

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTION # 29.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #29. *What are the punishments of sin in the world to come?*

A. The punishments of sin in the world to come, are everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God, and most grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in hell-fire for ever.¹

Question 1—*What is implied by this thought of punishments in the world to come?*

Answer—There are several things implied in this consideration of punishments in the world to come:

First, there is a world (literally, an age) to come, wherein is an existence predicated beyond this present existence, Matt. 12:32. Traditionally, this “world to come” was understood in one of three ways: 1.) The age of the Messiah, wherein there would be a resurrection of the righteous, Heb. 6:5; *cf.* Rev. 20:6. 2.) The “world to come” consisting in the existence of immortal souls after the resurrection of the body, Heb. 2:5. 3.) That heavenly world wherein righteous souls are made to rejoice immediately upon death, Luke 16:22; 18:30.

Second, the soul exists after its separation from the body by death, which is evident, from the immateriality thereof, and its being different from the body, Gen. 35:18; 2 Pet. 1:13-15. This was apparent from the light of nature, whereby the heathen had some knowledge of it, *cf.* Acts 24:25. Nonetheless, it is most plainly held forth in the Scriptures, Matt. 10:28.

Third, the soul, separate from the body, retains those powers and capacities which it had, while so united, whereby it shows itself to be the subject of moral government, *cf.* Heb. 12:22-25; these powers being, in some sense, hindered in their actings by being in this body as presently corrupted, *cf.* Mark 9:43-48. From this, it should appear that the soul, as it experiences either the increase or restriction of its powers and faculties, cannot but be happy or miserable in the world to come, 2 Cor. 5:8-11.

Fourth, upon this follows that, if the soul goes out of this world under the weight and guilt of sin, it must retain that guilt, because there is no sacrifice for sin, extending into that world, Eccl. 11:3; Matt. 5:22; Luke 16:23-25. All mediation, the gospel and the means of grace, are found in this world only, so that there is no forgiveness to be obtained after death, Luke 16:26-31. Hence, wicked men, whose sins are not forgiven in this world, are the subjects of punishment in the other, Matt. 13:40.

Fifth, this punishment is neither castigatory, nor paternal, nor consistent with that special love of God, and the advantage, wherein consists the punishments of believers in this world, Heb. 12:10, 11; since it is always expressed as the stroke of vindictive justice, demanding satisfaction for sins committed, *cf.* Prov. 9:17, 18; 2 Pet. 2:4.

Sixth, there are some who shall be happy in a future estate, specifically, those who are justified, whose sins are pardoned, Rom. 8:30.

¹ 2 Thess. 1:9; Mark 9:43-44, 46, 48; Luke 16:24.

Question 2—*What are those punishments to which the souls of men are liable in the world to come?*

Answer—These punishments to which the souls of men are made liable consist in two things, together with an dreadful aggravation:

First, there is the unspeakable punishment of loss of all those good things which they enjoyed here in this world, wherein they were made to experience the good will of God toward his creation, Matt. 5:45. 1.) There is the loss of divine light, the source of all knowledge and wisdom discovered in this world, Job 25:3. 2.) There is the loss of all of the divine mercies bestowed by God upon his works, wherein there is a tender of his goodness, Ps. 145:9. 3.) There is a loss of all that sustains and makes men glad which also witnesses to that divine goodness, Acts 14:17.

Additionally, this punishment of loss consists in the favorable presence and enjoyment of God and Christ, for they will be banished from the beatific vision of God in glory, Matt. 7:23; 25:41. This includes: 1.) The loss of the blessed company and society of the holy angels and glorified saints in heaven, Rev. 14:10, 11. 2.) The loss of all the glory and blessedness of heaven itself, *cf.* 1 Cor. 2:9; John 3:36. Again, this is attended with the loss of all pity and compassion, having no one to commiserate their condition or regard for their pain, Matt. 13:42.

Second, there is the punishment of sense, whereby men shall suffer the most grievous torments both in body and in soul, John 5:29; Rom. 2:6-10. These are torments which exceed the capacity of the human conception, so that our most fearful thoughts cannot equal the horror of them, Ps. 90:11. The exquisite detail of this punishment at once impresses the hopelessness of condition upon the soul and the corporeal pains in the body itself, Matt. 13:50. It involves a casting out and thrusting down into the terrors of hell to be a companion with the devil, Matt. 25:30; Luke 10:15. It is a binding that maintains the person in a state in anticipation of further judgments, Jude 6; Matt. 22:13. It is a punishment which makes every desire of the wicked to perish, Ps. 112:10. It is not only the loss of knowledge but the imposition of that darkness wherein never shall any spiritual light be permitted to arise, Matt. 8:12.

Finally, these punishments are greatly and dreadfully aggravated by their duration, which is eternal, 2 Thess. 1:9. This horrible aggravation adds these torments: 1.) All hope and expectation of deliverance and escape from their misery is extinguished, Matt. 3:12. 2.) All possibility of deliverance from their torments is removed, Hos. 9:12. The door of the pit shall be shut upon them forever, and their fetters shall never be loosed, Rev. 20:10-15. Thus, sinners in hell shall lose everything that is good and agreeable, even God the chiefest good, and all the happiness he has prepared for them that love him, Matt. 25:46. This is confirmed when the bodies of the wicked are joined again to their souls so that they are made to experience the everlasting contempt of God, Dan. 12:2. The characterization of the final disposition of the wicked in the lake of fire, as the second death, underscores the inescapability of its torments for those who find themselves there, Rev. 21:8.