

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTION # 89.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #89. *What shall be done to the wicked at the day of judgment?*

A. At the day of judgment, the wicked shall be set on Christ's left hand,¹ and, upon clear evidence, and full conviction of their own consciences,² shall have the fearful but just sentence of condemnation pronounced against them;³ and thereupon shall be cast out from the favourable presence of God, and the glorious fellowship with Christ, his saints, and all his holy angels, into hell, to be punished with unspeakable torments, both of body and soul, with the devil and his angels for ever.⁴

Question 1—*What shall the day of judgment hold for the wicked?*

Answer—The day of judgment, which shall take place at Christ's coming again, shall bring the whole world to be seated before his tribunal, with the wicked to be seated to his left, Matt. 25:33. With the books opened, the cause shall be tried and the evidence produced, Rev. 20:12; and, as a consequence, the sentence will be pronounced which the Savior expresses in words filled with dread and horror, Matt. 25:41-43. All of this shall be accomplished with clear evidence and to the full conviction of their own conscience, Rom. 2:15, 16. This sentence shall include an eternal banishment and separation from him, in whose favor there is life because sin, being contrary to his holy nature, those who are found in open rebellion will not stand in his sight, Ps. 5:5. As they did not desire his special and gracious presence, which his saints always reckon their chief joy, in this world, they shall be deprived of it in the next, Luke 13:27. And when they are commanded to depart from him, they are described as cursed, that is, bound over to suffer all those punishments which the vindictive justice of God will inflict, and which are contained in the threatenings of the his law which they have violated, Deut. 27:15-26. Thus, they shall be sent down into hell, to be punished with unspeakable torments, both in body and soul, with the devil and his angels forever, Rev. 14:10, 11.

Question 2—*What is the nature of this punishment?*

Answer—As to the kind of punishment, it must be considered in two respects:

First, there is the punishment of loss which includes a separation from God, the fountain of blessedness, Jer. 2:13. It is being destitute of every thing which might administer comfort to them, Luke 16:24; and, as a consequence of this, a deprivation of fellowship, not only with Christ, Matt. 7:23; but with his saints and angels, in whose presence the wicked shall suffer without the benefit of that presence, Ps. 58:10, 11; Rev. 14:10. Not that they were ever the objects of their love or delight, but, on the other hand, their conversation was distasteful and burdensome, especially when it was in itself most spiritual, 2 Pet. 3:3, 4; yet

¹ Matt. 25:33.

² Rom. 2:15, 16.

³ Matt. 25:41-43.

⁴ Luke 16:26; 2 Thess. 1:8, 9.

it is reckoned to be one of the ingredients of their misery, when they are apprised of their eternal loss of this fellowship with Christ and his saints, Luke 13:27, 28.

Second, there is the punishment of sense which is set forth by unspeakable torments to be endured both in body and soul, Matt. 10:28; and because no pain is so unbearable as that which is occasioned by fire, a fire which is unquenchable and everlasting, Matt. 3:12; 25:41. The fire stands for the wrath of God which, when inflicted, is called a consuming fire, Heb. 12:29. It represents that wrath as kindled by the holiness which will brook no competition, so that his jealousy is said to burn like fire, Ps. 79:5. Hence, some have described the punishment of sin in hell, as including the insupportable weight of the wrath of God lying on the consciences of men, and sinking them into perdition, which makes it such a fearful thing, Heb. 10:31. This is the effect of God's immediate presence as a sin revenging Judge, whereby that presence is turned into the cause of their destruction, 2 Thess. 1:8, 9. The presence of God and his power as the immediate cause of their destruction is also held forth by the Psalmist, Ps. 90:11.

As for those punishments which respect the body, they are described under the most awful expressions beyond torments in fire, as cutting asunder, Matt. 24:51; tearing in pieces, Ps. 50:22; drowning in destruction and perdition, 1 Tim. 6:9; being bound and cast into outer darkness, Matt. 22:13; *etc.* All of which convey a deepened sense of the pains to be inflicted.

Question 3—*What is the degree of punishment?*

Answer—The proportion of punishment, as to its degree, shall be according to the proportion of the aggravations of sin committed, Deut. 25:1-3; so, those who have sinned under the Gospel dispensation, shall be exposed to a greater degree of punishment than others who have not had those advantages, Heb. 10:29. Our Saviour, speaking concerning the scribes and Pharisees, who were notorious hypocrites, and whose religion was no more than a pretense, and made subservient to the vilest practices, had contracted greater guilt and would be liable to a greater degree of punishment, Matt. 23:14. The apostle likewise speaks of some who had had great advantages through the riches of God's goodness yet added greater degrees of punishment to endure in the world to come through their misuse of it, Rom. 2:5. Thus, as bad as Sodom was, her sentence on Judgment day will be less severe than Bethsaida because the former never saw Christ, Matt. 11:20-24.

Question 4—*What is the duration of this punishment?*

Answer—The duration of this punishment unto which sinners are liable to in the world to come shall be without intermission, and eternal, there shall be no relaxation, Luke 16:26. Thus, we read of the wicked drinking of the wine of the wrath of God, their smoke ascending forever and the wicked having no rest day or night, Rev. 14:10, 11. Our Saviour speaks of the two main components of the punishment for sin—namely, the tormenting sense which conscience shall have of the wrath of God, due to it; and the punishment of sense, which is compared to that which proceeds from fire; and both are described as eternal, Mark 9:44, 46, 48. Its eternity is guaranteed by the fact that there is no other Mediator appointed between God and them, none who shall undertake to pay this debt for them, and procure a discharge from the penalty, Heb. 10:26. Without any prospect of hope, there shall arise everlasting despair, that is beyond expression tormenting, Jude 13.