

Christians Go to Heaven When They Die

By Dave DeWitt

Thesis

I shall here demonstrate that the historic view of Protestant Christianity, that believers go to heaven when they die, is correct and biblically accurate. I shall demonstrate that the position which holds that the soul dies with the body or is in a state of unconscious “sleep,” until it is resurrected into an earthly kingdom of God, is not the gospel taught by Christ and the apostles, and that this view is contrary to the teaching about the state of the believer after death revealed throughout the Bible. I shall demonstrate that the Bible teaches, when a believer dies, his or her soul is immediately in an intermediate bodily form, in heaven, awaiting a future permanent resurrected body.

As Dallas Seminary professor Larry Waters put it,

Believers have cognizant existence between death of the body and its resurrection. There is between death and resurrection an intermediate state in which believers and unbelievers experience, respectively, the presence and absence of God. [“The Believer’s Intermediate State After Death,” a paper by Larry J. Waters, Associate Professor of Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas]

The New-Kingdom View Is Dangerous

I shall call the idea that we do not go to heaven when we die, the “New-Kingdom View.” The old-kingdom view, of Reformed Covenant Amillennialism, saw believers as building the kingdom of God today by reading the New Testament back into the Old Testament, for example, concluding that the church replaces Israel and the promises to Israel are fulfilled in the church. But they understood that believers were going to heaven when they died. It is an earth-to-heaven view of God’s kingdom.

The New-Kingdom View Reads the Old Testament into the New Testament

It claims we need to understand the church in light of the Old Testament Jews looking for a Messiah to come and establish a kingdom here on earth. It says believers in Jesus should build His kingdom here on earth, and when they die, their soul also dies or sleeps until they are resurrected at the Second Coming of Christ, to be in His earthly kingdom. So, it is an earth-to-earth view of the spiritual life. For example, one New-Kingdom believer said that Paul “only speaks of the resurrection and NEVER about dying and going to heaven... My goal is to rule and reign as a servant leader with Christ in the coming kingdom.” [Capital letter emphasis is his. The name of the source is intentionally omitted.]

The New-Kingdom View Impacts Our Definition of the Spiritual Life

As N. T. Wright put it,

If the only point is to save souls from the wreck of the world, so they can leave and go to heaven, why bother to make this world a better place? But if God is going to do for the whole creation what he did for Jesus in his resurrection—to bring them back, here on the earth—then those who have been rescued by the gospel are called to play a part, right now, in the advance renewal of the world. [N. T. Wright is an Anglican bishop and a Senior Research Fellow at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. His new book of devotional readings, “On Earth as in Heaven,” is to be published in March 2022 by HarperOne.]

The New-Kingdom View Impacts the Definition of the Gospel

*Colossians 1:3-5, We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the **hope laid up for you in heaven**, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, **the gospel**...*

Paul included in his definition of *the gospel*, a belief in *the hope laid up for you in heaven*. The gospel of the apostles teaches a heavenly hope, not a dead or sleeping soul resurrected to an earthly hope at the Second Coming.

The New-Kingdom View Abandons a Literal Hermeneutic

The view is supported by abandoning the author's intended meaning, the only actual way to understand anybody. If you read the Old Testament into the New Testament (or, for that matter, the New Testament back into the Old Testament), then you are not using the author's intended meaning to interpret the text. The New-Kingdom View usually does this by deceptively claiming to use the context. Context is always significant, hence the deception, but they use context in two deceptive ways. One is they broaden the "context" until they find a passage that sounds like what they want to say. Then they say that is what the author really meant. For example, in 2 Corinthians 5:1, Paul wrote, *For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, **eternal in the heavens***. The United Church of God tries to explain away Paul's statement about heaven by claiming they look at the "overall context."

If we examine the overall context, the passage that starts chapter 5 refers back to the concepts that are outlined in chapter 4. Taking a quick look at the underlying concepts in the latter half of 2 Corinthians 4, we can see that Paul is discussing the idea of the temporal nature of this life. [Posted on Nov 2, 2017, by United Church of God (UCG.org)]

A second common way to misuse the context, is to inject some supposed historical, cultural context that governs the meaning of a biblical text that does not fit their view, in this case, any going-to-heaven text. For example, N. T. Wright says that early Christians believed in eternal life on earth, but the influence of Greek philosophy penetrated Christianity with the idea of going to heaven, which was introduced in "the third century."

