



# **Death & Resurrection:**

## **Bodies, Souls, & Christian Hope**

# What happens when we die?

## What have you heard?

Soul goes to  
Heaven or Hell

What is a soul?  
When does it  
Go? How?

We Sleep

Purgatory

We get our own  
planet/star/world...  
with our family.



Limbo

Reincarnation

NOTHING: We Rot

Resurrection of the body

Become one  
with the world

Many others...

## Why teach this Class:

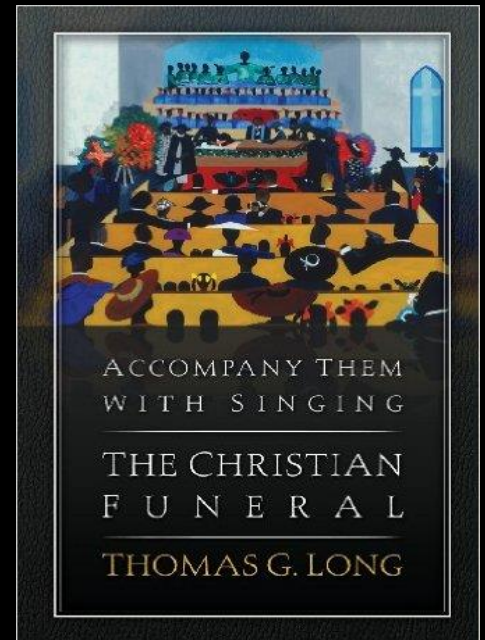
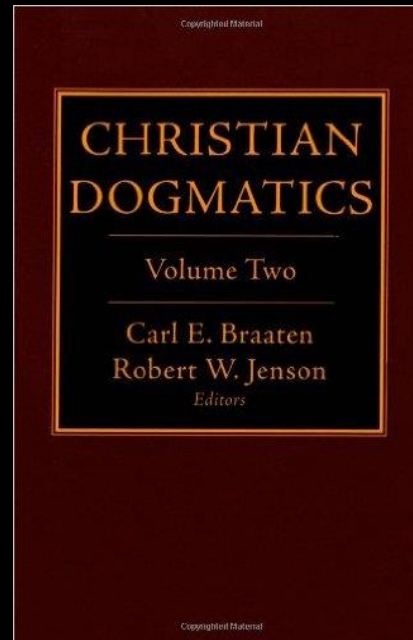
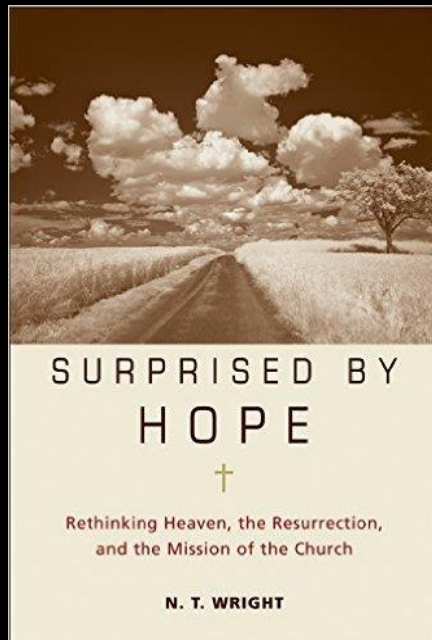
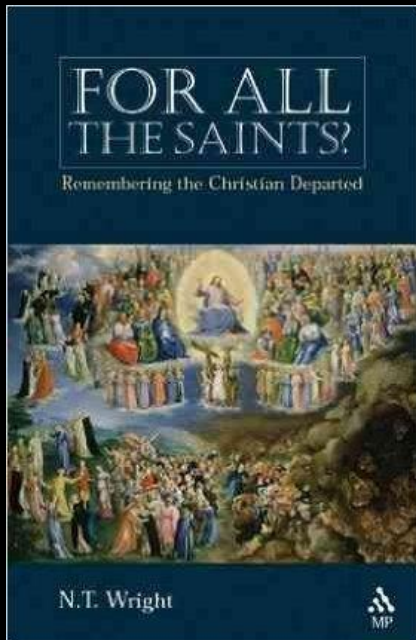
1. What Christians in America believe about Life after death is a confusing mess drawing from multiple belief systems.
2. What we believe about what happens in death affects how we live in this world.
3. Scripture provides some clarity in what we ought to believe as it provides a source of hope for both the present and the future.

