though meant well, ridiculously silly? (eg. “he looks so nice just lying there, as if he could wake up anytime”)

4

THE STATE OF SOULS BETWEEN DEATH AND RESURRECTION

- 1: **(Scripture reveals very little about this state of being; Biblical eschatology focuses and directs Its readers to Judgment Day)**
- 2: **Souls of unbelievers:** “spirits in prison (hell). . .” [1 Peter 3:19]
- 3: **Souls of believers:** “As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” [Acts 7:59] “(the thief on the cross said to Jesus” ‘remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.’” [Luke 23:42-43] [see above again, Philippians 1:23]
- 4: **Christians must reject ideas of: soul sleep if it excludes a blessed enjoyment of divine peace and bliss; the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory; the contention that because the physical body is annihilated, God creates a completely new, spiritual body for the Christian soul; and the Christian soul becomes an angel**
- 5: **Other un-Biblical ideas that Christians must reject: departed souls return to this world; departed souls have direct knowledge of particular things and happenings on earth (praying through saints); hope for the conversion of a condemned soul**

Notes:

THE LAST DAY (JUDGEMENT DAY)

- 1: **The Second Advent of Christ** “Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather the elect”. . .[Matthew 24:30-31] When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne” [Matthew 25:31] “When the disciples had come together, they

asked Jesus, "Lord when will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, 'It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority' . . . (note: after Jesus ascended into heaven, the angels said to the disciples), 'This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven.' [Acts 1:6-11] "(Jesus said), 'Concerning that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.'" [Mark 13:32] "The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God." [1 Thessalonians 4:16] "So Christ will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for them." [Hebrews 9:28] "The day of the Lord will come like a thief" [2 Peter 3:10]

5

- 2: Signs of the Last Day revealed in Scripture: signs in the natural realm, social world, and in the Church. . . these are given in every generation! Signs of the Last Day not revealed in Scripture (or mis-interpretations of Scripture): millenarian kingdoms (Revelation has suffered the most) that teach a future two-fold return of Christ (one to establish and one to judge/consummate); the Jewish people are still the chosen people of God, and their mass conversion (and rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem) will trigger the Messiah's Coming, et. al (beware of literalistic interpretation of apocalyptic genre!)**

Notes:

- 3: The Resurrection of the Dead** (see again John 5:28-29, all the dead are raised) (note: the Scriptures leave the condition of the resurrected unbeliever without detail; but for the resurrected believer, specific detail is given) "So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 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. . . the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For the perishable body must put on the imperishable, and we shall 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 imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and the mortal must put on immortality." [1 Corinthians 15: 42-53] "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is." [1 John 3:2] "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body. . . [Philippians 3:2-21] "Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." [Matthew 13:43] "The dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord." [1 Thessalonians 4:16b-17] see also Job 19:25-27

Notes:

4: The Final Judgment (Damnation or Salvation)—Matthew 25:31-46

The standard for judgment will be for each individual person her/his own performance of God's Law—the works that have been done. This is true for all people, believers and unbelievers. The Good News for believers is that they were covered in their sins from the moment of Baptism by the perfect obedience of Jesus during His earthly life. When God looks at them, He sees His Son Jesus, and remembers their sins no more. Those without faith in His Son are not connected to Him. While Jesus died and paid the entire ransom for the whole human race, and while God loves all people, it is only by grace through faith that an individual on the Last Day will be welcomed into heaven. It is a sobering fact and one hard to accept and impossible to understand. The Bible says it clearly so we must believe it and live with it, trusting God and sharing the Gospel with a meek urgency and zeal.

6

Notes:

5: The End of the World “Heaven and earth will pass away. . .” [Luke 21:33]

“The present form of this world is passing away” [1 Corinthians 7:31] “The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved.” [2 Peter 3:10]

6: The New Heavens and Earth “I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create” [Isaiah 65:17-18] “According to His promise we are waiting for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” [2 Peter 3:13] “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.” [Revelation 21:1] “No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will worship Him. Night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Notes:

CLOSING PRAYER

For all our days pass away under Your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone and we fly away. So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

[Psalm 90:9-10, 12]

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. [Revelation 14:13]

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven [Matthew 5:12]

Amen.

Return your answers on this module to

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If you want to ask questions or enter into dialogue on any of the above questions or related issues, we'd love to engage in conversation with you:

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