

The Four Last Things

Death, Judgement, Hell, Heaven

Introduction

1. **World View:** Five Ultimate Questions
 - a. Who/what are we?
 - b. Where do we come from?
 - c. What is the problem?
 - d. What is the solution?
 - e. Where are we going? What is our “end”?
 2. **Eschatology:** Study of the “End” (Greek: *eschaton*)
 - a. Personal Eschatology: study of the “end” of individual life
 - b. General Eschatology: study of the “end” of time and history
 3. **Traditional Designation:** The “Four Last Things”
 - a. Death, Judgement, Hell, Heaven
 - b. The Penny/Baltimore Catechisms
 4. **The Seven Last Things:**
 - a. Death, Judgment, Heaven, Purgatory, Hell, Resurrection, New Creation
 - b. The New Catechism: section on “Resurrection and Life Everlasting” (Creed)
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Death

1. **Ancient World**
 - a. Where and with whom did you die?
 - b. Who buried you?
 - c. No outsourcing death, with very few exceptions, everyone had to deal with it.
2. **Modern World**
 - a. Death is hidden away
 - b. The American “death care industry” is a multi-billion dollar industry
 - c. Death is even abstracted away in our food
 - d. No connection between death and the life-giving food that sustains us (Circle of Life)
3. **Modern World Contradiction**
 - a. Death is hidden away, fear of death, death is taboo
 - b. Old age is feared
 - c. Death in contemporary media
 - d. Repression of Death
4. **Death Theories**
 - a. The End: existence ceases, no hope after death (Sadducees; Nihilism)
 - b. Passing Away: spirit/soul departs, but to where? (Greeks)
 - c. Reincarnation: soul leaves one body to take up residence in another (Hinduism)
 - d. Biblical Definition of Death

5. **Biblical Definition of Death**
 - a. The end of earthly life (CCC 1007)
 - b. Separation of the soul from the body (CCC 362-368)
 - c. Mystery of death: Separation (CCC 1005-1006; Eccl 12:1-7)
 - d. No reincarnation (CCC 1013)
 6. **Why do we die?**
 - a. Death is a consequence of sin (CCC 1008)
 - b. God did not make death: it was “contrary to his plans”
 - c. God made Man immortal; he would have lived forever had he not sinned (Vat II)
 7. **Death & Original Sin**
 - a. Sin is choosing yourself or some object over God
 - b. This means cutting yourself off partially or completely from God
 - c. What is God? Life
 - d. Sin cuts man off from life which merits death
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Judgment

1. **How does Death relate to Judgment?**
 - a. Puts an end to the time of accepting/rejecting Christ (CCC 1021)
 - b. No repentance for men after death (CCC 393)
 2. **The Particular Judgment** (Heb 9:27, CCC 1021-1022)
 - a. Rewarded to each individual at the very moment of/immediately after death
 - b. In accordance with faith and works
 - c. With regard to the final destiny of the soul
 3. **Particular Judgment Specifics**
 - a. Each will appear before the “judgment seat” of Christ (2 Cor 5:10)
 - b. Three possible destinations
 - I. Heaven (permanent)
 - II. Purgatory (temporary)
 - III. Hell (permanent)
 - c. Leads to the Intermediate State
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Heaven

- Heaven: can mean “sky” or “dwelling of God” (Hebrew *shamayim*; Greek *ouranios*)
 - We don’t know as much about Heaven as we’d like
 - Indescribable
1. **Heaven in the Bible**
 - a. Life of the Trinity
 - b. Being with Jesus
 - c. Perfect Self-Knowledge
 - d. Perfect Knowledge of God
 2. **Heaven in the Catechism**
 - a. Perfect Communion
 - b. Supreme Happiness
 - c. Beatific Vision
 - d. Kingdom of God

3. **Homework:** The Heavenly Mass (Revelation 4-5)
 - a. Priests/Elders (Gk presbyters) in White Robes with Crowns
 - b. Candles ("seven torches of fire") and a Crystal Floor around the Throne
 - c. Angels and Music: singing "Holy, holy, holy!" (Lat Sanctus)
 - d. Kneeling: The People fall down in worship, singing Hymns
 - e. Scripture: A Sacred Book (the "Scroll" no one is worthy to open)
 - f. The Lamb of God: standing as if Slain
 - g. Incense: "The Prayers of the Saints" offered by Angels and Saints
 - h. "Amen": fall down again in worship
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Purgatory

1. **Purgatory in the Bible**
 - a. Prayers for the dead: atonement for sin after death (2 Maccabees 12:39-45)
 - b. Suffering "fire" in this life (1 Pet 1:3-7)
 - c. Parable of the "Prison" and Paying Debts
 2. **Purgatory in the Catechism** (CCC 1030-1032)
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Hell

1. **Definition of Hell** (CCC 1033-1037)
 - a. We cannot be united with God unless we freely love him
 - b. We cannot love him if we sin gravely against him or others (1 John 3:14-15)
 - c. Dying in Mortal Sin without repenting and accepting God's love
 - d. Hell: the state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God
 - e. The Real Issue: Denial of Free Will (CCC 1730, 1731-42)
 2. **The Reality of Hell** (CCC 1034-1036)
 - a. Jesus speaks frequently of Hell ("Gehenna": 11 times in Gospels)
 - b. The Church has infallibly taught the reality and eternity of Hell
 - c. Chief Punishment: "Eternal separation from God"
 - d. Hell is a Call to Responsibility and Conversion (CCC 1037)
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Resurrection of the Dead

1. **What is it?**
 - a. The culmination of the Creed (CCC 988)
 - b. Based on Christ's Resurrection (CCC 989)
 - c. Resurrection of the Body, not just the Soul! (CCC 990)
 - d. The essence of the Christian faith and hope (CCC 991)
2. **Qualities of Risen Body** (Catechism of the Council of Trent 11)
 - a. Immortality
 - b. Impassibility (cf. the bodies of those in Hell)
 - c. Brightness (cf. the transfiguration; not all equal)
 - d. Agility (not bound by space and time)
 - e. Subtility (subjection to the Spirit)

The New Creation

1. **The Hope for the New Creation**

- a. Many Christians do not know about the New Creation
- b. Many have a semi-Gnostic view of salvation
 - i. Gnosticism: saw creation as inherently evil; salvation is non-bodily
 - ii. Hope for Man's Soul
 - iii. No Hope for Man's Body (much less the universe)
- c. The True Christian Hope
 - i. Immortality of the Soul
 - ii. Resurrection of the Body
 - iii. "Restoration" of All Creation (Greek *apokatastasis*; cf. Acts 3:21)