

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTION # 87.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #87. *What are we to believe concerning the resurrection?*

A. We are to believe that at the last day there shall be a general resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust:¹ when they that are then found alive shall in a moment be changed; and the self-same bodies of the dead which were laid in the grave, being then again united to their souls for ever, shall be raised up by the power of Christ.² The bodies of the just, by the Spirit of Christ, and by virtue of his resurrection as their head, shall be raised in power, spiritual, incorruptible, and made like to his glorious body;³ and the bodies of the wicked shall be raised up in dishonour by him, as an offended judge.⁴

Question 1—*What do we mean by resurrection?*

Answer—In Scripture, sometimes we find the resurrection of the dead to be taken in a metaphorical sense, speaking of the quickening of regeneration as a figurative resurrection, Eph. 2:1, 5. After this manner, Christ himself sometimes speaks, John 5:25. However, in this question, we are to understand the word *resurrection* in its proper sense, as denoting the change that shall pass upon the body when it shall be delivered from the state of corruption into which it was brought at death, Ps. 16:10; 49:9. This sense is held forth by Christ when he speaks of a future time when all men, just and unjust shall be raised from the dead, John 5:28; this common resurrection of all men is proclaimed by the apostle Paul, Acts 24:15. This includes not merely the repairing but the rebuilding of the frame of nature, which was not only decayed but dissolved in death, Job 19:26; or the gathering together of those particles of matter of which the body was before constituted, it having been turned not only into corruption but into common dust, Gen. 3:19; Job 17:16; Eccl. 3:20. A new body, as to its form and qualities, is thus erected out of its old materials, 1 Cor. 15:42; otherwise it could not be called a resurrection, Luke 20:34, 35. It is said, indeed, that the body shall not in all respects be the same that it was when separated from the soul, 1 Cor. 15:37, 38. But though different as to its qualities, it is the same in substance, as it consists of the same materials, Luke 24:39-43.

Question 2—*What proofs do we find of the doctrine of the resurrection in Scripture?*

Answer—The various heathen schools of philosophy have always viewed the doctrine of a bodily resurrection incoherent and difficult to be understood, as may be seen amongst the Epicureans and Stoics in Athens, Acts 17:18. This is because this doctrine of the resurrection is not something that is learned from the light of nature but we must look to Scripture for a satisfactory account of it, as Jesus testifies to the Sadducees, Matt. 22:23-32. We must find the fountain of this doctrine in the Scriptures and a proper knowledge of the power of God, Hos. 13:14; Jer. 32:17. Skepticism of the heathen, which exists apart

¹ Acts 24:15.

² 1 Cor. 15:51-53; 1 Thess. 4:15-17; John 5:28, 29.

³ 1 Cor. 15:21-23; 42-44; Phil. 3:21.

⁴ John 5:27-29; Matt. 25:33.

from Scripture, is unwarranted and even irrational being grounded in their foolish notions about the nature of God and his creation, Acts 26:8.

Excepting for those Jews led out of the way by the writings of the philosophers, against which Paul warns the church, Col. 2:8; we cannot conclude that the doctrine of the resurrection was denied by the main body of the Jews, or the greater part of them, Heb. 11:35.

First, several Old Testament passages provide support for this belief amongst the Jews: 1.) Consider the vision of Ezekiel's concerning the valley dry bones which, though a prophesy of the deliverance of the people of God from Babylonian captivity, presumes a general belief in the resurrection of the dead unto which that deliverance is likened, Ezek. 37:1-14. 2.) There is the confession of Job, as he looks beyond his present affliction for redemption and vindication at the last day, Job 19:25-27. Job was so far from expecting any good in this life, Job 7:7; that he seeks to find rest from his affliction in the grave, Job 14:13. It is from this position that he looks for that deliverance of the resurrection by his Redeemer, Job 33:23, 24. 3.) This belief of Job is confirmed by his statements wherein he shows a firm persuasion of his faith in the doctrine of the resurrection, wherein he would be changed from a state of mortality to that of life, Job 14:13-15; despite seemingly denying this doctrine at first thought, Job 14:12. 4.) There is another verse that plainly shows forth the doctrine of the resurrection was held amongst the Jews, Dan. 12:2. 5.) This doctrine is implied in that which God says to Israel in the time of Moses, Deut. 32:39; which saying Hannah, in her song, understands to import even the resurrection of the dead, 1 Sam. 2:6. 6.) It is held forth in certain miracles in the former prophets; namely, when the Shunamite's child is raised by Elisha, 2 Kings 4:35; and the dead man who was cast into the sepulcher wherein he touched Elisha's bones and was revived, 2 Kings 13:21. Likewise, in the case of the son of the widow of Zarephath, over whom Elijah prayed, thereby assuring us of his belief in such a resurrection else he could not pray in faith having no promise from God, 1 Kings 17:21, 22. 7.) This, too, was the settled belief of the patriarch Abraham, who, when offering up his only begotten son Isaac, expressed faith in the doctrine of the resurrection, as the apostle tells us, Heb. 11:19. 8.) David professed his belief that Messiah should be raised from the dead, Ps. 16:10; which Peter quotes to prove Christ's resurrection, Acts 2:24-27. 9.) Again, Isaiah, speaking of the result of the coming of Christ, makes mention of the general resurrection that shall follow the Gospel era, Isa. 26:18, 19. Thus, elsewhere, the prophet Hosea says Christ shall be the destruction of death, Hos. 13:14. 10.) Finally, as Christ points out to the Sadducees, this doctrine should have been known from the narration surrounding God revealing himself to Moses, Ex. 3:6; Luke 20:37, 38.

