

XIX. The Apostles' Creed in Biblical Perspective

"I Believe..."

"The Life Everlasting"

I John 5:11–13

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We will be looking at four other texts in this study but we'll start with I John 5. This is the 19th sermon in our series of the Apostles' Creed, the essentials of the faith. There will be one more study on this creed but we will be looking at the last affirmation in this study. The last study will cover the last word in the creed, Amen. Why is that word there? Let's now look in I John 5:11–13 which says, *[11] And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. [12] Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. [13] I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.* You can't get any clearer than this. Here He tells us that you can be assured and know before you get to eternity that you have life.

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Everlasting life – one might be thinking 'I think I read somewhere that every major religion have teaching and a doctrine on eternal life.' Is that true? Yes, but only Christianity reveals the truth that everlasting life will be enjoyed with an everlasting body in an everlasting new heavens and new earth, for all who have Christ and are forgiven of their sins. All those other religions see the body as a vehicle in a prison. Everlasting life is deliverance from the body, escape from the body and that's why they burn bodies, because it's evil, bad so get rid of it. Christianity says it will be a body and soul experience – a perfected soul and glorified body and it won't be in heaven. It will be in a new heavens and new earth. Those who will enjoy it are those who have come to Christ for the forgiveness of their sins.

None of those other religions have any way to deal with sin. In fact, most deny it. They also don't have a way to deal with sin's consequences of shame and guilt. Christianity says shame and guilt can be sent away and your sins be forgiven – remission. Christianity says for those who have forgiveness of sins, God is going to raise your body and it will be joined to your perfected soul. It will be places in this heavens and earth that will be rolled back up and rolled back out in the new heavens and the new earth. That's what the Bible says.

Now that immediately awakens a lot of questions when I was four years old. We lived on Dixie Road but today that road is now one of the runways at the Charlotte International Airport. We were not well off so we lived with my grandparents at that place for about a year. My grandfather secured my very first dog named Prince and still to this day I love that dog. He was such a majestic collie. I played with him every afternoon as I exhausted him and he exhausted me. Then we'd lay down in the backyard as I put my head on his stomach and his breathing would put me right to sleep for that's the way I took my nap in the afternoons. When Prince died my question to my mother was 'Mom, will Prince be in heaven?' Then came my childish remark, 'Mom, if Prince isn't in heaven then I don't want to go to heaven.' There are a lot of things that we probably think about heaven now and when we get there we'll probably think it was pretty childish. My mom, like our God, was very patient with me and did not chide me. She said to me 'Son, here is what I can assure you, everything that will be needed in heaven for God

to be glorified and you to be satisfied will be there.’ But when you die where will you go and where will we finally go?

There have been a number of times I have shared with people about eternal life in Christ and after we’ve gone around and around avoiding commitments, repentance and faith, I’ll ask ‘What are you going to do about your guilt and shame?’ Most will say ‘I don’t have any.’ But give me about two more questions and I’ll surface it for you. It is only through a living God, His Son Jesus and an atoning death who has secured forgiveness of sins. And our salvation isn’t an escape from the body for it’s deliverance from our sin. Then the glories will be just as God made us with a body and soul in a heaven and earth to enjoy fellowship with Him. Now that the curse is removed then we will have a body and soul to enjoy Him in a new heavens and a new earth which will be restored through the redeeming work of Christ.

Our questions are myriad aren’t they? Will there be animals in the new heavens and new earth? Will we know each other? Will we be able to talk to each other? What will be our relationships be like? What will the new city look like? We have myriads of varied and intriguing questions. I would love to answer them all so I’m going to give you three pastoral suggestions to start answering your questions. The first is there are three books I recommend on this subject, not necessarily recommending everything in them but they’re good books. One is by Randy Alcorn titled Heaven. Number two is Michael Rogers and his book is titled What Happens After I Die? Thirdly, this book is out of print but can be purchased on Amazon by William Hendriksen titled The Bible on the Life Hereafter. Pastoral suggestion number two is be patient. I’ll be preaching more on what the Bible says about the new heavens and the new earth and about hell in the near future. The third suggestions is that I will give you four texts in this study that I think you will find helpful.

So as we get started I want to remind you of the Apostles’ Creed which is as follows;
I believe in God the Father Almighty, (first affirmation/1st Person of the Trinity)

maker of heaven and earth;

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, (second affirmation/2nd Person of the Trinity)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,

born of the Virgin Mary,

suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died, and was buried;

He descended into hades.

On the third day he rose again;

He ascended into heaven,

is seated at the right hand of the Father Almighty,

and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, (third affirmation/3rd Person of the Trinity)

the holy catholic church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body

and the life everlasting. Amen.