To understand what the first followers of Jesus believed about what happens after death, we need to read the New Testament in its own world—the world of Jewish hope, of Roman imperialism and of Greek thought....The point was not for us to "go to heaven," but for the life of heaven to arrive on earth... From as early as the third century, some Christian teachers tried to blend this with types of the Platonic belief, generating the idea of "leaving earth and going to heaven," which became mainstream by the Middle Ages. [N. T. Wright, referenced above]

N. T. Wright makes a classic interpretation error. The meaning of a text is not determined by the audience but by the author. Whatever the Jews of the day were looking for, Jesus and the apostles taught a going-to-heaven perspective. The soul-death view requires a cultural hermeneutic that says we cannot get the meaning by just reading the biblical text. The view believes we need to know more about the historic culture at the time than we can get from the Bible. It means uninspired cultural information must govern the meaning of the inspired Word of God. This is very dangerous because it takes the Bible out of the hands of people. It says believers cannot understand their Bible because they do not know the ancient cultures.

But the church was not Jewish, Roman, or Greek. It was new revelation from God, about which the Jewish prophets and patriarchs did not know (Ephesians 3:3-9). The apostles said, we are *aliens and strangers* here on earth (1 Peter 1:1; 2:11), looking for a heavenly home (2 Corinthians 5:1). Peter said, *...the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up* (2 Peter 3:10).

Protestant Christian Leadership Understands that Christians Go to Heaven

The belief that Christians go to heaven when they die has been supported by all the main (Covenant, Dispensational, Calvinist, and Armenian) branches of Protestantism.

- "The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption: but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God...received into the highest heavens." [The Westminster Confession XXXII, 1646]
- "Of the State of Man after Death and of the Resurrection of the Dead...The Bodies of Men after Death return to dust (Gen 3:19; Acts 13:36) and see corruption; but their Souls (which neither die nor sleep) having an immortal subsistence, immediately (Ecc 12:7) return to God who gave them." [1677/1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, chapter XXXI]

- “I want to know one thing, the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach the way; for this end He came from heaven.” [John Wesley (1703-1791) quote from “John Wesley”, p. 89, Oxford University Press]
- “For the believer the state after death is one of conscious bliss while awaiting the resurrection.... It could not be otherwise, for the believer at death is ushered into the presence of God immediately.” [Charles C. Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1959), 348]

Scripture

Genesis 35:18, *It came about as her soul was departing (for she died)...*

Here we have a description of Rachel when she died while giving birth to Benjamin. This is the most concise definition of death in the Bible. Death is the departure of the soul. Notice, her soul did not die, or sleep, when her body died, rather it left her body when it died. (See also Psalm 104:29.)

1 Samuel 28:3, 14-15, 19, *Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him and buried him in Ramah, his own city... [Then Saul sought a woman who was a medium to go conjure up Samuel from the dead.] And she said, “An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped with a robe.” And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did homage. Then Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?... Moreover, the LORD will also give over Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines, therefore tomorrow you and your sons will be with me.”*

First, we need to recognize that this was indeed Samuel who came up from the dead because the author of the biblical text tells us it was Samuel. To doubt it, would be to doubt the inspiration of the biblical text. Also, notice Samuel was physically dead, and his body was buried in Ramah. Nonetheless, he was in some good place (verse 15) in a body that had real form, and he was the same person he was on earth before his death. Samuel also told Saul that he and his sons would die tomorrow, and they would come to the place and *be with me*. So, they would also be the same people as before they died, just in a different place, with some sort of body. Their souls, like Samuel’s, would not die with their body, or be in some unconscious sleep.

2 Kings 2:1, 11, *And it came about when the LORD was about to take up Elijah by a whirlwind to **heaven**, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to **heaven**.*

We do not know what happened to Elijah’s physical body, but we do know he went to some place called *heaven* (the same sort of thing was true of Enoch—Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5).

