
COMFORT AND JOY

The Heidelberg Catechism in Modern English

*with cross-references to the
Westminster Shorter Catechism*

INTRODUCTION

This document contains a modern English version of the *Heidelberg Catechism* of 1563, one of the most famous catechisms of the Reformation.

What is a Catechism?

“Catechise” comes from the Greek word *catecheo*, meaning “instruct”. It refers to the education in the faith of Children, young people and adults. In the early Church the term indicated the oral instruction about central Christian truths given before baptism and admission to the Lord’s Supper. The whole course lasted two or more commonly three years and was designed for adult converts from paganism. As the Church grew, this material was written down in brief creeds (such as the Apostles’ Creed) or manuals. Such books of instruction about basic Christian beliefs eventually came to be called “catechisms”.

The Middle Ages

Catechisms continued in use during the Middle Ages. Often they were used in connection with the sacrament of Confession. In the later part of the period their content typically included what were called the “four pillars”:

- the *Apostles’ Creed* (the baptismal profession of faith);
- the meaning and use of the *sacraments*;
- the *Ten Commandments*; and
- the *Lord’s Prayer*.

At this time, too, catechisms were designed with the needs of children in mind. One of the better known is the *Catechizon* prepared by John Colet (c. 1467–1519) for the use of the boys at St Paul’s School in London.

The Reformation

The Reformation, with its insistence on religious instruction, brought a flood of new catechisms, commonly in the form of questions and answers. They aimed to give a unified view of the Church’s teachings on matters of belief and Christian living. Lutherans, Reformed, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Baptists and Congregationalists all made active use of them.

Teaching the catechism took place in a number of settings: at home, at school, in church services and in universities. Adults were expected to be familiar with the catechism and study it regularly. Parents were responsible to teach it at home. Special classes for children were provided by the minister. After instruction, those who confessed for themselves the faith which it taught were admitted to the Lord’s Supper.

Later Developments

In the eighteenth century John Wesley encouraged catechising, but in many other circles the teaching of catechisms degenerated into rote learning of questions and answers. Church members frequently came to know them only as boring material imposed by authority. Rationalists and Liberals no longer accepted the orthodoxy that the catechisms represented. Many ministers came to see them as historical monuments rather than living witnesses. From the middle of the nineteenth century they progressively fell into disuse in the major Protestant churches. In the United States, for example, 130,000 copies of the Westminster Shorter

Catechism were sold in 1892, but only 22,200 in 1938. Today in many Australian denominations catechisms have been so entirely forgotten that the word itself is strange and unfamiliar.

Professional theologians, of course, did not forget them. In 1938 the neo-orthodox theologian Karl Barth put this viewpoint to a group of teachers of religion:

Why bother with the Heidelberg Catechism? A little historical interest is not reason enough. It is not enough that until about a hundred years ago the catechism was used in church and school in Switzerland also. A historical argument is even less convincing in light of the fact that for the past hundred years the value of the catechism has been questioned from all sides (not least from the side of modern pedagogy) and finally laid aside. But it is becoming clear just in our time that what the Heidelberg Catechism once represented cannot be destroyed by a short century of rejection. In any case it is and remains a classical document of the faith of the Church which was reformed according to God's word. This document deserves at least a respectful hearing. It is not of course an authority to be acknowledged without question. The Reformed Church knows only the one authority of Holy Scripture. But alongside (or better: under) Scripture there is also a legitimate witness to Scripture. That is what the Heidelberg Catechism intends to be.

Some more conservative Protestant denominations have continued the use of catechisms. In Australia this includes the Lutheran Church, the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia and a number of smaller Presbyterian groups. The section of the Presbyterian Church which did not go into union with the Methodists and Congregationalists in 1977 has also shown a renewed interest.

In the churches at large there has been some revival of interest in catechetical instruction since the middle of the twentieth century. New catechisms have been written and fresh approaches adopted. There has been a recognition that education which stresses experience and personal creativity is not sufficient without explicit attention to biblical and theological knowledge. At the same time there is a clear awareness that teaching must include training in the ability to ask—not just answer!—the right questions.

The Heidelberg Catechism

The *Heidelberg Catechism* was drafted at the request of Elector Frederick III, who ruled the important German province of the Palatinate from 1559 to 1576. He assigned the task to the theological faculty of Heidelberg University. It is generally held that the main contributors were *Zacharias Ursinus*, professor of systematic theology, and *Caspar Olevianus*, Frederick's court preacher. Ursinus was a scholar who combined fervent piety with deep learning, and Olevianus had been imprisoned in Treves for preaching the evangelical faith.

With the approval of a church synod and the Elector himself the Catechism was published early in 1563. A Latin translation soon followed. The Catechism was immediately popular, and three more German editions were called for in the same year.

Mediaeval Christianity was often marked by uncertainty and fear. In the art of the cathedrals people were reminded of the last judgement, which they must seek to avoid by their good works, and from which they needed to flee to the Church and its sacraments. Into this world, at the Reformation, came the renewed message of comfort, security and assurance of salvation to

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those who put their trust in Christ alone. This message is clear and central in the Heidelberg catechism.

The Catechism divides into three sections, commonly referred to as the three G's: *guilt* (human sin and misery), *grace* (deliverance through Christ) and *gratitude* (thankfulness and the Christian life). It is also divided into 52 weeks, so it can serve as a guide for preachers. It was Frederick's intention that it be used in families, Christian schools and public worship.

The beauty of the Catechism is nowhere clearer than in the first question, which contains the central theme of the whole work. As Schaff comments, this question

is unsurpassed for depth, comfort and beauty, and, once committed to memory, can never be forgotten. It represents Christianity in its evangelical, practical, cheering aspect, not as a commanding law, not as an intellectual scheme, not as a system of outward observances, but as the best gift of God to [humanity], as a source of peace and comfort in life and in death. What can be more comforting, what at the same time more honouring and stimulating to a holy life than the assurance of being wholly owned by Christ our blessed Lord and saviour, who sacrificed his own spotless life for us on the cross? The first question and answer of the Heidelberg Catechism is the whole gospel in a nutshell.

Other questions, such as the description of faith in Question 22 and the treatment of God's providence in Question 28 are both moving and profound, and richly repay the careful attention of a sermon or a study group. The Catechism is a work of deep religious feeling, based on a profound understanding of Scripture. The most ecumenical of all the Reformation catechisms, it is largely free of the intolerance common at the time.

The Heidelberg Catechism has been translated into many of the world's languages. Today it has the distinction—with the sole and honourable exception of Luther's Small Catechism—of being the most generally accepted and widely used of the catechisms to come down to us from the Reformation. Compact but rich in content, biblical, and full of comfort, it richly repays careful study.