Jesus in His virgin birth, His suffering, His atoning death, His resurrection, has finished the work of redemption for His people. Now He has sent the Holy Spirit from His ascension to work on gathering and perfecting the redeemed. The Spirit’s work is then put into two categories – in the church and in the Christian. The creed establishes the church in its two

dynamics. One is the holy catholic church and the word catholic is not used as a noun to identify a denomination but it's a transliteration of the two original Greek words which mean the parts as a whole. The Holy Spirit is assuring, insuring and securing all the elect of God who will live forever in eternity – the invisible, universal, holy, triumphant church that is perfect – perfectly sanctified. It is perfectly made up of the elect of God. Jesus says 'Of all the Father has given me I lose not one' and the Spirit is gathering the people of God into the church universal/triumphant. This church is at rest from its labors, enrolled in the general assembly (the congregation of heaven), but until Jesus returns there is the church militant.

The church militant is the church, the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, doing the work of Christ until He returns indwelt by the Holy Spirit. In the Apostles' Creed this is referred to as the communion of saints. These are the people of God bound together by the Word of God, the Spirit of God and the commission of our Savior where we are on mission, on message, in ministry in communion. It is not a perfect church for there are false sons and teachers within its veils. It is in progress of sanctification but its communion is together by the Spirit of God led by the Word of God to the glory of God for King Jesus. We are on mission, that is to make disciples of all the nations, on message with the Gospel of Christ and in ministry together.

Then the creed goes to the Holy Spirit's work in the Christian with three Gospel blessings – forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Again, everyone will get a resurrected body, but only those who have been forgiven of their sins will have a resurrection body for life everlasting. Those who have embraced their sins, under their sins dominion and said 'no' to Christ they get a resurrected body but it's for the lake of fire which is the just judgment of God, to be endured for all eternity. So let's look at some Scripture on this.

There are times people say things that as a pastor my heart is with them but I kind of want to say 'that's not quite accurate.' It's like when a loved one dies who suffered and they say 'well they're breathing easier now.' Now they're not but they will when they get a new body. When they die that body is going to the grave – ashes to ashes, dust to dust (Genesis 3:19). They are not dancing in heaven for that's not where they are right now. They are in heaven but not with a body dancing. It's coming. They are passing into an intermediate state and the Bible calls it paradise, Abraham's Bosom and heaven. Their soul leaves their body to be in the presence of Christ, comforted with joy. Will we know one another there? Yes, but we don't have a body yet. We have a perfected soul that which is made in the image of God. Our soul leaves our body and our body is buried until Jesus comes again. Then it will be raised to a body and soul united that will be deposited in a new heavens and a new earth which is the final state. Unless you are alive when Jesus comes back, everyone will go to the intermediate state through the door of death into paradise if you are a believer. That is what Jesus told the thief of the cross who believed in Jesus right before his death; [43] *And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise"* (Luke 23:43). This intermediate state will be for a time until Christ comes.

When will Christ come? He will come when all of His elect have been saved and the Gospel has been taken to all the nations. The trumpet will blow, shouts will be made, He comes, bodies are raised and all united together with the Lord in the new heavens and the new earth. Until then the Gospel is at work bringing men and women to the Lord and the Kingdom of God. When they die their body goes to the grave with the sure expectation of the resurrection. Then their spirit goes to be with the Lord. II Corinthians 5:8 says [8] *Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.* The soul is present with the Lord not the body.

I think it's very important to understand this because then we can anticipate all of what the Lord is going to do. So does this stand the test of the Scriptures and does it come from the Scriptures? This is where I want to show you four texts. I want to start with the first martyr in the Bible in the New Testament and his name was Stephen. Stephen was put to death for Christ and he gives some insights. Your mother was right if she taught you this bed time prayer: Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep, if I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. He will also take the body but that will come later. I want to show you that mother was right and what this means for us in terms of everlasting life. Let's look at Acts 7. This is the account of the stoning of Stephen. When you get the chance read his last sermon before he died. This is what happens when he gets to the end of the sermon.

Acts 7:54–60 says [54] *Now when they* (Pharisees and others around him) *heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him* (same phrase used for those who will be cast into hell – not a statement of remorse but of rage). [55] *But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.* [56] *And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”* [57] *But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him.* [58] *Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.* [59] *And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, **receive my spirit.**”* [60] *And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he **fell asleep.***

The term ‘fell asleep’ is what describes a believer’s death. It’s an attempt to give us a metaphor or euphemism of Psalm 23:4a when it says, *Even though I walk through the valley of the **shadow of death**...* Death is a door that is a very hard door to go through for an unbeliever but for the believer it swings open and the believer never goes through it alone. The believer goes through it with the One who has conquered it. Jesus conquered sin, death, hell and the grave. Paul uses this euphemism because the death of a believer is sweet due to the fact that Christ was victorious over death and the sting of death which is sin. The door swings open into everlasting life. He goes us with us through that door to His presence.

