

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTION # 84.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #84. *Shall all men die?*

A. Death being threatened as the wages of sin,¹ it is appointed unto all men once to die;² for that all have sinned.³

Question 1—*What is death and wherein lies its power?*

Answer—There are three sorts of death mentioned in Scripture; 1.) Physical death which results from the separation of body and soul, Eccl. 3:19-21. 2.) Spiritual death which is that condition and estate in which men are by fallen nature, Eph. 2:1. 3.) Eternal death which is the final disposition of the wicked in which they shall suffer the pains of hell forever, Rev. 20:13, 14. This question concerns the first kind of death which pertains to all men living, 1 Cor. 15:21, 22. It is a death over which no man has power in the day of its coming, Eccl. 8:8.

The power of death is said to lie in the devil, Heb. 2:14. He is said to have the power of death for several reasons: 1.) Because he induces men to commit sin, Eph. 2:2; which meritoriously renders them liable to death, Ezek. 18:4. He tempted the first man with the effect of making him a murderer from the beginning, John 8:44. 2.) In that he inspires them with furious thoughts, and inflames their passions, from whence proceed strifes and wars, that efficiently cause death, Jas. 4:1, 2. He is supreme in all the arts of mischief, and always intent upon evil, Rev. 13:14. It is by his instigation that men become like raging beasts, animated and bent on mutual slaughter, 1 Pet. 5:8. 3.) Because many times he is the executioner of God's wrath, and inflicts death upon rebellious and incorrigible sinners, Ps. 78:49. These are those princes of the air, the instruments of the thunder, and fiery storm of hail that destroyed them, Eph. 6:12. 4.) Because he makes death more formidable to sinners, by heightening their guilty fears of God's tribunal, Heb. 2:14, 15. The false spirit tempts men to sin by many enticements, but afterwards he is a severe accuser of them to God, and to themselves, Rev. 12:9, 10. 5.) He is charged with tormenting sinners with unrelenting cruelty in hell, which is the second death, Rev. 14:10; Matt. 25:41.

Question 2—*What is the certainty of death?*

Answer—God has determined, by an unalterable purpose and decree, that all men must die; we have as much reason to conclude that we shall leave the world, as at present we have that we live in it, Job 30:23. On this account, the Psalmist declares the frailty and fleeting nature of man, Ps. 39:12. Although the deaths of men are very different in their kinds, it remains certain they shall die, *cf.* 1 Sam. 26:10. Should we consider the diseases which are the forerunners of death, making nature feel the cruel victory before it yields to the enemy, we have reason to join Hezekiah in his mournful complaint, Isa. 38: 12, 13.

¹ Rom. 6:23.

² Heb. 9:27.

³ Rom. 5:12.

They do greatly err who account death a consequence of nature which would befall men regardless of whether or not they sinned is contradicted by the apostle, Rom. 5:12. We have a particular account of this in the sentence God passed on our first parents immediately after the fall; when, having denounced a curse upon the ground for their sake, Gen. 3:19; God binds a sentence upon them, so that death is unavoidable, pursuant to the decree of God, Job 14:5; so the constitution of our nature, as well as the external dispensations of providence, lead to it, Gen. 2:17.

This empire of death is universal, as each generation ebbs and flows like the waves of the sea upon the shores of human history, Eccl. 1:4. Death spares none; the strongest constitution can no more withstand its stroke than the weakest; no age of man is exempted from it, Job 21:23-26.

We might consider the body after death, as a prey for the worms, the seat of corruption, Job 19:26; and lodged in the grave, the house appointed for all living, Job 30:23. This puts an end to all the actions, as well as the enjoyments of this life, Ps. 146:4.

Likewise, death puts an end to our present enjoyments, removing us from the society of our dearest friends to a dismal and frightful solitude, Isa. 38:11. It also strips us of all our possessions, and all the honors we have been advanced to in this world, Ps. 49:17.

Again, the time of life and death are in God's hand, Eccl. 3:2; we were brought into the world by the sovereignty of his providence and we are called out of it at his pleasure, Ps. 31:15; Job 12:10. Hence, as nothing is more certain than death, nothing is more uncertain to us than the time when, *cf.* 2 Sam. 7:12. This God has concealed from us for wise ends, Luke 12:20. Did we know that we should soon die, it would discourage us from attempting any thing great in life, Ps. 39:4; and did we know that the lease of life was long, and that we should certainly arrive at old age, we might take occasion to delay all concern about our soul's welfare, presuming that it should be time enough to think of the affairs of religion and another world, when we should apprehend ourselves to be near death, Job 21:21. Hence, God, by concealing from us the time of our departure from this world, has made it our wisdom, as well as our duty, to be waiting all the days of our appointed time, till our change come, Ps. 104:9, 29.

From this, we learn the vanity of man as mortal, for though believers enjoy a happiness beyond the grave, there is a different view as to what respects this world, Ps. 39:5. The certainty of death affords an undeniable and universal motive to humility, Job 42:6. Death knows no distinction of persons, regards the rich nor more than the poor, puts no mark of distinction between the remains of a prince and those of a peasant, Eccl. 3:19; let none boast of their extraction, descent or kindred, before this great leveler of mankind, Job 17:14. Shall we be proud of these bodies, whether the beauty of youth or the finery of culture, when our habitations are but dwellings of clay? Job 4:19.

Question 3—*What is the account we must have of death's entrance into the world?*

Answer—There is a threefold account: 1.) There is the desert of sin, whereby the soul voluntarily lost the spiritual life by forsaking God and, therefore, unwillingly loses the natural life by expulsion from the body, Rom. 6:23. By the original establishment of propagation, this fallen nature has been transmitted to all his posterity by ordinary generation, Rom. 3:23. 2.) There is the effect of the divine decree respecting sin, and the real execution of it, Heb. 9:27. Nothing can interrupt or frustrate this appointment, none can delay, Ps. 82:6, 7. 3.) Death is the sentence of the law, Gen. 2:17. Man did not keep this command of so easy observation, and justly incurred its doom, Jas. 1:15.