The Heidelberg and Shorter Catechisms Compared

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* is a product of the great age of Presbyterianism, before Moderate influence took hold in the eighteenth century. It was prepared by English Puritans during the mid-1600s with assistance from commissioners sent by the Church of Scotland. The name *Westminster* comes from Westminster Abbey, where an assembly of theologians first met in 1643, during the English Civil War. The assembly was convened by the Puritan Parliament, and its tasks included the preparation of a confession and a catechism for use throughout England, Scotland and Ireland. In the event Ireland remained Catholic, and England returned to traditional Anglicanism after 1660. However the Westminster documents continued to be used in Scotland and later in Presbyterian churches throughout the world.

It was natural that the Westminster Assembly should be instructed to produce a catechism. Not only were many members of the Assembly skilled catechists: no fewer than a dozen had prepared their own catechisms, and these were in widespread use. Parliament asked for a fuller catechism to replace the one still to be found in the Anglican Church's *Book of Common Prayer*.

It was soon concluded, however, that two catechisms were needed, a *Larger Catechism* for “those who have some proficiency” and a *Shorter Catechism*, “more easie and short for new beginners”.

In later history the Larger Catechism has been of secondary importance, but no document of the Assembly has been used more widely or exercised a deeper influence than the Shorter Catechism. It achieves an exceptional balance of concise and exact wording on the one hand, and freshness on the other. It immediately became a textbook in the Scottish schools and retained that position for centuries. It was also widely used in England, America and the British colonies. Though now largely forgotten in more liberal churches, it continues to be used around the world wherever orthodox Presbyterians are found.

The Heidelberg and Shorter Catechisms have frequently been compared and contrasted. Users of either have generally held the other in high regard. The Heidelberg Catechism is *the more traditional* of the two. It retains the familiar structure of the four pillars. The Apostles’ Creed, for example, is expounded clause by clause, while the Shorter Catechism places the Creed in an appendix and covers its contents in its own new framework.

The Heidelberg Catechism is also *the more personal* of the two catechisms. The Shorter Catechism uses objective and impersonal language: the application of the truths it is teaching is left in the hands of the parent, the teacher or the preacher. The Heidelberg Catechism, on the other hand, addresses the student as a present or prospective church member, who (it is prayerfully hoped) is learning to answer from his or her own experience.

The Shorter Catechism, for its part, is *the more concise* of the two catechisms. It far surpasses the Heidelberg Catechism in brevity, terseness and precision of definition.

Both approaches have their place, and both require the whole life and teaching of the Christian community as their setting.

In this edition cross-references to questions in the Shorter Catechism are shown thus: *[SCat 14*

References and Translations

The biblical references in the Shorter Catechism were added at the specific request of Parliament, and have historically been left unchanged. For the Heidelberg Catechism by contrast there has traditionally been some flexibility in the verses used. The present references are based on the original, but have been reviewed and make extensive use of the careful revision carried out by the Christian Reformed Church, a U.S. and Canadian denomination.

This is a practical tool, not a scholarly translation. Essentially I wanted something for my family that avoided the “translation English” of some current versions. Having made that disclaimer, I have taken a fair bit of care. The text is based on the fourth German edition, which I understand is the standard text. I have also referred to the text of Philip Schaff’s translation in *The Creeds of Christendom* (1877), Miller and Osterhaven’s 400th anniversary edition (1962), the translation prepared by the Christian Reformed Church in 1975 and revised in 1988, and the Canadian Reformed Churches’ version of 1984.

– Frank Harrison, Brisbane, 1996



THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

Our Only Comfort

Lord's Day 1

**1 Q. What is your only comfort
in life and in death?**

[SCat –

A. That I,

with body and soul,
in life and in death,¹
am not my own,²
but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.³

He with his precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins,⁴
and set me free from all the power of the devil;⁵
and so preserves me⁶
that without the will of my heavenly Father*
not a hair can fall from my head;⁷
indeed, all things must work together for my salvation.⁸

Because I am his,
Christ, by his Holy Spirit,
assures me of eternal life,⁹
and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready
from now on to live for him.¹⁰

1 Rom 14:7–9

2 1 Cor 16:19–20

3 1 Cor 3:23; Tit 2:14

4 1 Pet 1:18–19; 1 John 1:7–9

5 Heb 2:10, 14–15; John 8:34–36; 1 John 3:8–9

6 John 6:39–40; John 10:27–29; 2 Thess 3:3; 1 Pet 1:5

7 Matt 10:29–31; Luke 21:16–18

8 Rom 8:28–30

9 Rom 8:9, 11; Eph 1:13–14; 2 Cor 5:4–5; Rom 8:15–17; 2 Cor 1:21–22

10 Rom 8:4–5, 8–9

* Note on use of asterisks: Used after certain biblical words referring directly or indirectly to God (*he**, *Father**, *kingdom**, etc.) an asterisk indicates the theological truth that God is not male or female (John 4:24 with Matt 22:30).

**2 Q. What must you know
to live and die
in the joy of this comfort?**

[SCat –

- A.** Three things:
first, the greatness of my sin and misery;¹
second, how I am set free
from all my sins and misery;²
and third, how I am to thank God
for such a deliverance.³

1 Rom 3:9–10; 1 John 1:10

2 John 17:3; Acts 4:12; Acts 10:43

3 Matt 5:16; Rom 6:13; Eph 5:8–10; 2 Tim 2:15; 1 Pet 2:9–10

Part I: Human Misery

Conviction under the Law

Lord's Day 2

3 Q. Where do you learn of your misery?

[SCat 14]

A. The law of God tells me.¹

1 Rom 3:20; Rom 7:7–25, esp. vv. 10–11

4 Q. What does God's law require of us?

[SCat 42]

A. Christ teaches us this in a summary, in Matthew 22:

“*You shall love the Lord* your God*

with all your heart

and with all your soul

and with all your mind

and with all your strength.’^a

This is the greatest commandment: it comes first.

“And the second is like it:

‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

“On these two commands

depend all the law and the prophets.”¹

1 Matt 22:37–40 with Mark 12:30; Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18

a The words *and all your strength* are omitted in most earlier manuscripts. They are found in the parallel passage in Mark 12:30.