Psalm 23:6, *Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell **in the house of the LORD forever**.*

David saw his final destiny, after his body died, as living *in the house of the LORD*. Whatever David’s concept of that was, it included seeing himself as the same person he was on earth, living in the realm where God was, *forever*. One might call that going to heaven. David certainly did not see his soul as dying with his body, or sleeping until it was resurrected to an earthly kingdom.

2 Samuel 12:23, *But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? **I will go to him**, but he will not return to me.*

This is a comment that David made about his infant son who died. Putting this together with Psalm 23:6 (quoted above), the most reasonable way to understand David’s comment is that he assumed the dead baby was in some sort of body, existing in some place, where David would also go when he died. David identified this place as the *house of the Lord* in Psalm 23:6. So it is legitimate to say David believed his dead child was in heaven and David, when he died, would also go to heaven.

Psalm 90:10, *As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years, yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; for soon it is gone and we fly away.*

Earlier in the Psalm, Moses said death is returning back to dust (verse 3) and falling asleep (verse 5), but he also describes death as *we fly away*. We can therefore conclude that Moses saw death as the physical deterioration of the body but with another part of the human being leaving the body. Some part of us turns to dust and some part of us leaves. It sounds very much like what he said about Rachel, *her soul was departing (for she died)*.

Luke 16:19-23, *Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.*

Let's make some observations:

1. This is probably not a parable, since Abraham and Lazarus are named, and the characters in other parables do not have names. The names tie the story to reality. But even if this is a parable, the point is just the same.
2. No matter what else it dealt with (like money, greed, selfishness, or poverty), the whole emphasis, the majority of the description, is on what happens after death.
3. Both men died, that is, their bodies were dead and buried, yet the essential nature of both men, what we refer to as their soul, left their bodies and did not die or sleep.
4. Both men were immediately alive after death in a bodily form, and they were the same people they were on earth, including Abraham, who had died 2,000 years earlier.
5. Lazarus was in a place of comfort called *Abraham's bosom*.

Like all Old Testament people, Lazarus and the rich man were in a place, usually referred to as *Sheol*. The word *Sheol* can mean either trouble (Jonah 2:2), death (1 Kings 2:9), or the place of the dead. But frequently it refers to the place after death for both believers and unbelievers (Job 7:9; Psalm 16:10; 49:15; 139:8; Isaiah 14:9). Old Testament saints, believers who have died (like Lazarus in Luke 16) were not yet qualified to be in the presence of God, until after Jesus paid for their sins on the cross (Hebrews 9:12). Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom, a paradise, the pleasant part of Sheol, seemingly the same as Rachel, Samuel, David, Moses, and the other Old Testament saints. It seems that the Old Testament believers were led from Sheol to heaven, by Jesus after He died on the cross and paid for their sins (2 Corinthians 5:21; Acts 2:27; Ephesians 4:8-10). But what is abundantly clear is that, even though their fleshly bodies were dead and buried, both the rich man and Lazarus were alive and well in a bodily form, and the same people they were on earth, with their senses of sight, hearing, touch, movement, and a sense of morality. Their souls were certainly not dead, or asleep.

John 11:23-26, *Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die."*

Jesus was friends with two sisters and a brother—Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Four days after Lazarus died, Jesus came to the grave and told Martha that Lazarus would rise again. Martha said, *"I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."* But Jesus corrected her, saying, *"everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die."* Therefore, there is some part of believers, the real us, usually called our soul or spirit, which *will never die*.

Matthew 5:10-12, *Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great...*

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus focused on rewards in heaven rather than on earth. Actually, His whole ministry focused on heaven rather than earth. The rewarded believers Jesus is talking about are

rewarded in heaven, not at His Second Coming to the earth, or in the Millennial Kingdom on the earth. One of the main differences between Jesus and the Jewish leadership (and one reason why they hated Him so much) is that Jesus turned the whole focus away from earth and toward heaven.

