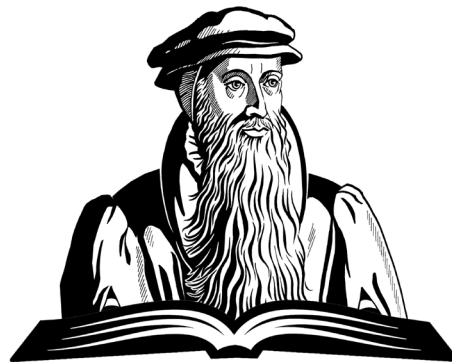

**VIDEO LECTURE MODULE:
THE APOSTLES' CREED**

LECTURE 13
ARTICLE 12: THE LIFE EVERLASTING

Lecturer Presenter: Rev. Cornelis Harinck



The John Knox Institute
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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Module

THE APOSTLES' CREED

13 LECTURES

Lecturer Presenter: Rev. Cornelis Harinck

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THE APOSTLES' CREED

Rev. Cornelis Harinck
Transcript—Lecture 13

Article 12: The Life Everlasting

The concluding Article of the Apostles' Creed reads, "and the life everlasting." The Christian believes in the life that will never end.

Based on God's promises, the Christian believes that eternal life begins after death. For the Christian, life does not end with death. The Christian walks upon a pathway that ends in eternal life. David says, in Psalm 16, verse 11, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." This verse has been called a heavenly verse. It expresses a foretaste of heaven. It speaks of eternal joy and blessedness. And where are they to be found? David says, "in thy presence." Communion with God is man's greatest joy.

God created us for this joy. God is the purpose of our existence. Augustine exclaimed, "O God! Thou hast made us for thyself, and our heart remains restless until it finds rest in thee." We lost that purpose and satisfaction, when we sinned against God. Sin has disrupted our fellowship with God. It has come between God and our hearts. We have lost our true happiness. We fail to achieve the purpose of our existence. The apostle writes, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"—Romans 3, verse 23. Jesus, by his death, has restored life for all who believe in him. He could promise, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears my word, and believes on him that sent me, has everlasting life"—John 5, verse 24.

God's children have a blessed hope. They have the hope of eternal life. The apostle says of this hope, "which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began"—Titus 1, verse 2. The hope of eternal life is the foundation of faith. A Christian faith void of the expectation of eternal life is like a ladder that leads to nowhere. Churches who only speak of being a good man and trying to better the world, and do not teach anything about the future and eternal life have become theologically bankrupt.

Is there life after death, or is this life all there is? These are the questions of all ages and all nations. There are also just as many answers to that question. All these questions and answers prove that man cannot break free from the idea that death is not the end. There must be something after death. The notion that the spirit of man lives on after death is widely believed. Every culture fosters the notion that there is life after death. The denial of life after death is absent in ancient civilizations. Only modern and secular man denies this fact.

Modern man believes that our existence ends with death. When a person dies, he disappears like a ship disappearing in the fog. Man, thinking that he has risen far above his primitive ancestry, exclaims, "There is no God, no soul, no hereafter, no heaven, and no hell. We only believe what we can see and touch." All that matters to secular man is the here and the now. Man's slogan therefore is, "Since we live only once, you should enjoy it as much as possible." However, it is more the language of the lip than the language of the heart. Even devout atheists cannot erase the innate awareness that death is not the end.

The Bible clearly teaches that there is life after death. The godly of the Old Testament knew about life after death. The fellowship with God that they enjoyed would not end with death and the grave. Asaph says, in Psalm 73 (verse 24), "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

The expectation of the believer of eternal life is related to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Jesus' resurrection from the dead is the warranty of their resurrection and eternal life. Jesus promised, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in me, though he were dead,

yet shall he live: and whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die”—John 11, verses 25 and 26. When the apostle comforts believers regarding their loved ones who have died, he tells them not to mourn like unbelievers who have no hope. Those who are united to Christ by faith are now with the Lord, as to their souls, and will one day, like Christ, rise again with their bodies. “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him”—1 Thessalonians 4, verse 14. Even death cannot break the believer’s union with Christ. The apostle speaks emphatically about life on earth, and life after death, “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you”—Philippians 1, verses 23 and 24.

The Scriptures clearly teach that there is life after death. When believers die, they will enter eternal life, but unbelievers will enter eternal death. The parable of Lazarus and the rich man shows us where Lazarus resided after death, and where the rich man resided after death. Lazarus died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom. The rich man died and then opened his eyes in hell, “being in torments”—Luke 16, verse 19. Jesus taught that after death, there are only two places where the souls of men will go. They will enter either into eternal life, or into eternal death. He said, “It is better for you to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire”—Matthew 18, verse 8.