3 Q. Can you keep all this law perfectly?

[SCat 18]

A. No:¹ I am inclined by nature
to hate both God and my neighbour.²

1 Rom 3:10, 20, 23; 1 John 1:8, 10

2 Rom 8:7; Eph 2:1–3; Tit 3:3; Gen 6:5; Gen 8:21; Jer 17:9; Rom 7:23

The Fall and Its Consequences

Lord's Day 3

**6 Q. Did God create people
so wicked and perverse?**

[SCat 10]

A. No, on the contrary,
God created them good¹ and in his* own image,²
that is, in true righteousness and holiness;³
so that they
might truly know God their creator,⁴
love him* with all their hearts,
and live with him* in eternal happiness,
to praise and glorify him*.⁵

1 Gen 1:31

2 Gen 1:26–27

3 Eph 4:24

4 Col 3:10

5 Ps 8

**7 Q. From where, then,
does this corrupt human nature come?**

[SCat 13–18]

A. From the fall and disobedience of our first parents,
Adam and Eve, in Paradise.¹

This fall has so poisoned our nature²
that we are all born sinners:
corrupt from conception on.³

1 Gen 3, esp. v. 6

2 Rom 5:12, 18–19

3 Ps 51:5

**8 Q. But are we so corrupt
that we are wholly unable to do any good,
and inclined to all evil?**

[SCat 18, 20]

A. Yes,¹ unless we are born again
by the Spirit of God.²

1 Gen 6:5; Gen 8:21; Job 15:14; Job 14:4; Isa 53:6

2 John 3:3–6

Lord's Day 4

**9 Q. Is not God, then, unjust
by requiring in his* law,
what humanity cannot do?**

[SCat 14]

A. No; for God created humanity
able to keep the law.¹

They however,
urged on by the devil,²
through wilful disobedience,
robbed themselves and all their descendants
of these gifts.³

¹ Gen 1:31; Eph 4:24

² Gen 3:13

³ Gen 3:6; Rom 5:12, 18–19

**10 Q. Will God allow such disobedience and rebellion
to go unpunished?**

[SCat 19, 84]

A. Certainly not:
he* is terribly angered
both by the sin we are born with¹
and by our sins committed since

He will punish them in righteous judgement
now and in eternity.²
As he* has spoken:

*Cursed is everyone who does not continue
to do everything in the book of the law.*³

¹ Gen 2:17; Rom 5:12

² Ps 5:4–6; Nah 1:2; Ex 34:7; Rom 1:18; Eph 5:6; Heb 9:27

³ Deut 27:26; Gal 3:10

11 Q. But isn't God also merciful?

[SCat 84]

A. God is indeed merciful,¹
but he* is also just.²

His* justice demands that sin,
committed against his supreme majesty,
be punished with the supreme penalty—
eternal punishment of body and soul.

¹ Ex 34:6–7; Ps 103:8–9

² Ex 34:7; Deut 7:9–11; Ps 5:4–6; Heb 10:30–31

Part II: Deliverance

Christ our Mediator

Lord's Day 5

- 12 Q. By God's righteous judgement we deserve to be punished, both now and forever: how then, can we hope to escape punishment and return to his* kind favour?** *[SCat 85]*

A. God demands that his* justice be satisfied.¹

Therefore full payment must be made,
either by ourselves, or by another.²

¹ Ex 23:7; Rom 2:1–11, esp. vv. 5–8

² Isa 53:11; Rom 8:3–4

- 13 Q. Can we ourselves pay this debt?** *[SCat 19, 20]*

A. Certainly not.

Rather, we increase our guilt every day.¹

¹ Matt 6:12; Rom 2:1, 4–5

- 14 Q. Can any mere creature—any at all—pay this debt for us?** *[SCat –]*

A. No: for firstly,

God will not punish any other creature
for humanity's guilt;¹

and secondly,

no mere creature can bear the weight
of God's eternal wrath against sin,
and release others from it.²

¹ Ezek 18:4, 20; Heb 2:14–18

² Ps 130:3; Ps 49:7–9

- 15 Q. What kind of mediator and deliverer, then, must we look for?** *[SCat 21]*

A. One who is truly human¹ and truly righteous,²
yet stronger than any creature:³
that is, one who at the same time is truly God.⁴

¹ Heb 2:17; 1 Cor 15:21; Rom 1:3

² Heb 7:26; 2 Cor 5:21; Isa 53:9

³ Luke 11:20–22; Col 2:14–15; John 1:29; Isa 53:4; 1 Pet 2:24

⁴ Isa 7:14; Isa 9:6; Jer 3:6; John 1:1

Lord's Day 6

**16 Q. Why must the mediator
be truly human and truly righteous?**

[SCat –

- A.** He must be truly human
because God's justice demands
that the human nature which has sinned
must pay for its sin.¹

He must be truly righteous
because one who is a sinner
can never pay for others.²

1 Rom 5:12, 15; 1 Cor 15:21; Heb 2:14–16

2 Heb 7:26, 27; 1 Pet 3:18

**17 Q. Why must he also
be truly God?**

[SCat –

- A.** He must be truly God
so that by the strength of his divine nature,¹
he might bear in his human nature²
the weight of God's anger,³
and obtain for us
and restore to us
righteousness and life.⁴

1 Isa 9:6; Isa 63:3

2 Isa 53:4, 11

3 Deut 4:24; Nah 1:6; Ps 130:3

4 Isa 53:5, 11; John 3:16; 2 Cor 5:21

**18 Q. But who is this mediator—
truly God, truly human and truly righteous?**

[SCat 21

- A.** Our Lord Jesus Christ,¹
who is given to us
to set us free completely²
and make us right with God.³

1 1 Tim 2:5; Matt 1:21–23; Luke 2:11

2 Luke 4:18; Gal 5:1; Heb 2:14–16; Rom 8:1–2; John 8:34, 36

3 1 Cor 1:30; Rom 5:1, 10–11; 2 Cor 5:18

19 Q. Where do you find this out?

[SCat 3

- A.** From the holy gospel,
which God himself* first revealed in Paradise¹
Later he* proclaimed it
through the holy patriarchs² and prophets,³
and portrayed it
through the sacrifices
and other rites of the law.⁴
And finally he* fulfilled it
through his* own dear son.⁵

1 Gen 3:15

2 Gen 22:18; Gen 49:10

3 Isa 53, esp. vv. 4–6, 12; Isa 49:6; Jer 23:5–6; Mic 7:18–20; Acts 10:43;
Rom 1:1–4; Heb 1:1–2

4 John 5:46; Heb 10:1–10, esp. vv. 1, 10; Col 2:16–17

5 Gal 4:4–5; Rom 10:4; Mark 1:15 with v. 1; Gal 3:24; Col 2:17

Salvation by Faith

Lord's Day 7

**20 Q. Is everyone saved through Christ,
just as all were lost through Adam?**

[SCat 20

- A.** No:¹ only those are saved
who by true faith
are grafted into Christ
and accept all his blessings.²

1 Matt 7:14

2 John 3:16, 18, 36; Rom 3:22; Rom 11:20

THE APOSTLES' CREED

21 Q. What is true Faith?

[SCat 86]

- A. True faith is a knowledge and conviction
by which I accept as true
all that God has shown us in his* Word.¹