Second, there are those passages found in the New Testament which confirm this doctrine: 1.) Those instances wherein Jesus raised persons from the dead in a miraculous way, as Elijah and Elisha; such as, Jairus' daughter, Matt. 9:25; the son of the widow of Nain, Luke 7:14, 15; and that of Lazarus, John 11:43, 44. In this last case, it was a clear occasion to teach on the general resurrection of the dead, John 11:24, 25. 2.) Through the resurrection of Christ, the apostles taught this general doctrine to Christians, Acts 4:2. 3.) Without this doctrine, the vanity of Christianity appears, 1 Cor. 15:13, 17. Whereas, Christ's resurrection is a pledge to all believers of the truth of this doctrine, Rom. 8:11.

Question 3—*Shall this resurrection be universal?*

Answer—This resurrection of the dead shall include all who have lived, or shall live, from the beginning of time, until the coming of Christ; all the dead shall be raised, from whatever quarter their bodies have been deposited, all shall be required to appear to give an account, Rev. 20:12. This resurrection is demanded so that each might receive in their respective bodies the reward or punishment for their works done, John 5:28, 29. Furthermore, they who are alive at Christ's second coming, shall undergo a change which, though it cannot be called a resurrection, will be equivalent to it, 1 Cor. 15:51-53. Thus, the bodies of the dead, together with those alive at his coming, shall be changed from their corrupt condition and state, being united again to their souls for ever, being raised by the power of Christ, 1 Thess. 4:15-17.

Question 4—*What is the condition in which the body shall be raised?*

Answer—The condition in which the body shall be raised must be considered twofold:

First, the circumstance and glory which respect more especially the resurrection of the just, wherein the same body which lived on earth is raised in glory, 1 Cor. 15:43. Its identity is illustrated by the apostle by a grain of wheat springing up, and changed into a full grown ear, which though greatly improved, and very altered from what it was when cast into the ground, yet retains its fundamental continuity of identity, 1 Cor. 15:38. The apostle calls it a spiritual body, 1 Cor. 15:44; in order to distinguish it from flesh and blood which cannot inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. 15:50. The reason why flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God is that such are subject to corruption; hence, he argues, it must be changed, and put on incorruption, 1 Cor. 15:42. The body, which before was subject to filth and deformity, is raised in glory and splendor, shining like the sun, Matt. 13:43; that which was once vile, is fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body, and freed from all defect or deformity of its members, and from any dishonorable parts, not subject to weakness by labor, decays by age, to impotency and wasting by diseases, but nimble, active, and that without intermission or molestation, grief, pain or other debility, Phil. 3:21.

It is to be noted that the bodies of the just shall be raised by the Spirit of Christ, Rom. 8:11. The bodies of believers, which were in this world the temple of the Holy Ghost, and were under divine influence while living, 1 Cor. 6:19; shall not cease to be objects of his care when dead, so that they shall subserve believers attaining that complete redemption which Christ purchased for them, at his coming, 1 Cor. 15:21-23.

Finally, in contrast, the wicked shall be raised in dishonor, bearing some marks of dishonor in their bodies, Dan. 12:2. They shall be raised with all the natural blemishes and deformities which rendered them the object of contempt, Isa. 66:24. That part which the body bore in tempting the soul to sin, shall tend to its everlasting reproach, Jer. 20:11; and when reunited to it, those habits of sin which were contracted shall incurably remain, as well as the tormenting sense of guilt consequent upon them, Jer. 23:40; John 5:27-29; so that the body shall be exposed to the wrath of God for ever, Matt. 25:33. The resurrection of the bodies of the wicked, therefore, which renders them immortal, brings upon them endless misery, Matt. 25:46.