There is a link between eternal life and heaven. Jesus promised the rich young man a treasure in heaven if he would sell everything and follow him. He said to him, “Thou shalt have treasure in heaven”—Matthew 19, verse 21. When we speak of eternal life, we think of heaven. Where is heaven? Heaven is a specific place in God’s creation. It is the place where God dwells. The Bible calls this place heaven: “But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased”—Psalm 115, verse 3. Although God is omnipresent, heaven is his special abode. His throne is there, and there he is surrounded by thousands of angels. God says of himself, “The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool”—Isaiah 66, verse 1. Jesus taught us to pray, “Our Father which art in heaven” (Matthew 6:9). After completing his work on earth, Jesus ascended into heaven, “who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God”—1 Peter 3, verse 22. When we hear the word “heaven,” we instinctively look upward. The Hebrew word “heaven” denotes that which is high and lofty. Elijah ascended into heaven—2 Kings 2, verse 11. Jesus was taken up into heaven—Luke 24, verse 51. The disciples watched Jesus until a cloud took him out of their sight: “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight”—Acts 1, verse 9. Paul was drawn up into the third heaven—2 Corinthians 12, verse 2. The word “heaven” is always associated with a place high in God’s universe.

Heaven is a real place in God’s creation. Some modern theologians want to see heaven only as a spiritual disposition—almost like the pagan idea of a spiritual abode. Although the Scriptures speak of heaven as a place where one delights in God, heaven is not merely a certain state of mind. It is a real and physical location. When Jesus ascended into heaven, he went from one place to another. He left the earth and was taken up into heaven. Of Jesus’ ascension is said: “And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven”—Luke 24, verse 51. When Stephen was stoned, he saw Jesus in heaven. He testified, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God”—Acts 7, verse 56. Stephen was not speaking of a state of mind, but rather, his eyes were opened to a dimension, a reality, which is still hidden from us now—a real dimension that exists in time and place. Heaven is a place to which Jesus went with his body. He promised his disciples that he would go to heaven to prepare a place for them. They would one day be reunited with him in heaven. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also”—John 14, verse 3. All these scriptures teach us that heaven is a real place—the place where God lives.

The Bible says different things about heaven. It is a place of eternal joy, of knowing and enjoying God, of praise and adoration, and of always being with the Lord. Above all, it is the place where God’s glory shines brightest. The greatest display of God’s glory is in heaven. It is the place where God makes known his glory, and where angels and redeemed saints worship him. Asaph expected to be taken up into God’s glory: “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory”—Psalm 73, verse 24. Regarding Jesus, the apostle not only says that he will

bring his people into heaven, but also that he will bring “many sons unto glory”—Hebrews 2, verse 10.

Heaven is the place of God’s glory. God’s glory is the brilliance and magnificence of his perfections. God permitted his glory to pass before Moses. What did Moses then see and hear? He heard who God is. He heard how God himself proclaimed his name: “The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty”—Exodus 34. In heaven, God displays his full glory. Heaven is, therefore, a place of great splendor. God’s glory is seen there. The glory of God is the happiness and bliss of the inhabitants of heaven. The pinnacle of heaven is: “And they shall see his face”—Revelation 22, verse 4. It makes heaven to be heaven. It makes heaven a place of joy and gladness. They will “come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy, and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away”—Isaiah 35, verse 10.

The Christian confesses, “I believe in the life everlasting.” Where will that eternal life be? The Bible speaks of a new heaven and a new earth. After the final judgment, believers will enter into the perfect joy of living in the presence of God. They will be in God’s presence forever. “He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God”—Revelation 21, verse 3. They will enter a kingdom of which the Bible says, “And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever”—Revelation 22, verse 3 to 5.

There will be a new heaven and a new earth—a fully renewed creation. Believers will live in it. The Old Testament already makes mention of this event. The Lord says, in Isaiah 65, verse 17, “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth.” Peter points to this Old Testament promise and writes, “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness”—2 Peter 3, verse 13. In the vision that John received of the events following the Last Judgment, he tells, at last, what he saw, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea”—Revelation 21, verse 1. The visible creation will be renewed and purified from sin. There will be “a new heaven and a new earth.”

This question is frequently asked, “Will the earth be destroyed and replaced by an entirely new earth, or will the existing earth be renewed and cleansed of all the consequences of the fall?” Some passages in the Bible seem to imply the destruction of the present heaven and earth. Peter writes, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up”—2 Peter 3, verse 10. In Revelation 21, verse 1, we read, “The first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” These scriptures seem to point toward an ancient heaven and earth that will be destroyed and cease to exist.

A more in-depth study will reveal that the visible heavens we know as the clouds and the starry sky, together with the earth on which we dwell, will be cleansed of all traces of sin. The old earth, which brings forth thorns and thistles, where so much blood has been shed, and where so much iniquity has been committed, will be renewed. God’s message is not, “I will destroy the earth and the visible heavens,” but rather, “Behold, I make all things new!”—Revelation 21, verse 5. He will cleanse it by fire. It will be a new earth upon which the heaven of God’s glory will descend. “And I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God—Revelation 21, verses 2 and 3.