It is also² a heart-felt trust and assurance,³
created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel,⁴
that, out of sheer grace
earned for us by Christ alone,⁵
not only others, but I too,⁶ by God's free gift
have had my sins forgiven,
have been declared righteous before him*,
and have received salvation forever.⁷

1 John 17:3, 17; Heb 11:1–3

2 Jas 2:19

3 Rom 4:18–21; Rom 10:10; Rom 5:1; Heb 4:14–16

4 Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:21; Rom 10:17; John 3:5; Matt 16:15–17; Acts 16:14

5 Eph 2:8–10; Rom 3:21–26; Gal 2:16

6 Gal 2:20

7 Acts 10:43; Rom 4:4–9; Matt 5:6; Heb 10:10; John 3:16; Rom 1:17;
Rom 8:28–39, esp. vv. 30, 38–39

22 Q. What, then, must a Christian believe?

[SCat 2]

- A. All that God promises us in the gospel,¹
which the articles of our undoubted Christian faith,
confessed throughout the world in the Apostles' Creed,
teach us in a summary.

1 John 20:30–31; Mark 1:14–15; Matt 28:18–20

23 Q. What are these articles?	[SCat –
A. <i>I believe in God the Father* almighty, creator of heaven and earth.</i>	Art. 1
<i>I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. The third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven; he is seated at the right hand of God the Father* almighty, and from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.</i>	2 3 4 5 6 7
<i>I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.</i>	8 9 10 11 12

The Trinity

Lord’s Day 8

24 Q. How are these three articles divided?	[SCat 6
A. Into three parts: God the Father and our creation; God the Son and our deliverance; God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification.	

25 Q. Since there is just one God,¹ why do you speak of three persons — Father*, Son and Holy Spirit?	[SCat 5
A. Because that is how God has revealed himself* in his* Word; ² these three distinct persons are the one true, eternal God.	

1 Deut 6:4; Isa 44:6; 1 Cor 8:4, 6

2 Luke 4:18 cf. Isa 61:1; Matt 3:16–17; Matt 28:18–19; John 14:26; John 15:26; 2 Cor 13:14;
Gal 4:6; Eph 2:18; Tit 3:5, 6

God the Father*

Lord's Day 9

**26 Q. What do you believe when you say
I believe in God the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth?***

[SCat 8, 9

A. That the eternal Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who out of nothing made heaven and earth
and all that is in them,¹
who still upholds and rules them
by his* eternal counsel and providence,²
is my God and Father*
because of Christ his* Son.³

I trust him* so much, that I do not doubt
that whatever I need for body and soul
he* will provide;⁴
and whatever hardships he* sends me
in this life of sorrow,
he will turn to my good.⁵

He* is able to do this because he* is almighty God;⁶
he* desires to do this because he* is a faithful Father*.⁷

1 Gen chs 1–2; Ex 20:11; Acts 4:24; Acts 14:11; Ps 33:6; Isa 44:24

2 Ps 104, esp vv. 27–30; Matt 10:29; Matt 6:30; Eph 1:11

3 John 1:12–13; Rom 8:15–16; Gal 4:4–7; Eph 1:5

4 Ps 55:22; Matt 6:25–26; Luke 12:22–31

5 Rom 8:28

6 Gen 18:14; Rom 8:31–39

7 Matt 7:9–11

Lord's Day 10

27 Q. What do you mean by the providence of God?

[SCat 8, 11

- A.** Providence is the almighty, ever-present power of God¹
by which he* still upholds,
as though with his* own hand,
heaven and earth and all creatures,²
and so governs them that
leaf and blade,
rain and drought,
fruitful and lean years,
food and drink,
health and sickness,
riches and poverty³—
indeed, all things,
come to us not by chance
but from his* fatherly* hand.⁴

1 Acts 17:24–28; Jer 23:23–24

2 Heb 1:3

3 Jer 5:24; Acts 14:17; John 9:3; Prov 22:2

4 Prov 16:33; Matt 10:29; Jas 1:17

**28 Q. How does it help us to know
that God has created all things
and still upholds them by his* providence?**

[SCat –

- A.** We can be patient when things go against us,¹
thankful when things go well,²
and confident for the future
in our faithful God and Father*,³
fully trusting that nothing in creation
can separate us from his* love;⁴
for all things created are so entirely in his* hand
that without his* will
they cannot even move.⁵

1 Job 1:21–22; Jas 1:3

2 Deut 8:10; 1 Thess 5:18

3 Ps 55:22; Rom 5:3–5

4 Rom 8:38–39

5 Job 1:12; 2:6; Prov 21:1; Acts 17:24–28

God the Son: Jesus Christ

Lord's Day 11

29 Q. Why is the Son of God called *Jesus*, that is, *Saviour*?

[SCat –

- A.** Because it is he who saves us from our sins¹ and because no salvation may be sought for elsewhere or found in anyone else.²

¹ Matt 1:21; Heb 7:25

² Acts 4:11–12; John 15:5; 1 John 5:11–12

30 Q. Do those truly believe in Jesus, the only Saviour, who seek their salvation and security from saints, in themselves, or anywhere else?

[SCat –

- A.** No: though they may boast of being his, they in fact deny Jesus, the only Saviour and deliverer.¹

For one of two things must be true:
either Jesus is not a perfect Saviour,
or those who accept him in true faith
have all they need for their salvation.²

¹ Col 5:4; 1 Cor 1:12–13

² Col 1:19–20; Col 2:10; 1 John 1:7

Lord's Day 12

**31 Q. Why is he called *Christ*,
that is, *Anointed*?**

[SCat 23–26

- A.** Because he is ordained by God the Father*
and anointed with the Holy Spirit¹
to be our chief prophet and teacher²
 who fully reveals to us
 God's secret will and counsel
 for our deliverance;³

our only high priest⁴
 who has delivered us
 by the one sacrifice of his body,⁵
 and who pleads our cause continually
 before the Father*;⁶

and our eternal king⁷
 who governs us by his Word and Spirit,
 and who guards us and keeps us
 in the deliverance he has won for us.⁸

1 Luke 3:21–22; Luke 4:14–19 cf. Isa 61:1; Heb 1:9 cf. Ps 45:7

2 Acts 3:22 cf. Deut 18:15

3 John 1:18; John 15:15

4 Heb 7:17 cf. Ps 110:4

5 Heb 10:11–14; Heb 9:12

6 Rom 8:34; Heb 9:24

7 Matt 21:5 cf. Zech 9:9; Isa 9:6–7; Luke 1:32–33

8 Matt 28:18–20; Rom 8:1–14, esp. vv. 4, 7–9; John 10:28; Rev 12:10–11

32 Q. But why are you called a Christian?

[SCat –

- A.** Because by faith I am a member of Christ¹
 and so I share in his anointing.²

