

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

QUESTIONS # 3 & 2.

(*Larger Catechism*)

Q #3. *What is the word of God?*

A. The holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God,¹ the only rule of faith and obedience.²

(*Shorter Catechism*)

Q #2. *What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?*

A. The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments,³ is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.⁴

Question 1—*What is the Word of God?*

Answer—The Word of God is the holy Scriptures which are contained in the Old and New Testaments, 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21.

This Word of God is called by several names throughout the Bible: 1.) It is his *law, statutes, precepts, commandments* and *ordinances*, whereby we are given to know the authority and power which demands their obedience therein, Ps. 119:97, 98, 100, 101, 112; Ezek. 11:20. 2.) It is called his *judgments*, whereby we are made to know God is the great Judge who will bring us to account for its contents, Ps. 119:102, 108. 3.) It is called his *righteousness*, denoting that it contains that which is holy and just, Isa. 58:2. 4.) It is called his *testimonies*, containing the record of His own perfections in demonstration to the world, Ps. 99:7; 119:99, 111. Through meditating upon these *testimonies*, we behold his glory, 2 Cor. 3:18. 5.) It is called his *way*, declaring his various works done to men and the way in which they should walk if they would attain eternal life, Ps. 25:4; Prov. 4:11. 6.) It is called the *oracles* of God, to denote that many things could not have been known unless he revealed them, Rom. 3:2. Through this Word, many hidden things have come to be revealed, Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:26. 7.) Finally, it is called the *gospel*, or *good news*, because it alone announces the glad tidings of salvation and redemption in Christ, 1 Tim. 1:11; Eph. 1:13.

Additionally, this Word of God is contained in scriptures divided into two portions: *First*, there is a large part, which was written before the Incarnation of the Savior, containing a relation of God's dealings with his church from the beginning of the world unto the end of those predictions concerning the era to follow, called the Old Testament, 2 Cor. 3:14. *Second*, there is another part, which was written after the Incarnation, containing an account of the dispensation of grace in Christ between his first and second coming, giving an account of God's dealings with the early Christian church and those predictions which concern this church until the second coming, called the New Testament, 2 Cor. 3:6. By *testament*, is meant the covenant of grace, which is a testamentary covenant, without any

¹ 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21.

² Eph. 2:20; Rev. 22:18, 19; Isa. 8:20; Luke 16:29, 31; Gal. 1:8, 9; 2 Tim. 3:15, 16.

³ 2 Tim. 3:16; Eph. 2:20.

⁴ 1 John 1:3, 4.

proper conditions for us, Heb. 8:10. It marks two dispensations of this covenant of grace; the *first*, a dispensation of types and shadows, whereby no man was made perfect, Heb. 9:1, 9, 10; the *second*, a better dispensation of this covenant of grace because it is of the Spirit in unveiled truth, Heb. 8:6, 7. A *testament* is the declared, or written, will of a person by which things are bestowed or bequeathed to those concerned or described in it; hence, the New Testament contains an account of the valuable legacies given to the heirs of salvation, Luke 22:20. These are the many and precious promises which God has given his people, wherein Scripture abounds, Ps. 73:24; 84:11. Yet, the strength of a *testament* lies in its validity, which depends upon the death of the testator, Heb. 9:15-17; which is why even the *first*, or Old, Testament, was signed and sealed with blood, Heb. 9:18-20. It is in and through the death of the testator that all of the promises declared come into actual possession of the heirs, 2 Cor. 1:20. There are two *testaments*, one established with the people of God at Sinai; the other, with the people of God through Jesus Christ, in heaven, Gal. 4:24-26. The *first* brought forth to bondage because it stood in a priesthood limited by death, Heb. 7:22-25; the *second* brings the glorious liberty of the sons of God, Rom. 8:17. Both *testaments* find their fulfilment in Christ, who is the Mediator of the one eternal covenant of grace, which must for us, remain testamentary, Heb. 13:20.

Before this written Word, the church was not destitute of this testamentary Word of God, which was transmitted by the living testimony of those possessing lengthy lives, 2 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 11:7; Jude 14, 15. The Son of God also frequently condescended to appear himself, and converse with man, and so reveal his mind to him, Gen. 3:8; 15:1. To this end, the ministry of angels also was employed, Gen. 22:11. These former ways of directing the church being now at an end, Heb. 1:1, 2; the written Word brings with it a certainty for all to see, Prov. 22:19-21; Luke 1:3, 4.

Question 2—*Wherein does it appear that the Scriptures are the only rule of faith and obedience?*

Answer—*First*, although the Jewish dispensation, the *first* dispensation of the covenant of grace under a testamentary character, is now abolished, the Old Testament is not set aside as a rule of faith and obedience, Rom. 15:4. Those writings contain a record of the same covenant of grace under an earlier testamentary form, Luke 16:29, 31; and, before that, as it existed from the time of Adam until Moses, Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 10:11. These were written for the admonition of the church even under the New Testament dispensation, Rom. 4:23, 24. Though the ceremonials are abolished, yet they do not cease to teach, Heb. 10:1; 1 Cor. 5:7. Though the judicial observances pertained to the Jewish nation, they, too, teach through their principles of general equity, 1 Cor. 9:9, 10. The Old Testament dispensation was for heirs yet under tutors until Christ came, Gal. 4:1-5. It was a more *legal* dispensation because of its use of things derived from this fallen creation, Heb. 9:10; 13:9; whereas the New Testament is a more *gracious* dispensation being the fruit of the Incarnate Christ, Col. 2:16, 17; Heb. 7:16.

Second, the Word of God in these Scriptures is the very foundation upon which the church is built, Eph. 2:20. In confessing the truth as contained in this Word, the church is provided with the necessary foundation to withstand all the assaults of the devil, Matt. 16:18. These alone provide that rule of faith which lead to salvation, 2 Tim. 3:15, 16.

Third, these Scriptures contain that Word of God which alone directs how to glorify and enjoy God, 1 John 1:3, 4. They alone declare what pertains to the glory of God, Isa.

66:19; and they alone lead men to Christ, wherein is all fullness of joy in God, Hab. 3:17, 18; John 15:11.

Fourth, this Word of God contained in these Scriptures is the only rule by which all other rules must be judged and compared, Isa. 8:20. Whatever may be said of other modes of knowing, the Scriptures alone are the supreme and alone infallible rule by which all others are known to be true or false, Jer. 8:9; and, that alone, which demands the certainty or surety of divine faith, 2 Pet. 1:19.

Fifth, this Word of God in Scripture alone defines what is that gospel whereby men are to be saved, Gal. 1:8, 9. All doctrines of faith are made known and made subject to the express limits of this Word of God, Deut. 4:2; 12:32. Those who do not are false apostles, 2 Cor. 11:13, 14; they are heretics, choosing their own delusions, Tit. 3:10, 11.

Sixth, this Word of God alone defines those practices of faith whose obedience is accepted and acceptable before God, Lev. 10:1-3; 1 Chron. 15:13. It is not the works of our own hands that are accepted, Isa. 2:8; but that which is according to that Word of God in Scripture, 1 Cor. 9:21; 1 Tim. 1:8. This obedience alone is of faith in which Christ is glorified in all who believe against that day of his coming, 2 Thess. 1:10.

Seventh, this Word of God, wherein stands our only rule of faith and obedience is now fixed and become a *canon* of faith and obedience to which nothing more is to be added, nor should anything be subtracted, Rev. 22:18, 19.