# Schedule



- Today: Addressing the Confusion
- January 31: The Resurrection of Christ.
- February 7: Scriptural Understanding of Souls and Resurrection Hope.
- February 14: The Kingdom of God Now... and finally.
- February 21: The Christian Funeral

# Resources (in addition the Bible)



# Why the confusion?

## Complex answer

### 1. Pastoral Problem

- What is heard in the midst of grief?
  - Some find it easier to confirm false belief systems.
  - Not the time to correct. – part of the reason to teach now.

### 2. Challenge of a Multi-faith world

- What if I “like” a different belief system more?

### 3. Historical theological challenges

- Theological “errors”, heresies, and misunderstandings seem to revisit us.

### 4. Cultural Christianity has adopted from many sources

# A Multi-faith World: Isn't all religion the same?

“There is a world of difference between the Muslim who believes that a Palestinian boy killed by Israeli soldiers goes straight to heaven and the Hindu for whom the rigorous outworking of karma means that one must return in a different body to pursue the next stage of one's destiny. There is a world of difference between the Orthodox Jew who believes that all the righteous will be raised to new individual bodily life in the resurrection and the Buddhist who hopes after death to disappear like a drop in the ocean, losing one's own identity in the great nameless and formless Beyond.”  
(Surprised by Hope, 7)

# Historical Theological Challenges

- Platonic Body/Soul Dualism
  - Platonism taught that Human Beings are dualistic creatures which have:
    - 1. A Material Body, which is mortal
    - 2. A Soul, which is immortal and part of the true, transcendent, divine world.
  - The problem we face is that our immortal souls have descended from the divine realm and have become trapped in our mortal bodies.