I am anointed
 as a prophet to confess his name;³
 as a priest to present myself to him,
 a living sacrifice of thanks;⁴
 and as a ruler to strive with a free conscience
 against sin and the devil
 in this life,⁵
 and afterwards to reign with Christ
 over all creation
 for all eternity.⁶

1 1 Cor 12:12–13, 27

2 1 John 2:27; Acts 2:17

3 Matt 10:32; Rom 10:10

4 1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rom 12:1

5 Rom 6:12–13; Gal 5:16–17; Eph 6:11; 1 Tim 1:18–19

6 2 Tim 2:12

God's Only Son, Our Lord

Lord's Day 13

33 Q. Why is he called *God's only Son* when we too are children of God?

[SCat 34

A. Because Christ alone
is the eternal, natural Son of God¹
We are God's adopted children—
adopted through grace, for Christ's sake.²

1 John 1:1–3, 14, 18; Heb ch 1, esp vv. 1–2

2 Gal 4:4–7; Rom 8:14–17; John 1:12; Eph 1:5–6

35 Q. Why do you call him *our Lord*?

[SCat –

A. Because
not with gold or silver
but with his precious blood,¹
he has set us free
from sin and from the tyranny of the devil,²
and has bought us,
body and soul,
to be his very own.³

1 1 Pet 1:18–19

2 Col 1:13–14; Heb 2:14–15

3 1 Cor 6:20; 1 Tim 2:5–6

Born of the Virgin Mary

Lord's Day 14

**35 Q. What does it mean
that he *was conceived by the Holy Spirit*
and *born of the virgin Mary*?**

[SCat 22, 27]

A. That God's eternal Son,
who is and remains
true and eternal God,¹
took to himself,
through the working of the Holy Spirit,²
from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary,³
true human nature⁴
so that he might become David's true Son,⁵
and like his brothers and sisters in every way⁶
except for sin.⁷

1 John 1:1; John 10:30–36; Acts 13:33 cf. Ps 2:7; 1 John 5:20; Col 1:15–17

2 Luke 1:35; Matt 1:20

3 Gal 4:4; Matt 1:18–23; Luke 1:31, 42, 43

4 John 1:14; Rom 5:14

5 Rom 1:3; 2 Sam 7:12–13; Luke 1:32; Acts 2:29–30

6 Phil 2:7; Heb 2:14; 17

7 Heb 4:15; Heb 7:26–27

**36 Q. What benefit do you receive
from the holy conception and birth of Christ?**

[SCat 32]

A. That he is our mediator,¹
and that, with his innocence and perfect holiness,
he removes from God's sight my sin—
mine since I was conceived.²

1 1 Tim 2:5–6; Heb 9:13–15

2 Ps 51:5; 1 Pet 1:18–19; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 3:18; Isa 53:11; Rom 8:3–4

Suffered under Pontius Pilate

Lord's Day 15

37 Q. What do you understand when you say that Christ *suffered*?

[SCat 27]

- A.** That during all his life on earth,
but especially at the end,
Christ bore in body and soul
the wrath of God
against the sin of the whole human race.¹
- This he did, so that
by his suffering as the only atoning sacrifice²
he might deliver us, body and soul,
from eternal condemnation,³
and gain for us
the grace of God, righteousness, and eternal life.⁴

1 Isa 53:4–6; 1 Pet 2:24; 1 Pet 3:18

2 1 Cor 5:7; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10; Rom 3:25; Heb 10:14

3 Gal 3:13; Rom 8:1–4; Col 1:13–14; 1 Pet 1:18–19

4 Rom 3:24–26; 2 Cor 5:21; John 3:16; Heb 9:15

38 Q. Why did he suffer *under Pontius Pilate* as judge?

[SCat 27]

- A.** He, though innocent,
was condemned by an earthly judge,¹
and so freed us
from the just and heavy judgement of God
that was to fall upon us.²
- This he did, so that
by his suffering as the only atoning sacrifice²
he might deliver us, body and soul,
from eternal condemnation,³
and gain for us
the grace of God, righteousness, and eternal life.⁴

1 Luke 23:12–24, esp. vv. 22–24; Matt 27:24–26

2 Isa 53:4–5; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13

39 Q. Is it important that he was *crucified* instead of dying some other death?

[SCat 27]

- A.** Yes:
this death assures me
that he shouldered the curse
which rested on me;
for death on the cross was accursed by God.¹

¹ Gal 3:10–13; Deut 21:23

Lord's Day 16

40 Q. Why did Christ have to go all the way to death?

[SCat 27]

- A.** Because God's truth¹ and justice are such that nothing could pay for our sin except the death of the Son of God.²

¹ Gen 2:17

² Rom 8:3–4; Phil 2:8; Heb 2:9

41 Q. Why was he *buried*?

[SCat 27]

- A.** His burial testifies that he was really dead.¹

¹ John 19:38–42; Isa 53:9; 1 Cor 15:3–4

42 Q. Since Christ has died for us, why do we still have to die?

[SCat 32, 35, 37]

- A.** Our death is not a payment for our sins:¹ it is rather an end to our sinning, and our entrance into eternal life.²

¹ Ps 49:7; 1 Thess 5:9–10

² Rom 6:7; John 5:24; Phil 1:21–23

43 Q. What further benefit do we receive from Christ's sacrifice and death on the cross?

[SCat 32, 35]

- A.** Through Christ's overcoming death¹
our old selves are crucified,
 put to death,
 and buried with him,
so that the evil desires of the flesh
 may rule in us no longer,²
but that instead
 we may dedicate ourselves to him
 as an offering of thankfulness.³

1 John 19:30; Heb 7:27; Phil 2:8–9

2 Rom 6:6–7; Rom 6:11–12; Col 2:11–12

3 Rom 12:1; Eph 5:1–2; Luke 1:68–75

Descended to the Dead

44 Q. Why did Christ suffer the torments of hell?^a

[SCat 27]

- A.** That in my greatest troubles and temptations
I may be assured
that Christ my Lord
 by the unspeakable anguish, pains and terrors
 his soul endured
 on the cross, but also earlier,
has rescued me
from the anguish and torment of hell.¹

1 Matt 26:38–39; Heb 5:7–8; Matt 27:45–46; Isa ch. 53; John 1:29

a The original wording is, **Why does the Creed add, He descended into hell?** Calvin interpreted this figuratively of Christ's earthly sufferings, and in this superb question and answer the Catechism follows his lead. The word *hell*, in both the Greek and Latin of the Creed, is best translated *lower places* or *underground* and is derived from Eph 4:9. The Creed refers to Hades, the place of the dead, whether evil or good. In ancient times this was often thought of as a literal place under the earth, which Calvin rightly rejects (*Institutes II.xv1.9*).

