

# Set Your Mind On Things Above

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**Q.** What benefits to believers receive from Christ when they die?

**A.** When believers die, their souls are made perfectly holy and immediately pass into glory. Their bodies, which are still united to Christ, rest in the grave until the resurrection.

(Westminster Shorter Catechism Q&A #37)

“And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

(Luke 23:43)

As human beings, we tend to focus primarily on the here and now. Our eyes are largely fixed on the tasks that are immediately before us. Our gaze is predominately centered on what we have to get done today, without giving much thought to the future. Because of the many pressing responsibilities that lay upon us in terms of our daily obligations to our families and our vocations, we tend to set our sights on the present, neglecting to set our sights on eternity. We tend to focus more on the temporal and less on the eternal. We think more about this present age than we do about our future home in heaven.

Interestingly enough however, the Bible encourages believers to do just the opposite. Over and over again in the pages of the New Testament, Christians are exhorted to think MORE about eternity than the things of this world. In Colossians 3:2 the Apostle Paul writes, *“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”* You see, the Bible calls us to think MORE about Heaven, not less. Christians are encouraged to set their minds *“on things above”*. We are called to be heavenly minded, to be future focused, and to look at life through the lens of an eternal perspective. Why? Because as the Apostle John tells us, *“the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”* (1 John 2:17). Even though the cares of this life may, at times, seem to appear paramount in terms of their importance, in reality we must remember that *“this world is passing away...”*. This world is temporary, it’s transient and impermanent. Just as God’s Word tells us, *“we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”* (2 Corinthians 4:18).

It’s with all this in mind that we come to Q&A #37 in the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Here in questions 37-38 the Westminster Divines take a break from dwelling on the temporal and begin to point us to the eternal. Our catechism asks, *“What benefits to believers receive from Christ when they die?”*. And the answer given is this: *“When believers die, their souls are made perfectly holy and immediately pass into glory. Their bodies, which are still united to Christ, rest in the grave until the resurrection.”*. Here we find a question that has been asked by

every believer, in every age, since the very beginning of the world, and that question is this: *“What happens when I die?”* Our catechism, in summarizing the Bible reveals to us three important truths that we must understand in terms of what happens when a Christian dies. First of all, we are told that when a believer dies, *“their souls are made perfectly holy...”*. The Apostle Paul writes that for the believer, *“to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”* (Philippians 1:21). He goes on to reveal to us that in comparison to this present world, *“to depart and be with Christ...is far better”* (Philippians 1:23). That’s because when a Christian dies, it is in that moment that they are made perfectly holy. Death for the believer marks the moment when they are perfectly sanctified, that is, when they are freed from all evil, sin and corruption (Revelation 7:14-17). I can’t even fathom what it will be like to be completely free from all sin and misery, but that is what we have to look forward to as believers in Christ!

Not only will believers be made perfect at death, but as our catechism goes on to tell us, *“when believers die, their souls... immediately pass into glory.”* You’ll remember the thief on the cross who was crucified next to Jesus. After placing his faith in Christ only moments before his death, Jesus comforted him by saying, *“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”* (Luke 23:43). What happens when a believer dies? When a Christian dies, immediately their souls are brought into heaven to behold the face of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As we read in 2 Corinthians 5:6,8, *“So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord...We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”*

Death is not the end for the Christian. Death is only the beginning. The moment a believer dies immediately their souls are made perfect, and they are ushered into the presence of their great and glorious God in Heaven. But that’s not all that we have to look forward to in regards to the afterlife. For, as we’ll see in tomorrow’s devotional, our catechism will go on to reveal to us one more event that we have to look forward to as believers. Until then, spend some time today meditating on the hope of Heaven!

## Dig Even Deeper into God’s Word!

Hebrews 12:23

2 Corinthians 5:6,8

1 Thessalonians 4:14

John 5:28-29