

# THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

## WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

### QUESTIONS # 86 & 37.

*(Larger Catechism)*

Q #86. *What is the communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy immediately after death?*

A. The communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy immediately after death is, in that their souls are then made perfect in holiness,<sup>1</sup> and received into the highest heavens,<sup>2</sup> where they behold the face of God in light and glory,<sup>3</sup> waiting for the full redemption of their bodies,<sup>4</sup> which even in death continue united to Christ,<sup>5</sup> and rest in their graves as in their beds,<sup>6</sup> till at the last day they be again united to their souls.<sup>7</sup> Whereas the souls of the wicked are at their death cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, and their bodies kept in their graves, as in their prisons, till the resurrection and judgment of the great day.<sup>8</sup>

*(Shorter Catechism)*

Q #37. *What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?*

A. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness,<sup>9</sup> and do immediately pass into glory;<sup>10</sup> and their bodies, being still united to Christ,<sup>11</sup> do rest in their graves,<sup>12</sup> till the resurrection.<sup>13</sup>

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Question 1—*What should we think of the immortality of the soul?*

*Answer*—We do not speak of that which we read in Scripture, of the death of the soul, in a spiritual sense, as separated by sin from God and destitute of the principle of grace, and utterly indisposed to perform any spiritually good actions, 1 Tim. 5:6. In regard to it, unregenerate persons are said to be in a condemned state, a state of death, which is the consequent of it, Eph. 2:1. This death is opposed to that spiritual life which Scripture calls immortality, 2 Tim. 1:10. Nor do we speak of immortality as an attribute peculiarly of God, 1 Tim. 6:16.

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. 12:23.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. 5:1, 6, 8; Phil. 1:23; Acts 3:21; Eph. 4:10.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John 3:2; 1 Cor. 13:12.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 8:23; Ps. 16:9.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Thess. 4:14.

<sup>6</sup> Isa. 57:2.

<sup>7</sup> Job 19:26, 27.

<sup>8</sup> Luke 16:23, 24; Acts 1:25; Jude 6, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Heb. 12:23.

<sup>10</sup> 2 Cor. 5:1, 6, 8; Phil. 1:23; Luke 23:43.

<sup>11</sup> 1 Thess. 4:14.

<sup>12</sup> Isa. 57:2.

<sup>13</sup> Job 19:26, 27.

The immortality of the soul refers to that constitution of the nature of the soul which cannot be effected to dissolution by any second cause, *cf.* Matt. 10:28; and which we must consider as having its eternal existence resulting from the will of God, who could, had he pleased, have annihilated them, *cf.* Heb. 1:3.

The immortality of the soul is proved by several reasons: 1.) The soul, being immaterial, has the power of thinking or reasoning, and imparts to the body life, perception and motion, all of which is made apparent when the union between body and soul is severed in death, *cf.* Eccl. 9:5. Since these superior powers and excellences of the soul are clearly not produced by the body, they must be derived immediately from God, which Scripture confirms, Gen. 2:7. This, accordingly, is considered a peculiar display of the glory of God, Zech. 12:1. 2.) Scripture gives a particular account of the soul when separated from the body, each is disposed of in a different way, Eccl. 12:7. Accordingly, when separate from it, it is represented as returning to God to give an account of its behavior in the body, and to reap the fruits and effects of it, 2 Cor. 5:10. Thus, believers, like the Saviour, breathe forth their souls, and resign them by faith, into the hand of God, Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59. 3.) There is set in men naturally a desire for immortality after which the soul longs, Eccl. 3:11; especially amongst the saints who seek things in God which cannot be attained in this life, Ps. 63:1. 4.) This immortality is also proved from the justice of God which renders necessary that rewards and punishments should be distributed according to men's behavior in this life, Rev. 20:13.