For study groups wishing also to deal with the intended meaning of the Creed, the following might be useful. It is not, of course, part of the original Catechism.

Why is it that Christ descended to the dead?

That Christ,
 having suffered the humiliation of death
 and the burial of his body,
might await the vindication of God¹
with those who had died in faith,²
becoming one with them
 that they, and I too, might know that
 neither life nor death,
 height nor depth
can separate us from the love of God
in Christ Jesus our Lord.³

1 Matt 12:40 with Jon 1:17–2:6; Eph 4:9; Acts 2:23–24, 31

2 Heb 11:13; Luke 23:40–43 with Luke 16:22–23

3 Rom 14:8–9; Rom 8:38–39; Rev 1:17–18

Rose Again from the Dead

Lord's Day 17

45 Q. How does Christ's resurrection benefit us?

[SCat 28, 32]

A. First, by his resurrection
he has overcome death,
so that he might make us
sharers in the righteousness
which he won for us when he died.¹

Second, by his might
we too are already
raised up to a new life.²

And third, in his resurrection
we have a sure pledge
of our own glorious resurrection.³

1 Rev 1:17–18; Rom 4:25; 1 Pet 1:3–5; 1 Cor 15:16–20

2 Rom 6:5–11; Col 3:1–4; Eph 2:4–6

3 Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:12–23, esp. vv. 20, 22; Phil 3:20–21

Ascended Into Heaven

Lord's Day 18

**46 Q. What do you mean by saying
he ascended into heaven?**

[SCat 28]

A. That Christ,
in the sight of his disciples,
was lifted up from earth to heaven¹
and is there for our good²
until he comes again
to judge the living and the dead.³

1 Acts 1:9–11; Luke 24:50–51

2 Eph 1:20–22; Heb 9:24; Heb 4:14–16; Heb 7:23–25; Rom 8:34

3 Acts 1:11; Matt 16:27; Matt 25:31–46, esp. vv. 31–32; Heb 9:27

47 Q. But isn't Christ with us till the end of the world as he promised us?¹

[SCat 28]

- A.** Christ is truly human and truly God;
in his human nature he is not now on earth;²
but in his divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit
he is not absent from us for a moment.³

1 Matt 28:20

2 Acts 3:19–21; Acts 1:9–11; John 14:1–2; John 16:28

3 Matt 28:18–20; John 14:16–19; John 15:5; Rom 8:9

48 Q. But aren't the two natures in Christ separated from each other, if his human nature is not found wherever his divinity is?

[SCat 21]

- A.** Certainly not:
for his divinity has no limits
and is present everywhere.¹

So it must follow

that his divinity indeed goes beyond the bounds
of the humanity he has taken,
but nevertheless is in that human nature,
and remains united to it
in his one person.²

1 Jer 23:23–24; Acts 7:48–49 cf. Isa 66:1

2 John 11:15; Matt 28:6; Col 2:9; John 1:14

49 Q. What benefit do we gain from Christ's ascension into heaven?

[SCat 32]

- A.** First, that he pleads our cause in heaven
in the presence of his Father*.¹

Second, that we have our flesh in heaven:

taken there as a sure pledge
that Christ our head
will take us, his members,
there to himself.²

And third, that he sends us his Spirit,
sent back as a further pledge:³

by whose power we make our goal
not earthly things,
but things above where Christ is,
seated at God's right hand.⁴

1 1 John 2:1; Rom 8:34

2 John 14:2; John 17:24; Eph 2:4–6

3 John 16:7; Acts 2:33; John 14:16; 2 Cor 1:22; 2 Cor 5:5

4 Col 3:1–4

Seated at the Right Hand of God

Lord's Day 19

50 Q. Why does it next say, *[SCat 28]*
he is seated at the right hand of God?

A. Christ ascended to heaven
there to show that he is head of his Church,¹
and that through him the Father* rules all things.²

¹ Eph 1:20–23; Col 1:18

² Matt 28:18; John 5:22–23

51 Q. How does this glory *[SCat 32]*
of Christ our head benefit us?

A. First, through his Holy Spirit
he pours out gifts from heaven
on us his members.¹

Second, by his power
he defends and keeps us safe
against all enemies.²

¹ Acts 2:33; Eph 4:7–8, 11–12

² Ps 110:1–2; Rev 19:11–16; John 10:27–30

Will Come to Judge the Living and the Dead

**52 Q. How does it comfort you
that Christ will come again
to judge the living and the dead?**

[SCat 28, 32]

A. In all my sorrow and persecution
with uplifted head I look to heaven,
and in sure hope await as judge
the very one
 who has offered himself
 to God's judgement already
 in my place,
 and so removed from me
 the whole curse.¹

He will send all his and my enemies
 to everlasting punishment;
but will take me,
 and all his chosen ones,
along with him
into the joy and glory of heaven.²

1 Phil 3:20; Luke 21:28; Rom 8:22–25; Tit 2:13–14

2 Matt 25:31–46, esp. vv. 34, 41; 2 Thess 1:6–10

God the Holy Spirit

Lord's Day 20

**53 Q. What do you believe
concerning the Holy Spirit?**

[SCat 29–31]

A. First, that he*,
 with the Father* and the Son
is true and eternal God.¹

Second, that he* is given to me,²
 to make me share,
 by true faith,
 in Christ and all his blessings,³
 to comfort me,⁴
 and to remain with me forever.⁵

1 Matt 28:19 with Isa 42:8; Acts 5:3–4; 1 Cor 3:16; 1 Cor 6:19

2 Gal 4:6; 1 Cor 6:19; 2 Cor 1:21–22; Eph 1:13

3 Gal 3:14; 1 Pet 1:21

4 John 15:26; Acts 9:31

5 John 14:16; 1 Pet 4:14

The Holy Catholic Church

Lord's Day 21

**54 Q. What do you believe,
concerning *the holy catholic Church*?**

[SCat –

A. I believe that the Son of God
through his Spirit and Word,¹
out of the whole human race,²
from the beginning of the world to its end,³
gathers, protects, and preserves for himself⁴
a fellowship
chosen for eternal life⁵
and united in true faith.⁶

And I believe that of this Church I am⁷
and always will remain
a living member.⁸

1 Matt 3:11; John 1:33; Rom 8:9; Acts 1:8; Acts 9:31; Acts 20:28; Mark 13:11;
John 10:14–16; Rom 1:16; Rom 10:14–17; Eph 5:25–27