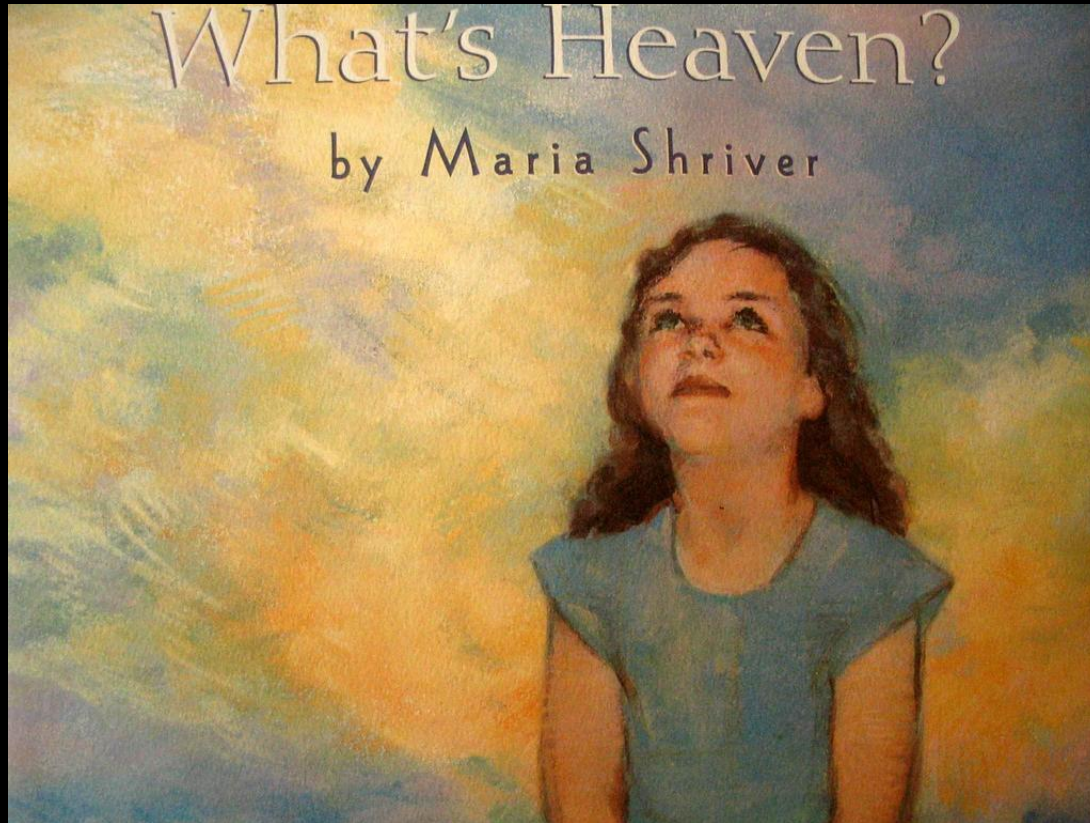
# Historical Theological Challenges

- Gnosticism
  - Creation is evil, a product of an evil “Old Testament” creator god.
  - The body and physical and sensual pleasures are evil, and that our ultimate goal is to be freed of our bodies and ascend as pure spirits to a divine realm through the “secret knowledge” (Greek gnosis) discovered only by those who achieved enlightenment enough to become Gnostic.

# Historical Theological Challenges

- Misunderstandings/Misuse of classic theology.
  - Heaven
  - Purgatory
    - Rejected by Eastern Orthodox and most Protestant churches
    - Minimized since Vatican II
  - Hell
    - Too many false assumptions

# Cultural Christianity...



What's **Heaven**? is the story of Kate, a little girl whose great-grandma has just died. She seeks answers, and her mother helps her learn about **Heaven**. The many questions in this book are real, coming from **Shriver's** own children, nieces, and nephews when her grandmother Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy passed away.

# Cultural Christianity...

Heaven is somewhere you can believe in... It's a beautiful place where you can sit on soft clouds and talk to other people who are there. At night you can sit next to the stars, which are the brightest of anywhere in the universe...

If you're good throughout your life, then you get to go to heaven... When your life is finished here on earth, God sends angels down to take you up to Heaven to be with Him...

And [Grandma is] alive in me...

Most important she taught me to believe in myself...

"I want you to know (says the girl to her great grandma) that even though you are no longer here, your spirit will always be alive in me. (What's Heaven, Shriver)

# Cultural Christianity...

The assumption is that everything is Christian... is that so?

A Popular Poem: (Mary Elizabeth Frye)

Do not stand at my grave and weep.

I am not there; I do not sleep.

I am a thousand winds that blow.

I am the diamond glints on snow.

I am the sunlight on ripened grain.

I am the gentle autumn rain.

When you awaken in the morning's hush

I am the swift uplifting rush

Of quiet birds in circled flight.

I am the soft stars that shine at night.

Do not stand at my grave and cry;

I am not there; I did not die.

What do we confess?

- Third Article of the Apostles Creed

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

The holy catholic church,

The communion of saints,

The forgiveness of sins,

The resurrection of the body,

And the life everlasting. Amen

What does this mean to you?

What do we confess?

- Nicene Creed

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of  
the world to come. Amen

**We do not say:** *“We look forward to going to heaven.”*

# Our Ultimate Destiny

In the New Testament, “going to heaven” when we die is *not our ultimate destiny*.

Our destiny is to be “bodily raised into the transformed, glorious likeness of Jesus Christ” (For all the Saints, 21) and live in a new or transformed Creation, the “New Jerusalem,” where God will reign.

“Going to heaven” is just the *first of two* stages – and the far less important stage – that we go through after death.

# Our Ultimate Destiny

The final stage and the ultimate destiny, **bodily resurrection**, is still *in the future for everyone*, living and dead:

**...for as we all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order; Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:22-23, NRSV**

# Our Ultimate Destiny

*All mainline Christian churches* affirm (as we confess in the Creed):

The final stage and the ultimate destiny, **bodily resurrection, and the life of the world to come** is still *in the future for everyone, living and dead.*

All those who have died are therefore still in an “intermediate state.”

# Our Ultimate Destiny

Wright argues that there are *no category* distinctions between God's people in this "intermediate state."

There is no place or stage of "Purgatory" needed to purge us of the guilt of sin or the tendency to sin.

All of God's people who have died are in the same condition; and all are "saints."

This intermediate state is what we commonly called "heaven."

# Questions



# For Next Week

- The Resurrection of Christ
  - How Christ's death and Resurrection impacts us
  - Implications of Incarnation
  - Promise of Baptism