Matthew 16:28–17:3, *“Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.” Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.*

Jesus took three of His disciples up a mountain where He appeared in a realm not found on earth. In this realm, He was speaking with Moses and Elijah. At that time, Moses had been dead for about 1500 years, Elijah had been dead for about 800 years, and they both were alive, in the same place, in some sort of body. They were also the same people as they were when they were in fleshly bodies on earth. Just before this Transfiguration, Jesus said some of His disciples would not die (their physical bodies would not die) before they saw *the Son of Man coming in His kingdom*. In the context, that would seem to be this transfiguration event. If so, then some aspect of Christ’s kingdom is not on earth but in the heavenly realm where Moses and Elijah lived. At any rate, the souls of Moses and Elijah were not dead or asleep.

Matthew 19:21, *Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have **treasure in heaven**; and come, follow Me.”*

Notice, Jesus promised the wealthy man if he gave up his earthly treasure and followed Him, he would have *treasure in heaven*, not treasure on earth after his soul was awakened at the Second Coming.

Matthew 22:31-32, *But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?” He is not the God of the dead but of the living.*

Here Jesus is talking to the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They gave Jesus a theoretical example of a woman who married seven brothers successively. Then they asked, *“In the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be?”* (verse 28). By *resurrection*, here, the Sadducees did not mean in a resurrected body, but simply in life after death, in which they did not believe. Jesus responded with the significance of the to-be verb, *“I am.”* If God *is not the God of the dead but of the living*, then Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had to be still living. Their souls had not died, or gone to sleep, waiting for a future resurrection, but were alive and well.

Luke 23:42-43, [The thief on the cross next to Jesus said] *“Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!” And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”*

Jesus replaced, or defined, the thief’s idea of Jesus’ kingdom with an afterlife *paradise*. *Paradise* is referred to two other times in the New Testament, describing the presence of God (2 Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 2:7). The meaning of Jesus’ use of the word *today* has been debated, but what is clear is that He is telling the thief he would be with Jesus in a place Jesus called *Paradise*. Jesus was going to sit on the right hand of God *in heavenly places* (Ephesians 1:20). Jesus was not going to experience the death of His soul, or soul sleep, until the Second Coming. He was going to a heavenly place where God is personally present. So was the thief. Apparently, that was not just true of the thief on the cross but of all those who serve Christ. Jesus said, *“He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to **life eternal**. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and **where I am**, there My servant will be also”* (John 12:25-26).

John 14:6, Because of His impending death, Jesus gave comfort to His disciples. He said, *“I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”*

This is not a description of the Second Coming, where Jesus comes in power and great glory to establish His kingdom on the earth. This is a comfort and hope for the physically dead believer that we will be where Jesus is. For example, at the moment of death, Stephen said, *“I saw the heavens opened up and*

the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” ... he called on the Lord and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” (Acts 7:56, 59). Stephen was certainly not expecting his soul to die or sleep until awakened at the Second Coming.

2 Corinthians 5:8-9, *We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.*

There are two things to observe here:

First, Paul sees two bodily conditions for the believer. One is in this earthly physical body, the other is to be *absent from the body*. But to be absent from this body is *to be at home with the Lord*. There are only two possibilities for believers, in this body or absent from this body. But absent from this body is not a state of soul sleep or soul death, but one of being *with the Lord*.

Second, Paul argues that whether in a physical body or *at home with the Lord*, we must *have as our ambition* to please the Lord. Soul sleep and soul death suggests an unconscious person. Only a person alive and conscious (what Larry Waters [referenced above] called “cognizant existence”) can make choices so as to have *ambition*.

Philippians 1:21-24, *For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.*

In what sense is dying a *gain* if Paul’s soul is dead? In what sense is it *very much better* for Paul to die if it just means his soul dies with his body? In what sense does Paul *desire to depart and be with Christ*, if his soul does not depart but dies, and he is not *with Christ*?

Philippians 3:20-21, *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.*

Our current citizenship as believers is not in the place where we are living. Here on this earth, we are *aliens and strangers* (1 Peter 1:1; 2:11). Whatever role we play in the future earthly (millennial) kingdom of God, our citizenship as believers of this church age is never connected to the earth, now or in the millennium. The apostles clearly understood that when we die, we go to the place where we are already citizens, a place Paul calls *heaven*. The event that will *transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory* is connected to our heavenly citizenship. And our body is transformed from our earthly one to a heavenly one, not to a dead or sleeping soul unconscious until the Second Coming of Christ. Paul did not say “oh, btw, our spirit is going to heaven when we die” because he did not have to. It is all over the New Testament. Someone has to work really hard to not see it.