2 Rev 5:9–10; Rev 7:9–10

3 Ps 100, esp. v. 5; Ps 136; Jer 31:35–36; Isa 59:21; 1 Cor 11:26

4 John 10:14–16; Matt 16:18; John 10:28–30

5 Rom 8:28–30; Eph 1:10–14

6 Acts 2:42–47; Eph 4:1–6

7 1 John 3:14; 1 John 3:19–21

8 1 Pet 1:3–5; 1 Cor 1:7–9; John 10:27–28

**55 Q. What do you understand
by *the communion of saints*?**

[SCat –

A. First that believers, one and all,
as members of Christ's body,
share in him
and all his gifts and treasures.¹

And second, that each of us
should consider ourselves bound
to use our gifts
freely and with joy
to serve, aid and enrich
the other members.²

1 1 John 1:3; Rom 8:32; 1 Cor 12:12–13; 1 Cor 6:17; 1 Cor 12:4–7; Eph 1:3–8

2 Rom 12:4–8; 1 Cor 12:20–27; 1 Cor 13:1–7; Phil 2:4–8

The Forgiveness of Sins

56 Q. What do you believe concerning *the forgiveness of sins*?

[SCat 36]

A. I believe that God,
because of Christ's atonement,
will no more remember my sins,
nor my sinful nature
against which I need to struggle all my life.¹

Rather, in grace he* grants me
the righteousness of Christ
to free me forever from judgement.²

1 Jer 31:33–34; 2 Cor 5:19; Rom 7:21–25; 1 John 1:7; 1 John 2:2; Ps 103:3, 10–12

2 2 Cor 5:21; John 5:24; John 3:18; Rom 8:1–2

The Resurrection of the Body

Lord's Day 22

**57 Q. What comfort does
the resurrection of the body offer you?**

[SCat 37, 38]

A. That not only shall my soul
after this life
be taken up
to Christ as my head,¹
but also this my flesh
raised by the power of Christ
will be reunited with my soul
and made like Christ's glorious body.²

1 Luke 23:40–43; Phil 1:21–23

2 1 Cor 15:20; 1 Cor 15:42–46; 1 John 3:2; Phil 3:20–21

The Life Everlasting

58 Q. How does the article concerning *life everlasting* comfort you?

[SCat 38]

- A.** Even as I now already
experience in my heart
the beginning of eternal joy,¹
so after this life
I will have perfect blessedness
such as no eye has seen,
no ear has heard,
and no human heart has ever imagined:
a blessedness in which
to praise God forever.²

1 2 Cor 5:6–8; Rom 14:17; Ps 72:24–26

2 1 Cor 2:9; Isa 51:11; Rev 21:1–4

RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE GOD

Lord's Day 23

59 Q. How, though, does it help you now that you believe all this?

[SCat 32]

A. Now, in Christ,
I am righteous before God,
and an heir of everlasting life.¹

1 Rom 5:1–12; Rom 1:17 cf. Hab 2:4; John 3:36

60 Q. How are you righteous before God now that you believe all this?

[SCat 30, 36, 85]

A. Only by true faith in Jesus Christ:¹
That is,
although my conscience accuses me
that I have grievously sinned
against all God's commandments
and never kept any of them,²
and that I still
am always inclined
to all evil,³
nevertheless God,
without any merit of mine,⁴
out of sheer grace,⁵
grants and credits to me⁶
the perfect satisfaction,
righteousness, and holiness of Christ,⁷
as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner,
as if I had been perfectly obedient
as Christ was obedient for me,⁸
if only I accept this gift
with a believing heart.⁹

1 Rom 5:1; Rom 3:21–28; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8–9; Phil 3:8–9

2 Rom 3:9–20

3 Rom 7:23

4 Tit 3:4–5

5 Rom 3:24; Eph 2:8

6 Rom 4:3–5 cf. Gen 15:6; 2 Cor 5:17–19; 1 John 2:1–2

7 1 John 2:1–2

8 Rom 4:24–25; 2 Cor 5:21

9 Acts 16:30–31; John 3:18; Rom 3:21–22

**61 Q. Why do you say
that you are righteous
by faith alone?**

[SCat 33]

A. Not because God accepts me
for the worthiness of my faith.

Rather, only Christ's satisfaction,
righteousness and holiness
make me righteous before God,¹
and I can receive this righteousness
and make it mine
in no other way
than by faith alone.²

¹ Isa 53:4–6; 1 Cor 1:30–31

² 1 John 5:10–12; Rom 10:10

Lord's Day 24

**62 Q. But why can't the good we do
make us righteous before God,
or at least help in this?**

[SCat 82]

A. Because the righteousness
which can stand before God's seat of judgement
must be entirely perfect
and fully meet the measure of God's law;¹
but even the best we do in this life
is imperfect and stained with sin.²

¹ Rom 3:20; Gal 3:10 cf. Deut 27:26

² Isa 64:6

**63 Q. What? How can you say
that our good works earn nothing
when God promises to reward them
in this life and the next?**

[SCat –

A. This reward¹ is not earned:
it is a gift of grace.²

¹ Heb 11:6; Matt 5:12; 2 Tim 4:7–8

² Luke 17:10

**64 Q. But doesn't this teaching
make people wicked, and careless about sin?**

[SCat –

- A.** No: it is impossible
that those grafted into Christ
by true faith
should not produce fruits of true gratitude.¹

¹ Luke 6:43–45; John 15:5

THE SACRAMENTS

Lord's Day 25

**65 Q. Since, then, we share in Christ
and all his blessings
by faith alone,
where does this faith come from?**

[SCat 88–90

- A.** From the Holy Spirit,¹
who creates it in our hearts
by the preaching of the holy gospel,²
and confirms us in it
by the use of the holy sacraments.³

¹ John 3:5; Eph 2:8; 1 Cor 2:9–10, 14

² Rom 10:17; 1 Pet 1:23–25

³ Matt 28:19–20; 1 Cor 10:16

66 Q. What are the sacraments?

[SCat 91–92

- A.** Sacraments are visible, holy signs and seals
appointed by God.