In this Acts 7 text we see Saul standing there in the midst of those surrounding Stephen. Do you know what is going to happen to Saul? Saul will be on the road to Damascus, will meet Jesus and get converted. Saul will become an Apostle and lead people to Christ. Then Saul will try to show what will happen to them when they die. He not only saw the truth of God’s Word but had observed it in Stephen’s life so Paul begins to teach believers what happens when they die and Jesus has not yet come back. First of all he teaches us right from his very own life so let’s look at Philippians 1. Paul is in jail when he writes this letter and there is a possibility he may be put to death.

Philippians 1:21–26 says [21] *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* (a door Christ will walk through with him) [22] *If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell.* [23] *I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.* [24] *But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.* [25] *Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith,* [26] *so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.*

Basically Paul has a possible death sentence here and he doesn’t know whether to cheer for death because then he will depart. What does he mean depart? Paul is not talking about his

body. He is talking about his soul and spirit – absent from the body, present with the Lord. The body goes to the grave, the spirit goes to the Lord. If he departs it's gain, profit, better but he may cheer for the Lord to leave him on earth because someone needs to care these people and he is willing to choose what is not better, which is to stay with these people in order for them to serve the Lord better in their lives. He is talking about the intermediate state (heaven, paradise, Abraham's Bosom) and when Jesus comes back that body will be raised. Then body and spirit will be with the Lord in a new heavens and new earth.

I know what you're thinking – will we know people, will we be able to speak to people? God is a Spirit. Does God know you? Yes (if you're a believer). Does God speak to you through His Word? Yes. Do you have a relationship with Christ? Yes. I don't know how it works but we'll be able to communicate. You can see this with the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31). In this intermediate state Lazarus talks, there is relationships so I do know there will be relationships but I also know it's not the final state. In the intermediate state my spirit is present with the Lord in paradise, knowing the comfort, joys and the blessings of it but my body is still in the grave yet God is not through yet because He will raise that body. In other words, the same God who made you, body and soul in Adam and put him in a Garden to have fellowship with Him in the heavens and the earth, is going to erase the curse of sin and will bring you forth body and soul for a new heavens and a new earth. We will be redeemed and restored to what God's original declaration was in the Garden and the heavens and the earth.

Paul goes further with this in II Corinthians 4 where he speaks of the Gospel promises. II Corinthians 4:7–14 says [7] *But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. [8] We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; [9] persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; [10] always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.* (In other words, as I suffer in this life for Jesus it opens up the doors for me to bring the life of Jesus to others.) [11] *For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. [12] So death is at work in us, but life in you.*

[13] *Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, [14] knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into His presence.* How do I know I have been forgiven of my sins? Jesus died for me. How do I know I'll get a resurrected body? It is because Jesus was raised and when He was raised it was the promise that I would be raised therefore be given to Him for a new heavens and a new earth.

Let's continue in II Corinthians 4:15–18 which says [15] *For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.*

[16] *So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, **our inner self is being renewed day by day.** [17] *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, [18] as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.**

The outer self (the body) will waste away for gravity is going to win. Why in the world do we give all of our soul to what is perishing instead of what is eternal? Mark 8:36 says [36] *For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? Would you sell your soul for all the gold? Let me tell you what we'll do with gold in heaven, for we'll throw it*

out and walk on it because there will be streets of gold. What we give ourselves to is what lasts and that is the majesty and glory of our God of grace and glory. Let's continue in this text.

II Corinthians 5:1–5 says [1] *For we know that if the tent (our body) that is our earthly home is destroyed (ashes to ashes), we have a building from God (a new body), a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. [2] For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, [3] if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. [4] For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed (a new body), so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. [5] He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.*

Jesus said in John 14:3, [3] *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.* He is preparing a body for you. Let's continue in II Corinthians 5.

II Corinthians 5:6–10 says [6] *So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, [7] for we walk by faith, not by sight. [8] Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. [9] So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. [10] For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*

Our home is not here on earth. Our home is there with Him. I am forgiven of my sins because Jesus died for me. I have a promised resurrected body because Jesus had one and I will have everlasting life with Him. That is glory. That is majesty. That is beyond comprehension. How do I know this? It is because the Bible tells me so and the Spirit of God has been poured out as a guarantee and a seal. God will finish what He has begun. I want to show you one other text before we close this study in I Thessalonians 4.