Hebrews 11:16, *But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.*

In the midst of a list of faithful saints, the author of Hebrews said their desire was for a *heavenly* country, not an earthly one after being a dead or sleeping soul. Then he added that God has prepared such a heavenly city for them.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, when speaking of those believers who have died, Paul said he does not want us to be *uninformed*, *grieve as do the rest* (unbelievers), or *have no hope*. Then he said Jesus will come in the clouds, and *He will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus*. [Sleep is a metaphoric euphemism Paul repeatedly uses for death.] Then we who are alive, will *be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air*. Paul is saying to *comfort one another with these words*, and be informed about those believers who have died, so we do not grieve or have no hope. Question: Who is Jesus bringing back with Him to meet those still alive?

Answer: *Those who have fallen asleep*, believers who have previously died. Jesus is bringing actual people with Him who are not dead or sleeping souls awaiting to be resurrected to an earthly kingdom.

2 Timothy 4:18, *The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom...*

The most likely way to understand this statement is that Paul expects to go to heaven immediately when he dies. At any rate, it does not sound like Paul is expecting his soul to be dead or sleeping for 2,000 years. The kingdom that the believer of this church/grace age is looking for is a *heavenly kingdom*. Church-age believers are never told to long for a physical earthly kingdom.

1 John 5:11-13, *And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.*

John is speaking about the eternal life of a believer, and he said God has given it to us now. John's gospel includes the idea that eternal life is something *God has given us*. *Has given* is an aorist tense, which states an accomplished event. This is not a future tense, not something God will give us after our dead or sleeping soul is resurrected.

Revelation 6:9-10; 7:14, *When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" ... And he [one of the elders] said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"* (see also Revelation 20:4).

This establishes the same afterlife scenario described by Jesus in Luke 16. The place is heaven, rather than Abraham's bosom, because Jesus has now paid for their sins. But here we are told what happens to believers when they die. The bodies of these believers were dead, *slain because of the word of God*, but their *souls* were immediately in heaven with God. They were the same people they were on earth, aware of what was happening on earth when they were killed. Now in heaven their souls are alive and well, not dead or asleep, waiting for the Second Coming to be awakened. Their souls are in some bodily form that represented who they were on earth without the wounds that killed them.

Revelation 4:4; 5:11, *Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads...*

The word for *elders* occurs 12 times in the book of Revelation. There are 24 of them, and they are in the presence of God, around His throne. There are four magnificent living creatures, myriads of angels, and 24 elders. Elders in the Bible are always humans. Although we do not know who these elders are personally, we can only conclude they are humans who were once living on earth. They are around the throne of God, alive and awake, in a bodily form, in heaven. All 12 references to the elders are before the Second Coming of Christ. They are not dead or sleeping souls waiting for the Second Coming. In Revelation 19:4, they are part of the Halleluiah celebration preceding the Second Coming.

Revelation 19:7-8, *"Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

Here we have a scene in heaven which takes place just before the Second Coming of Christ. One of the groups of people is called the *bride*, and the bride is described as *the saints* who have been rewarded, indicated by the *fine linen, bright and clean*. These are human believers who have died. They are not dead or sleeping souls awaiting a resurrection at the Second Coming. They are rewarded believers who have died and are alive and awake and rewarded and in heaven awaiting the Second Coming.

Conclusion

With a multitude of examples, the Bible clearly teaches that when believers die, their souls do not die or go into an unconscious state until the Second Coming of Christ. Quite the contrary, the Bible teaches that when believers die, they are immediately where Jesus is, in a bodily form, the same people they were on earth (in a physically whole intermediate body without a sin nature), in the presence of God, in His realm known as the heavenlies. The Bible clearly, repeatedly, and consistently teaches the historic view of Protestant Christianity that

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