

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTION # 65.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #65. *What special benefits do the members of the invisible church enjoy by Christ?*

A. The members of the invisible church by Christ enjoy union and communion with him in grace and glory.¹

Question 1—*What is the first benefit members of the invisible church enjoy?*

Answer—The first benefit which members of the invisible church enjoy is they are made to enjoy union with and in Christ, Rom. 16:7, 11.

There is a real union between Christ and believers, whereby they are made new creatures, 2 Cor. 5:17. The salvation, or redemption applied, is to be had in this union, Isa. 45:17. Through this union, believers no longer find themselves under condemnation, Rom. 8:1; because it is in and by this union that the righteousness of Christ is overlaid to our great comfort and joy, Phil. 3:9.

That there is a real, true and proper union between Christ and believers, is evident if you consider the various representations of Scripture by lively metaphors and sundry resemblances: 1.) It is compared to the union of a vine and its branches, John 15:4, 5. 2.) It is compared to the union of our meat and drink with our bodies, John 6:56, 57. 3.) It is frequently compared to the union of the body to the head, Eph. 4:15, 16. 4.) It is sometimes compared to the conjugal union, Eph. 5:23, 30; Rom. 7:4. 5.) It is likewise compared to the union of a building, whereof Christ is considered as the foundation or chief cornerstone, 1 Pet. 2:4-6. 6.) This union is sometimes represented in Scripture, by an identity or sameness of spirit, 1 Cor. 6:17. 7.) It is sometimes represented by an identity of body, 1 Cor. 12:12, 27. 8.) It is also represented by an identity of interest, Matt. 25:40; John 20:17; 14:3.

This is a union of persons whereby Christ's person is ours, and our persons are his, Song 6:3. For, as it is in marriage, if the person of the husband be not the wife's, his goods are not her goods, nor his titles of honor and hers; for these come all to her, because his person is hers, Ex. 21:10; Lev. 22:11: he having passed over the right of his own body and of his person to his wife, as she hath passed over all the right of herself to her husband, 1 Cor. 7:4. It is this union which stands before all comfort and communion of graces, John 17:21, 24.

Question 2—*What is the second benefit members of the invisible church enjoy?*

Answer—The second benefit which members of the invisible church enjoy is they are made to have communion with Christ, Eph. 2:5, 6. All grace imparted to us here, is the result of union with him, 1 Cor. 1:30. Spiritual fruit is the result of this vital union and, contrarily, exercises in spiritual growth cannot occur without this union, John 15:5. Thus, from this union of persons comes a communion of all other things, Song 2:16.

Therefore, what he has done, what he has suffered, is mine and the benefit is mine by this communion, Isa. 53:4. His prerogatives and privileges to be the Son of God, and heir of heaven, and the like, is all mine, if I am a believer, Rom. 8:17. My person is his, my life

¹ John 17:21; Eph. 2:5, 6; John 17:24.

is his, to glorify him, and to lay it down when he will, 1 Cor. 10:31; Phil. 1:21. My goods are his, my reputation his, Phil. 2:5-7. I am content to sacrifice all for him, Phil. 3:7-11.

This communion with the person of Christ is spoken of in terms which respect conjugal relations and affections, Song 7:10; in which two things appear:

First, There is a mutual resignation, or making over of their persons one to another, Eph. 5:25-32. Christ makes himself over to the soul, to be his, as to all love, care, and tenderness of a husband, and the soul gives up itself wholly to be the Lord's, Gal. 2:20. This is set out in the parable of the prophet, Hos. 3:3. Thus, Christ gives himself to the soul, with all his excellencies, righteousness, preciousness, graces, and eminencies, to be its Saviour, head and husband, forever to dwell in this holy relation, because he counts the souls of his saints fair, Song 1:15. Therefore he adds that pathetic wish of the enjoyment of this his spouse, Song 2:14. Indeed, he often presses hard to a closer union with him in this conjugal bond, Song 4:8. So, in carrying this union, Christ freely bestows himself upon the soul, Jer. 23:6; and bids his people, his spouse, to this most intimate union, Matt. 11:28.

Second, on the part of the saints, it is their free, willing consent to receive, embrace, and submit unto the Lord Jesus, as their husband, Lord and Saviour, so that: 1.) There is a liking of Christ, for his excellency, grace and suitableness, far above all other beloveds whatever, preferring him in the judgment and mind above them all, Song 5:9. His worth is perceived to be beyond comparison with the choicest created good or endearment imaginable, as the soul takes an appropriate view of all that is in this world, 1 John 2:16, 17. 2.) There is the accepting of Christ by the will, as its only husband, Lord and Saviour, John 1:12.

This communion between Christ and his elect people is followed by affections suiting such a relation; so, Christ loves his own, John 13:1; and the saints love Christ, Eph. 6:24. This love and joy flowing from Christ results in a delight suitable to the desirable good enjoyed, Isa. 63:5. Thus, the day of his espousals is a day of great delight, Song 3:11.

Furthermore, this communion leads to a revelation of his secrets in the hearts of his people, Ps. 25:14; for he declares his mind to them as one does with a close bosom friend, Jer. 31:31-34. He communicates his mind unto his saints, and unto them only; the counsel of his love, the thoughts of his heart, the purposes of his bosom, for our eternal good, John 15:14, 15. These things are revealed by his Spirit, 1 Cor. 2:10, 11, 16.

Question 3—*What is the duration of these benefits?*

Answer—These benefits of union and communion with Christ are said to last through grace and glory, John 17:21, 24. By which should be understood the time of grace, here upon earth, 2 Cor. 6:2; and that heavenly life to come, Rom. 8:18.

That communion which the saints have with Christ in glory, whereby they who are brought to a state of perfection participate of those graces and comforts which flow from their continued union with Christ, and the first fruits or foretastes of glory which they have in this world, are also founded on union to the Saviour, Col. 1:27. It is union with Christ that gives eternal life and that is bestowed by his hand; but, of those who are his people, none shall separate them from him, John 10:28. Their enjoying of eternal happiness with him is predicated upon them being found in him, Phil. 3:9.

There is a difference between our union and communion with Christ in this life: 1.) Union is permanent and unchangeable, 2 Tim. 1:12. In this life we are spiritually united to Christ whom we have not yet seen, 1 Pet. 1:8. This shall continue into heaven when we shall see him and adore him forever, Eph. 1:23. 2.) Communion fluctuates due to our carelessness in spiritual things, Ps. 51:12; John 21:15-17.