Question 2—*What is the immediate happiness of the righteous after death?*

*Answer*—The apostle assures believers, through his own expressed hope, that death is gain to them, Phil. 1:21. The happiness of believers, or in what respects death is gain to them, in death has reference to their souls:

*First*, in regeneration the elect get a new nature, which is a holy nature, 2 Pet. 1:4; but much of the old nature remains, Col. 3:5, 8, 9. The grace that is in believers by the Spirit makes advances gradually sanctifying them, Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22-24. At death, this work is perfected, they are made perfectly holy, Heb. 12:23. Their arrival to this state of holiness is at the highest pitch they are capable of, beholding the face of God, Eph. 4:13. Their *understandings* shall be perfectly illuminated, 1 Cor. 13:12. Their *wills* shall be perfectly upright, so that they shall will nothing but what is good, and that without the least bias to the other side, Rev. 21:27. There shall be a perfect conformity between God's will and theirs, without the least possible disconformity, 1 John 3:2. Their *executive faculties* shall then perfectly answer to their will, readily and with all imaginable ease and delight, Matt. 6:10. There will no more be that impotency wherein a believer knows his duty but has no will to do it, *cf.* Matt. 26:41.

*Second*, there is the glory into which they pass after death which is a far better place than prior to death, Phil. 1:23. It is a glorious *place*, heaven, Acts 3:21; the seat of the blessed, 2 Cor. 5:1; wherein they enter into the presence of the Lord, 2 Cor. 5:6, 8. Thus, it is Christ's Father's house, where their room is ready for them, when they have no more place on earth, John 14:2. It is a place not needing the light of the sun or the moon, because it is lightened by the glory of God, Rev. 21:23. It is a glorious *society*, the society of other saints gone before them together with the angels, Heb. 12:23. It is the society of the blessed Trinity, the glorious Mediator, his Father and the Holy Ghost, John 17:24. It is a glorious *state*, 2 Cor. 5:1. It is the highest heavens, a glorious state of rest and perfect blessedness,

Eph. 4:10. It is what eye hath not seen nor ear heard nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, 1 Cor. 2:9.

Into this state they pass immediately and do not abide anywhere else, or sleep until the day of judgment, because: 1.) So Christ declared to the thief upon the cross, Luke 23:43. Thus, Lazarus was taken immediately to Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:22. At death, the working time for preparation is over, John 9:4. Where death finds a man, eternity picks him up, Eccl. 11:3. 2.) There is no middle state, when the saints put off the body, they put on glory, 2 Cor. 5:1, 2. When they are absent the body, they are present with the Lord, 2 Cor. 5:8. When they depart this life, they are already there with Christ, Phil. 1:23. When they die, they enter into peace and rest, Isa. 57:1; Heb. 4:9. 3.) Any contrary doctrine is inconsistent with the blessed state of believers after death, Rev. 14:13.

Next, death being the unnatural effect of sin, believers after death groan in anticipation of the redemption of their bodies, Rom. 8:23. Thus, death is gain to believers with reference to their bodies:

*First*, because, though death separate their souls from their bodies, their dead bodies (including every part thereof) are still united to Christ, 1 Thess. 4:14. They are members of Christ still, though in the grave, Rom. 8:11. Thus, Christ acknowledges in the case of Lazarus, John 11:11.

*Second*, for believers, the grave is a place of rest wherein their bodies do sleep as in their beds, Isa. 57:2. The grave, being transformed in Christ, death is now gain to believers such that they consign their bodies to it in hope, Ps. 16:9. For them it is a sleeping in Jesus, 1 Thess. 4:14. However, believers know that they cannot be held there forever, for the very dust of the saints is precious and shall be raised again in the resurrection, Job 19:26, 27.

Question 3—*What is the misery of the wicked in their death?*

*Answer*—In contrast to the righteous, the wicked shall not see blessedness or rest in their death, Isa. 48:22. Instead, at their death, the wicked are cast into hell, where they shall be shut up to torment and utter darkness, Luke 16:23, 24. This is the portion of the wicked and the beginning of their reward for their transgressions against God, Acts 1:25. Their bodies are kept in their graves, as in prison, Job 21:30-32. With soul in torment and body under a restraint that holds forth no promise, the wicked are reserved being kept until the resurrection and the great day of judgment, Jude 6, 7.