The New Jerusalem descends from heaven to the earth. It comes from heaven and is given a place on the new earth. Heaven returns to earth, so the earth will become new. The separation caused by sin will be canceled. The New Jerusalem, the new kingdom, will descend to earth in great glory. Scripture says, “like a bride adorned for her bridegroom.” The congregation of true believers will inherit the earth as the bride of Jesus. The old promise to the faithful was: “his seed

shall inherit the earth”—Psalm 25, verse 13. Jesus spoke of the regeneration of the earth, “In the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory”—Matthew 19, verse 28. God will pitch his tent—his tabernacle—among his people, and dwell among them. There believers will dwell in the presence of God, and will live eternally, serving and worshipping him.

The apostle teaches that creation eagerly awaits that day: “For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God”—Romans 8, verse 19. What will redeemed believers do in life eternal? The full enjoyment of God makes heaven to be heaven. God’s fellowship and nearness will be the supreme joy of God’s children. This was already the case when they lived on earth. God’s children will echo Asaph, saying, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee”—Psalm 73, verse 25. But now it will become forever their joy and happiness.

The enjoyment of God and the complete absence of sin will make heaven to be heaven. There, believers will be free from sin. They will also be free from sorrow. In heaven, there will be neither sorrow, sickness, death, mourning, pain, cross-bearing, suffering, nor mourning. “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away”—Revelation 21, verse 4. In heaven, believers will no longer have to fear any devil or enemy. Believers in heaven will be those who have overcome. “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony”—Revelation 12, verse 11. But what will believers do in heaven? Life in heaven will not consist of eternal idleness. In heaven, believers will serve God as they never were able to do on earth.

Heaven is, above all, the place of worship—the worship of God. Heaven will be filled with redeemed sinners who worship God and the Lamb. In Hebrews 8, verse 2, Jesus is called the High Priest and minister of the true tabernacle: “A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” The tabernacle in the wilderness was erected in conformity to God’s prescription, and yet it was constructed by men. The heavenly tabernacle is constructed by God, and is constructed with a purpose. It means that there will be worship in heaven, and on the new earth. John saw the temple of God in the midst of the New Jerusalem. God’s temple is the center of the new heaven and the new earth. There will be temple worship. There will be worship activities that will involve priests, worshippers and sacrifices.

God will be served and glorified. He will be glorified as the Creator of all things. Revelation 4 shows us how all of creation, as well as the believers of the Old and New Testaments, will fall down before God and honor him as Creator: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created”—Revelation 4, verse 11. God will be worshiped as Redeemer. The redeemed will sing the song of salvation: “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation”—Revelation 5, verse 9.

God will be glorified for how he has led his church and each individual believer. “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints”—Revelation 15, verse 3. God will be glorified in the judgments he will execute upon the wicked: “Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand”—Revelation 19, verses 1 and 2.

The redeemed will be kings and priests in heaven: “And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth”—Revelation 5, verse 10. They will rule as kings and serve as priests. It is too great and too much to comprehend. The apostle expresses this by saying, “It doth not yet appear what we shall be”—1 John 3, verse 2. Much about eternal life is still hidden and is now beyond our comprehension. However, the very best will be the following: “But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is”—1 John 3, verse 2. We shall see Jesus as he is, and we will comprehend the love with which he has loved us.

Rutherford longed to see the head that for his sins was crowned with thorns, and the face that for his sins was spit upon. The Creed ends on a high note for those who hope in the Lord. It makes

us to climb a high mountain, to stand at the vista of eternity, and behold what God has in store for those who love him, and say, “I believe in the everlasting life.” It is so beautifully expressed in the Heidelberg Catechism, Answer #58: “That since I feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy, after this life I shall inherit perfect salvation, which ‘eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man’ to conceive, and that, to praise God therein forever.”

However, this present life will be determinative for eternity. Our eternal and future state depends on who we are now. Our eternal destiny will be determined during this short and often laborious life. The apostle, therefore, says that God will recompense every person according to his deeds; that is, whether he or she has either rejected or embraced the truth of the gospel and kept God’s commandments. God will, according to the words of the apostle, “render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath”—Romans 2, verses 6 to 8. It is a great delusion to think that one can live wickedly, reject the gospel and God’s offered grace, and still inherit a blissful life in the end.

The message, with which Jesus sent the apostles into the world, is twofold: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”—Mark 16, verse 16. The flip side of eternal life is eternal death. Much about life after death is still hidden from us. However, this much is clear—there are only two roads and two destinations. There is a way that ends in eternal life, and there is a way that ends in eternal death. The road on which you are now traveling will determine the outcome. No one knew this better than Jesus. Therefore, he said with urgency, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it”—Matthew 7, the verses 13 and 14.