

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTION # 49.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #49. *How did Christ humble himself in his death?*

A. Christ humbled himself in his death, in that having been betrayed by Judas,¹ forsaken by his disciples,² scorned and rejected by the world,³ condemned by Pilate, and tormented by his persecutors;⁴ having also conflicted with the terrors of death, and the powers of darkness, felt and borne the weight of God's wrath,⁵ he laid down his life an offering for sin,⁶ enduring the painful, shameful, and cursed death of the cross.⁷

Question 1—*What are the ways in which Christ has humbled himself in the events surrounding his death?*

Answer—A *first* way Christ humbled himself in his death was in submitting to the great sufferings in the garden, when his soul was made to feel the weight of the alienation from God, Matt. 26:38. He desired his disciples to act in sympathy and regard to him in this his hour of agony, and in consideration for their own advantage, Matt. 26:39, 41; yet, they exhibit little care for themselves and, if possible, less for him unto whom they had the highest obligations, Matt. 26:40, 43.

A *second* way was in his being betrayed by Judas, a pretended friend, so adding to his afflictions, Ps. 41:9. Nonetheless, it should be noted that this betrayal does not indicate that there was any unwillingness in him to suffer, for he pressed himself into this crucible of suffering for us most willingly, Luke 12:50. Thus, when the opportunity for him to flee and make escape from his capture was presented, he most willingly surrendered himself, John 18:4-6. Again, when Peter made an overture to rescue him, he prohibited it, John 18:10, 11. The price which was given the traitor, which was the most they would offer for this heinous betrayal, was thirty pieces of silver, Matt. 26:15; is represented as an instance of the highest contempt which could be cast upon our Lord, Zech. 11:13. This is the price of a servant, or slave, who is gored by an ox so that he dies, Ex. 21:32. This wound was not offered by an open enemy, but by a pretended friend, who knew that Jesus was an innocent man, making it most grievous and sinful, Matt. 27:4.

A *third* way consisted in his being forsaken by his disciples, Matt. 26:56. So, the event was ordered by providence in order to enhance the suffering of Christ, for it is very afflictive when none stand to comfort or strengthen in times of trial, 2 Tim. 4:16. It was a farther design of providence in permitting the disciples to forsake Christ, so that they would not suffer together with him, he willingly suffered alone, John 18:8. If they had been

¹ Matt. 27:4.

² Matt. 26:56.

³ Isa. 53:2, 3.

⁴ Matt. 27:26-50; John 19:34.

⁵ Luke 22:44; Matt. 27:46.

⁶ Isa. 53:10.

⁷ Phil. 2:8; Heb. 12:2; Gal. 3:13.

apprehended, they might have been accused, condemned and crucified with him, which might have led some to conclude that he did not bear the price of redemption alone, contrary to Scripture, Isa. 63:3.

A *fourth* way was in his being disowned and denied by Peter, for this undoubtedly gives occasion to some to think he is not only persecuted by his enemies, but he is unworthy of being acknowledged by his friends, Matt. 26:69-72. This denial is much more severe due to his self-confident resolution before, Matt. 26:35. His fear was certainly increased when he was faced with the accusation of one who was kin to the servant of the high priest sent to capture Jesus, John 18:26.

A *fifth* way was his being scorned and rejected by the world, as if an inferior to them, Ps. 22:6, 7. He was not simply treated to a cold indifference but a hostile despising, Isa. 53:2, 3; which was doubtless designed to bring his doctrine into contempt, Mark 8:38. Though he did invite them, they rejected his pleas because they rejected him, John 5:40.

Finally, a sixth way was his being condemned by Pilate with a sneer unbecoming a judge in such matters, John 19:5, 14. Additionally he was tormented by his persecutors, scourged, buffeted, smitten with their hands, and crowned with thorns, Matt. 27:26-50; who even their most merciful acts toward him inflicted more suffering, John 19:34. He was compelled to bear his own cross until his very strength failed, divesting him of all humanity, John 19:17; Luke 23:26.

Question 2—*What are the ways in which Christ has humbled himself in his death?*

Answer—It is *first* to be noted that, in his death, he was made to feel all of its terrors, Luke 22:44; including the weight of the wrath of God at the very moment of his death, Matt. 27:46. Though many martyrs have suffered much in this frail nature, 2 Cor. 1:8; yet he alone was stripped of all comfort and laden with all fearful dread in his death, Heb. 5:7; Lam. 1:12. His very soul was tormented as he drew near the time of his death, feeling the sting and bitterness in all its fury, Mark 14:33-36. Additionally, he was therein made subject to the powers of darkness, even him who has the power of death, the devil, Heb. 2:14. Thus, at this time he was suffered to fall into the hands of his enemies that they might express their rage and malice against him, Luke 22:53.

Second, he was made to fear the wrath of God because he was laying down his life as an offering for sin, Isa. 53:10. As this wrath is so terrible in itself, we ought to be amazed and sorrowful that he underwent this, not for any sin of his own, but ours, 1 Pet. 2:24. He bore everything which was a punishment for sin, (except some circumstances peculiar to us, and which were inconsistent with his perfect holiness,) including that afflictive sense of the wrath of God due to sin, Isa. 53:6.

Third, he was made to endure the most painful death of the cross, Phil. 2:8. This method of death was most painful because: 1.) The body itself was distended, being first stretched while lying on the ground, forcing it to attain its full length, so that being placed upright his bones were drawn out of joint, Ps. 22:14. 2.) The nailing of the flesh so extended upon that cross, driving nails through the most sinewy and sensible portions of the body, Ps. 22:16; John 20:25. 3.) The dreadful pain of the sudden jerk of his body when he was hoisted up, 2 Sam. 18:9; John 12:32. 4.) It was a long and lingering death, hanging for six hours, from nine until three in the afternoon, during the heat of the day, Mark 15:25, 34.

This kind of death was considered most shameful, Heb. 12:2; being that unto which malefactors of the worst sort were condemned, Deut. 21:22, 23. For this reason, men accounted it a most cursed death, Gal. 3:13.