

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTION # 53.

(*Larger Catechism*)

Q #53. *How was Christ exalted in his ascension?*

A. Christ was exalted in his ascension, in that having after his resurrection often appeared unto and conversed with his apostles, speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God,¹ and giving them commission to preach the gospel to all nations,² forty days after his resurrection, he, in our nature, and as our head,³ triumphing over enemies,⁴ visibly went up into the highest heavens, there to receive gifts for men,⁵ to raise up our affections thither,⁶ and to prepare a place for us,⁷ where he himself is, and shall continue till his second coming at the end of the world.⁸

Question 1—*Wherein are the several parts of Christ's exaltation in his ascension?*

Answer—The exaltation of Christ continued in his ascension wherein we must observe several things:

First, the respect in which he ascended must not be thought to have respect to his divine nature, for that can change no place, and is confined to no place, John 3:13; but is in respect to his human nature, which is so present in one place, that it cannot be in another at the same time, so that it changes one place for another by local motion, John 11:6, 21.

Second, the reality of this ascension was such that he did not merely disappear, but by a local motion went up from the earth into the highest heavens, leaving the one, and going to the other, Luke 24:51. He ascended in a visible manner, before the eyes of the disciples, Mark 16:19.

Third, there was also the time of it, which was forty days after his resurrection, during which time he appeared unto and conversed with the disciples, speaking to them of the kingdom, Acts 1:2, 3. Of this time, it may be observed: 1.) He stayed so long in order to convince his disciples of the truth of his humanity, and confirm them in the faith of his being truly man, Luke 24:39; John 21:12, 13. 2.) It was time to confirm them more strongly in the faith of his resurrection from the dead, a truth not easily believed, Matt. 28:17. When they first heard of the truth of his resurrection from Mary Magdalene, and the other women that had been at the sepulcher, they were slow to believe, Luke 24:11. But, this period of time, during which he frequently conversed with them, gave them full assurance of the reality of his resurrection, as he showed himself alive through many infallible proofs, Acts 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:5-7. 3.) It was a period in which he was able to instruct them more clearly and perfectly

¹ Acts 1:2, 3.

² Matt. 28:19, 20.

³ Heb. 6:20.

⁴ Eph. 4:8.

⁵ Acts 1:9-11; Eph. 4:10; Ps. 68:18.

⁶ Col. 3:1, 2.

⁷ John 14:3.

⁸ Acts 3:21.

in the knowledge of the mysteries of his kingdom, Luke 24:44, 45. He had given them a general idea of the kingdom and when it should be set up, Mark 12:1-11; yet, upon the occasion of his resurrection, he let them more clearly into the nature of that kingdom as a kingdom of grace in this world, Luke 24:46-49. Upon this basis, he gave them commission to teach, Matt. 28:19, 20.

Fourth, there was the manner of the ascension: 1.) It was really and corporeally not merely figuratively and metaphorically, by a local translation of his human nature from earth to the heavens, Mark 16:19. 2.) He ascended while he was blessing his disciples, Luke 24:51. 3.) He ascended powerfully, even by his own almighty power, Phil. 1:19, 20; Acts 1:10. This was as he had told them, Luke 24:26. 4.) He ascended in a fashion that was gradual and, in some sense, accommodated to his disciples so as they could perceive the event, Acts 1:9.

Fifth, he ascended in a glorious and triumphant manner: 1.) Like as he descended in a cloud to Moses, Ex. 34:5; so, there was a cloud prepared as a royal chariot to carry him away, Acts 1:9. 2.) In his ascension he was attended by a retinue of glorious angels, Acts 1:10, 11. 3.) He went into heaven as a glorious conqueror, triumphing over all his enemies, Eph. 4:8. As conquerors of old, in their solemn triumphs, used to lead their captives chained in irons fetters, so Christ led his enemies in some real visible triumph, Col. 2:15. 4.) He ascended with shouts of triumph and great joy, Ps. 47:5. It was to the acclamation of angels, Ps. 24:7; of the blessed saints, who also revel in this victory, Isa. 63:1-3; together with the approbation of God, who testifies of his good pleasure in welcoming Christ home to heaven, Ps. 110:1; Dan. 7:13, 14. 5.) He ascended into heaven in the manner of an ascending monarch, bestowing gifts and blessings upon all the people, Eph. 4:8; Ps. 68:18.

It is always to be remembered that the Person who ascended is the same who descended first, Eph. 4:10.

Question 2—*Wherein consists the ends of Christ's ascension?*

Answer—The ends for which Christ ascended are several:

First, that he might be solemnly inaugurated and installed in glory, which was due to him by Mediatory compact, Ps. 2:6-9. The order appointed was he was first to suffer, then to enter into glory, 1 Pet. 1:11. There he will remain until his coming again, Acts 3:21.

Second, He ascended in order to make way for the Spirit, for if Christ had not gone, the Comforter would not have come, John 16:7. This Spirit was very necessary to fit and qualify the apostles for their work, John 14:26.

Third, to plead and make intercession for his people, Heb. 4:14.

Fourth, to prepare mansions of glory for all his followers, John 14:2. For though they were prepared from all eternity, in the immutable purpose of God, they were further prepared by Christ's ascension: 1.) He set open the gates of heaven for poor sinners to enter in, Ps. 24:3, 4, 9. 2.) He has as a public person, in our nature and as our head, taken possession of the celestial glory, Heb. 6:20. 3.) He prepares it for his people, in his sanctifying and purifying it for them, Heb. 9:23, 24. 4.) He prepares it for a people, in providing and fitting all things for their entertainment when they come, John 14:3.

Fifth, to instill in all who pretend any interest in Christ of their duty: 1.) To let their hearts be where our Lord is, Col. 3:1, 2. We ought not pursue earthly things as our treasures but live in this world as our heads are homewards, to the house prepared, Matt. 6:19. 2.) To let us be encouraged to face with grace and courage all the difficulties of this life, knowing we shall be conquerors through him, Rom. 8:37-39.