

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTION # 82.

(*Larger Catechism*)

Q #82. *What is the communion in glory which the members of the invisible church have with Christ?*

A. The communion in glory which the members of the invisible church have with Christ, is in this life,¹ immediately after death,² and at last perfected at the resurrection and day of judgment.³

Question 1—*What do we mean by communion in glory?*

Answer—When we speak of *communion*, we are speaking of what is often referred to as *fellowship* (κοινωνία) in Scripture, Phil. 1:5. It is a word which also connotes a *participation*, or *sharing*, in something, 2 Cor. 8:4. So, we can speak of a *communion* in grace which is that spiritual participation in God through the mediation of Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 1:8; and which, on earth, includes the *fellowship* of the sufferings of Christ, Phil. 3:10. This communion in grace, which is being contrasted with our present catechism question, is said to be in our justification, Rom. 8:30; together with our adoption, Eph. 1:5; and our sanctification along with whatsoever, in this life, manifests our union with him, 1 Cor. 1:30. This participation is the work of the Holy Ghost in believers, 2 Cor. 13:14.

The *communion in glory* is a participation, or fellowship, in that splendor of honor that is attributed to God, Lev. 10:3. It is an attribute denoting both the weightiness and light that adorns the supreme divinity, Ezek. 10:4. It is to characterize all that participates in the presence of the Deity, 1 Cor. 6:19; and, thus, it is perfectly displayed in the person of Jesus Christ, Heb. 1:3. Through Jesus, we see God's glory in the flesh, John 1:14. Additionally, the Father glorified Jesus in raising him from the dead, 1 Pet. 1:21. For man to have fellowship in glory means to participate, or have communion, in that divine presence by way of praise and worship, which is a showing forth of his due honor and worth, Rev. 14:7. This participation in glory, which is in and through the mediation of Christ, was ordained before the world, 1 Cor. 2:7.

Question 2—*Who are the members of the invisible church?*

Answer—The members of the invisible church consist of all the elect who are gathered together in Christ, as the head, Eph. 1:10, 22, 23. They are those chosen from eternity by the sovereign election of God, Eph. 1:4; and, though they are called invisible because they are not known by the physical senses, they are known and visible to God, 2 Tim. 2:19. They are those for whom alone Jesus prayed in his great prayer, John 17:9. At which time, he prayed not only to be glorified together with the Father, John 17:5; but, he also prayed for their fellowship, or communion, in that glory which he has with the Father, John 17:22. As such, they are joined to him as the spouse into one body with the end of bringing them into complete fellowship, or participation, in holiness and glory, Eph. 5:23, 27, 32.

¹ 2 Cor. 3:18.

² Luke 23:43.

³ 1 Thess. 4:17.

The communion in glory, which the members of the invisible church have with Christ, is that joint participation and experience of the divine presence, including the honor and praise that belongs to God alone, Rev. 21:10, 11.

Question 3—*What is the duration of this communion in glory with Christ?*

Answer—This communion is to be contemplated in its rise, or beginning, which is understood to be in this present life, 2 Cor. 3:18. Although this communion in glory belongs to the invisible church alone, it does not mean that the elect of God experience this communion until they have exercised faith in Christ, Rom. 8:1. Before men believe, they are not only in darkness, Ps. 82:5; they are even darkness itself, 2 Cor. 6:14. On the other hand, the glory of God is light, Rev. 21:23. Belief in Christ is the communicating of light, 2 Cor. 4:6. Salvation is turning from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, Acts 26:18. Thus, Christians must always be accounted as those who walk in light, 1 Thess. 5:4, 5. Being saved means being made a partaker, or one communicating, in that light, or glory, which is the possession of the saints, Col. 1:12, 13. Such is this communion in glory that none who are truly saints, members of the invisible church, can ever walk in darkness, John 8:12. When they sin, their sins are always carried out in light, and they are not like unto the sins of unbelievers, Deut. 32:5. Those who sin walking in darkness are not participants in this communion with God in Christ, 1 John 1:6.

This fellowship, or communion, in glory leads the saints of God into another communion, or fellowship, with one another, 1 John 1:3; it is a fellowship of light, or glory, *verse* 7. This fellowship manifests itself in the gathering of the visible church, Acts 2:42.

This communion in glory, which has immediate discoveries of glory which the elect enjoy in this life by faith, finds another degree at the time of the death of each believer, Luke 23:43. At this time, the believer, who has struggled throughout his life with the power of indwelling sin, is made free by the destruction of the body in which this principle of death remained, Rom. 7:24. This putting off of the flesh, which began when we first believed, Col. 2:11; is, through the process of sanctification, gradually made to give place to a new obedience in Christ, Rom. 6:6; and, finally, at death, is totally destroyed in the grave setting the soul free from its sinful bondage which interrupted its communion in glory, Eccl. 12:7. The grave has been sanctified by Jesus and, with the resurrection of Christ, death has become an entrance into communion in glory with the Savior, Rev. 14:13. Thus, the apostle speaks of the gain that is to be had in death, Phil. 1:21.

Ultimately, this communion in glory is made perfect at the resurrection and the day of judgment, 1 Thess. 4:17. At this time, the flesh, which was sown in corruption puts on incorruption, 1 Cor. 15:54. What was natural is raised spiritual and, once more, possessed of life by communion with Christ, 1 Cor. 15:44, 45. The resurrection of the body is, therefore, a resurrection in glory, 1 Cor. 15:43.