

The Apostles' Creed: Week 16

...And the life everlasting.

In the Scriptures:

1. “Oh, that my words were recorded,
that they were written on a scroll,
that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead,
or engraved in rock forever!
I know that my redeemer lives,
and that in the end he will stand on the earth.
And after my skin has been destroyed,
yet in my flesh I will see God;
I myself will see him
with my own eyes—I, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!

(Job 19:23-27)

2. “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.”

(John 14:1-4)

3. Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

... I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone

who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

(Revelation 21:1-5, 21:22-27, 22:1-5)

As described by Christian writers:

4. The entire life of a good Christian is in fact an exercise of holy desire. You do not yet see what you long for, but the very act of desiring prepares you, so that when he comes you may see and be utterly satisfied.

Suppose you are going to fill some holder or container, and you know you will be given a large amount. Then you set about stretching your sack or wineskin or whatever it is. Why? Because you know the quantity you will have to put in it and your eyes tell you there is not enough room. By stretching it, therefore, you increase the capacity of the sack, and this is how God deals with us. Simply by making us wait he increases our desire, which in turn enlarges the capacity of our soul, making it able to receive what is to be given to us.

So, my brethren, let us continue to desire, for we shall be filled.

- Augustine, "Fourth Homily on 1 John"

5. If then human happiness does not consist in the knowledge of God whereby He is commonly known by all or most men according to some vague estimate, nor again in the knowledge of God whereby He is known demonstratively in speculative science, nor in the knowledge of God whereby He is known by faith, as has been shown above; if again it is impossible in this life to arrive at a higher knowledge of God so as to know Him in His essence, or to understand other pure spirits, and thereby attain to a nearer knowledge of God; and still final happiness must be placed in some knowledge of God; it follows that it is impossible for the final happiness of man to be in this life.

The ultimate goal of man bounds his natural desire, so that, when that is reached, nothing further is sought: for if there is still a tendency to something else, the goal of rest is not yet gained. But that cannot be in this life: for the more one understands, the more is the desire of understanding. natural to all men, increased.

When one gains happiness, he gains also stability and rest. All have this idea of happiness, that it involves stability as a necessary condition... But in this life there is no stability: for however happy a man be called, sicknesses and misfortunes may always happen to debar him from that activity, whatever it is, wherein happiness consists.

...The final happiness of man then will be in the knowledge of God, which the human soul has after this life according to the manner in which pure spirits know Him. Therefore the Lord promises us reward in heaven (Matt. v, 12), and says that the saints shall be as the angels (Matt. xxii, 30), who see the face of God in heaven (Matt. xviii, 10).

- Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Contra Gentiles: Book 3, Question 48"

6. It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendours. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously—no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption. And our charity must be a real and costly love, with deep feeling for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner—no mere tolerance or indulgence which parodies love as flippancy parodies merriment.

- C.S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory"

Why we believe in everlasting life:

- Again, we believe based on God's promises for the future. God has promised us everlasting life in Christ, and the evidence of his trustworthiness is all the things mentioned previously in the Creed!
- Since all good things are good because they reflect God as their creator, all of our desires ultimately point to God. Hence, union with God is our ultimate purpose, and knowing him is the greatest possible blessing for any created being. Since God is infinite and mysterious, we can never fully comprehend him, and so the saints in heaven never get bored or restless, throughout their eternal life of joy.