In this text Paul is addressing the believers that have died and Jesus has not come back yet so the believers want to know what happened. I Thessalonians 4:13–18 says [13] *But 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. [14] For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep. [15] For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. [16] For 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. And the dead in Christ will rise first. [17] Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. [18] Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

According to this text, when Jesus comes back who is coming with Him? It is the believers who have died. Their bodies are in the ground but their spirit is with Him. When He comes He comes with them. First of all, Paul is not saying to you as a Christian if a loved one dies don't grieve. No, he wants you to inform your loved ones for it's inhuman not to grieve but we don't grieve without hope so Paul informs our hope in Jesus who died for our sins and is risen. When He comes again those who died and are in the intermediate state are going to come with Him because they are already with Him.

If I'm living when He comes, and I believe this will happen, then I will see the bodies brought up out of the sea and the land to those who will be coming with Him. The same God who put Adam together with dust will bring them back. I don't care what shark ate what or who got burned or what for He will bring it forth by His hand and His power and the graves will give

up the dead which will be joined to their spirit. Then we who are alive will be caught up together with Him in a new heavens and a new earth. Everyone who is alive when Jesus comes will not go through that door to the intermediate state but those who die before He comes (except for three exceptions) will go to the intermediate state of comfort, joy, in paradise in the presence of the Lord.

Who were the three exceptions? Enoch, Elijah and Moses. The arch angel Michael came for the body of Moses (Jude 1:9). Elijah was caught up with the Lord (II Kings 2:1) and Enoch walked and was no more (Genesis 5:24). That is why at the Mount of Transfiguration Moses and Elijah are already seen with their glorified bodies (Matthew 17:3). The rest of us await the second coming of Christ to get our glorified bodies and then we'll be in the new heavens and the new earth.

So here is your takeaway. Our Lord, by His atoning death and triumphant resurrection, has secured for every believer the incomparable glory of the forgiveness of our sins which then brings us to a promised resurrection of the body which will then be deposited in a new heavens and a new earth with life everlasting. What makes it glorious? It is that you will be with God and He will be with you and we will be together. We will be with Him by sight. We'll be together by His glorious triumphant. We will be caught up together to be with the Lord and that's the blessing of glory. There are other blessings as well like no pain or sorrow. It will be absolutely astonishing to imagine this new heavens and new earth.

To see the Lord's creation now is already glorious but just think of the new heavens and the new earth without the shroud of sin and with our ability to see it clearly. But just think of Him. We shall behold Him in all of His glory. [9] *But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him"* (I Corinthians 2:9). I know those who are headed to heaven due to the fact that on this side of heaven they love to worship and are never satisfied with their worship because they want to worship more. They want to witness for Christ on the way to heaven and that evidence is that they have been loved by Him and they love Him. I love what Robert Murray M'Cheyne said; 'When I see You O Lord as You art, then I will worship You as I ought.'

Lately, my wife, has been teaching a class on Pilgrim's Progress and it has given me the chance to go through it again as she tries it out on me. I think of the joy early on in my life of knowing the forgiveness of sins, the joy of growing in grace but O the increasing anticipation of this world not being my home for I'm just passing through. I have a job to do and I'll do it. I thank God for the privilege. This is not home at all.

I used to get in the car with my dad and mom and we would travel to Augusta, Georgia to see my grandparents. I loved my grandparents. All four of my grandparents were only 36 years old when I was born so I almost grew up with them. I loved going to see them at Thanksgiving but every time we did this I'd say things like 'are we close?' Then I'd say 'Daddy, are we there yet?' That's what believers start doing. Believers are forgiven of their sins in anticipation of their resurrected body to be with Him and one another – Father God, are we there yet? How much longer?

I sit in my office most every day and on most of those days people come and talk to me trying to make sense of sin and I will always tell them this; don't try to make sense of sin for sin is insanity but I cannot tell you how great the insanity is not to come to Jesus to be forgiven of your sins, to be given a new body and enjoy Him and one another in a new heavens and a new earth. He so loves you that He gave Himself for you so that where He is, there you may be also. Let's pray.

Prayer: Father, I thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. I thank You that all of Yours will be in heaven and I pray that all who are reading this will all be Yours that by faith and repentance they will have put their trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior to give themselves fully unto Him. Lord, while we're here it's for fruitful labor but to go and be with You is gain. The majesty of the intermediate state of comfort, Your presence and fellowship and then the exquisite joy of a new heavens and a new earth with no more pain, no sorrow, no more sin, no more ability to sin and no more death but the light and presence of the Lord to be with Him forever. Come quickly, Lord Jesus, I pray in Your Name, Amen.

Power Point

The Life Everlasting

The Apostles' Creed Context

The Biblical Texts

Life Takeaway

Our Lord, by His atoning death and triumphant resurrection, has secured for every believer the incomparable glory of the Forgiveness of sins, the Resurrection of the Body and Life Everlasting.

We shall behold Him in all of His glory!