

REFORMATION 500 WEEK 22 JOHN CALVIN AND STRASSBURG

Calvin arrived in the German city of Strasbourg in September, 1538, a few months after he and Farel had been banished from Geneva. “Strasbourg was a crossroads between France, Germany, Switzerland and the Low Countries. Various currents of Reformation thought met there. German Lutherans stood side by side with French Evangelicals, Anabaptists from the Low Countries and Zwinglians from Switzerland. All the various doctrines mingled in a great stream of life and activity under the peaceable direction of [Martin] Bucer [1491-1551]” (Cadier, 91-92).

Bucer (17 years older than Calvin) had been won for the Reformation by Luther during the great Leipzig Debate (1518), and he had witnessed first-hand the failure of Luther and Zwingli to agree at the Marburg Colloquy (1529). “He tried to find a middle ground between Luther and Zwingli in regard to the nature of the Lord’s Supper” (Greg Singer, *Dictionary of Christianity*, 2:207).

While in Strasbourg, Calvin “became pastor of the church of the French refugees, followers of Luther in France who had fled to Strasbourg to escape persecution. He also gave lectures in theology” (Kuiper, 196). He “published his first commentary, that on the Epistle to the Romans,” which “shows clearly that Calvin was, from the first, a prince of exegetes” (Cadier, 96). He also prepared a greatly enlarged edition of the *Institutes*. “He converted many Anabaptists...who brought to him from the city and country their children for baptism” (Schaff, 8:369).

“God in His providence had placed Calvin’s future wife in his congregation. Idelette de Bure, her husband Jean Stordeur, and their two children had come to Strasbourg as Anabaptists. After listening to Calvin’s faithful exposition of God’s Word, as well as having private conversations with Calvin, they embraced his Reformed views and had their youngest child baptized. In the spring of 1540, Jean Stordeur was stricken with the plague and died. A few months later, just as Calvin had almost given up any hope of finding a wife, Bucer asked him to consider Idelette. John and Idelette were married in August 1540” (DeMar, *Reformation*, 206).

Meanwhile back in Geneva, certain enemies of Calvin were threatening to return the city to the Roman Catholic Church. Cardinal Sadoletto, a very able man, had written a clever letter in which he tried to persuade the citizens of Geneva to return to the Roman Church. At the request of the council of Geneva, “Calvin, setting aside all hard feeling against the Genevans...wrote a brilliant *Rely to Sadoletto*” (Kuiper, 196). This *Reply* “was one of the means of saving Geneva from the grasp of popery, and endearing Calvin to the friends of freedom” (Schaff, 8:425).

When the party which was friendly to Calvin held power again in Geneva, the city Council begged Calvin to return, “convinced that Calvin alone could save the city from anarchy” (Schaff, 8:430). Calvin at first refused, but when Farel wrote to threaten him again with the wrath of God, Calvin finally gave in *again*. ‘If I had any choice I would rather do anything than to give in to you in this matter, but since I remember that I no longer belong to myself, I offer my heart to God as a sacrifice’ (Cadier, 105).

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REFORMATION 500 WEEK 22: HEIDELBERG CATECHISM QA'S 57-58

Question 57: WHAT COMFORT DO YOU RECEIVE FROM 'THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY'? **That not only my soul after this life shall be immediately taken up to Christ its Head, but also that this my body, raised by the power of Christ, shall be reunited with my soul, and made like the glorious body of Christ.**

Question 57 summarizes the biblical teaching concerning article 11 of the Apostles Creed, "the resurrection of the body." We have already learned from Question 45 that Christ's resurrection guarantees our resurrection, which will occur when Christ returns to usher in new heavens and a new earth (John 6:44; 1 Thess. 4:15-16; 1 Pet. 3:10-13). Our resurrection will follow the same basic pattern as His. His human soul after He died went immediately to heaven (Luke 23:43), and then returned to His body and came forth from the grave. Our soul after we die "shall be immediately taken up to Christ its Head." Paul said: "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8; cf. Phil. 1:23). The souls of believers go immediately to heaven; and the souls of unbelievers go immediately to hell (Luke 16:22; Rev. 6:10). During the time between death and the resurrection ["the intermediate state"], "the soul does not sleep," but "feels, and understands without the body...although the manner of its operation without the body is altogether unknown to us" (Ursinus, 310).

The resurrection is when our souls shall be re-united with our bodies – which will be raised from the dust by the Lord's almighty power (Job 19:26; Ezek. 37:12; Acts 26:8; 1 Cor. 15:42-44). Our resurrected body will be just like Christ's "glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). Christ's resurrected body was the very same body that was crucified (John 20:24-29). It was still "flesh and bones" (Luke 24:39), but adorned with immortality (Luke 24:31, 51; Rev. 1:14). Our resurrected bodies will be the same as those which we now have, only they will be immortal, incorruptible, imperishable, free from all defects and imperfections. Yes, we will recognize each other (Matt. 8:11)!

The bodies of the wicked will also be raised but only to endure eternal punishment (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; Matt. 25:30, 46).

Question 58: WHAT COMFORT DO YOU RECEIVE FROM THE ARTICLE 'LIFE EVERLASTING'? **That, inasmuch as I now feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy, I shall after this life possess complete blessedness, such as eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, therein to praise God forever.**

Since eternal life is a life in "fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3; cf. John 17:3), eternal life *begins* the moment God works truth faith in our hearts (John 5:24). As believers, we *begin* in this life to know what the unbelieving eyes and ears and hearts do not know, because "God has revealed them to us through His Spirit" (see 1 Cor. 2:8-10). But we have only a *beginning* of eternal joy (Phil. 1:6; Heb. 12:2). God's image is only *partially* restored in us (Gal. 5:22-23). But when Christ returns, God's image will be *perfectly* restored in us; and on a new earth in our resurrected bodies we will see Him face to face (1 John 3:2); "there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4). We can only imagine!

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