They were appointed
so that by their use
God might more fully declare
and make certain to us
the promise of the gospel:¹

that is, that God,
by grace alone,
because of Christ's one sacrifice
accomplished on the cross,²
forgives our sins
and grants to us eternal life.³

¹ Gen 17:11; Rom 4:11; Deut 30:6

² Rom 4:15–16; Heb 10:10

³ Matt 26:27–28; Acts 2:38

**67 Q. Are both these, then,
the Word and the sacraments,
meant to fix our faith on the sacrifice
of Jesus Christ on the cross
as the only ground of our salvation?**

[SCat 89, 90]

A. Yes, indeed:
for the Holy Spirit
teaches us in the gospel
and assures us through the holy sacraments,
that our entire salvation rests
on Christ's one sacrifice for us on the cross.¹

¹ Rom 6:3; 1 Cor 11:26; Gal 3:24–27

**68 Q. How many sacraments
has Christ appointed in the New Testament?**

[SCat 93]

A. Two: Baptism¹ and the Lord's Supper.²

¹ Matt 28:19

² 1 Cor 11:23–26

Baptism

Lord's Day 26

**69 Q. How does baptism show you and assure you
that Christ's one sacrifice on the cross
is for you personally?**

[SCat 94]

A. In this way:
that Christ has appointed this outward washing¹
and added the promise that
as surely as water
washes away filth from my body,
so certainly his blood and Spirit
wash away my soul's uncleanness;
that is, all my sins.²

¹ Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38

² Rom 6:3–10; Rev 7:14; Matt 3:11; Acts 22:16; 1 Pet 3:21

**70 Q. What does it mean
to be washed with Christ's blood and Spirit?**

[SCat 94

- A.** To be washed with Christ's blood
means that God, through grace,
has forgiven our sins
for the sake of Christ's blood
poured out for us
in his sacrifice on the cross.¹

To be washed with Christ's Spirit
means that the Holy Spirit
has renewed us
and set us apart
to be members of Christ
so that more and more
we may die to sin
and live holy, blameless lives.²

1 Zech 13:1; Rev 1:5; Eph 1:7–8; Heb 12:24; 1 Pet 1:2; Rev 7:14

2 Ezek 36:25–27; 1 Cor 6:11; 1 Cor 12:13; John 3:5–8; Col 2:11–12; Rom 6:4

**71 Q. Where has Christ promised
that he will wash us with his blood and Spirit
as surely as we are washed with the waters of baptism?**

[SCat –

- A.** In the institution of Baptism, where he says,
Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations:
*baptise them into the name
of the Father* and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*¹

And,

Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved,
*but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*²

This promise is also repeated
when Scripture calls baptism
*the washing of rebirth*³
and *the washing away of sins.*⁴

1 Matt 28:19

2 Mark 16:16 [this verse is missing from many early manuscripts]; 1 Pet 3:21

3 Tit 3:5

4 Acts 22:16

Lord's Day 27

72 Q. Does this outward washing with water itself wash away sins?

[SCat –

- A.** No, for only the blood of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit cleanse us from all sins.¹

1 Matt 3:11; 1 Pet 3:21; 1 John 1:7; 1 Cor 6:11

73 Q. Why then does the Holy Spirit call baptism *the washing of rebirth and the washing away of sins*?

[SCat –

- A.** God speaks this way with good reason:

firstly, to teach us by these words
that the blood and Spirit of Christ
take our sins away
just as water cleans filth from our bodies;¹

but also, much more, to assure us
by this divine pledge and sign,
that we are washed from our sins spiritually
just as truly
as we are outwardly washed with water.²

1 Rev 1:5; Rev 7:14; 1 Cor 6:11

2 Acts 2:38; Gal 3:27; Rom 6:3–4

74 Q. Should infants, too, be baptised?

[SCat 95

- A.** Yes. Infants as well as adults belong to God's covenant and people.¹

Through Christ's blood,
the forgiveness of sins
and the Holy Spirit, who brings about faith,
are promised to them
no less than to adults.²

Therefore, by baptism,
the sign of the covenant,
infants are to be grafted into the Christian Church
and distinguished from the children of unbelievers.³

This was done in the Old Testament
by circumcision,⁴
in place of which baptism
was appointed in the New Testament.⁵

1 Gen 17:7; Matt 19:14

2 Isa 44:1–3; Acts 2:38–39; Acts 16:31

3 Acts 10:47 with 1 Cor 7:14

4 Gen 17:9–14

5 Col 2:11–13

The Lord's Supper

Lord's Day 28

75 Q. How does the Lord's Supper show you and assure you that you share in Christ's one sacrifice on the cross and in all his gifts?

[SCat 96]

A. In this way:

That Christ has commanded me
and all believers
to eat this bread and drink this cup,
and joined to his command these promises:¹

First,
as surely as I see with my eyes
the bread of the Lord broken for me
and the cup given for me,
so surely
was his body offered for me,
and his blood shed for me
on the cross.

Second,
as surely as I receive
from the hand of the one who serves,
and taste with my mouth
the bread and cup of the Lord,
given to me
as sure signs
of Christ's body and blood,
so surely
does he himself
nourish and refresh my soul
for eternal life
with his crucified body
and shed blood.

¹ Matt 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19–20; 1 Cor 11:23–25

**76 Q. What does it mean
to eat the crucified body of Christ
and to drink his shed blood?**

A. It means to accept
with a believing heart
all the sufferings and the death of Christ,
and by believing
to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.¹

But it also means to be so united
more and more
to Christ's blessed body
through the Holy Spirit,
who lives both in Christ and in us,²
that,
although he is in heaven³
and we are on earth,
nevertheless
we are flesh of his flesh
and bone of his bone,⁴
and live and are governed forever
by the one Spirit,
as members of our body are
by one soul.⁵

1 John 6:50–54; John 6:35, 40

2 1 Cor 12:12–13; 1 Cor 10:16–17; John 6:55–56

3 1 Cor 11:26; Acts 1:9–11; Col 3:1

4 Eph 5:29–30; 1 Cor 6:15–17; 1 John 4:13

5 1 John 3:24; John 6:56–58; John 15:1–6; Eph 4:15–16

**77 Q. Where does Christ promise
to nourish and refresh believers
with his body and blood
as surely as they eat this bread and drink this cup?**

[SCat –

A. In the institution of the Lord’s Supper, which reads as follows:

*The Lord Jesus
on the night he was betrayed
took bread,
and when he had given thanks
he broke it and said,
“This is my body, which is for you;
do this in remembrance of me.”
In the same way
after supper he took the cup, saying,
“This cup is the new covenant in my blood;
do this, whenever you drink it,
in remembrance of me.”
For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup,
you proclaim the Lord’s death
until he comes.¹*

This promise is repeated by Paul in these words:

*Is not the cup of thanksgiving
for which we give thanks
a participation in the blood of Christ?
And is not the bread that we break
a participation in the body of Christ?
Because there is one loaf,
we, who are many, are one body,
for we all partake of the one loaf.²*

1 1 Cor 11:23–26

2 1 Cor 10:16–17

Lord's Day 29

78 Q. Are the bread and wine changed into the real body and blood of Christ?

[SCat 96]

- A.** No:
just as the water of baptism
is not changed into Christ's blood
and does not itself wash away sins
but is simply God's sign and assurance of this,¹
so too the bread of the Lord's Supper
is not changed into the actual body of Christ;²
even though it is called the body of Christ³
in keeping with the nature
and customary language of sacraments.⁴

1 Eph 5:26; Tit 3:5

2 Matt 26:26–29

3 1 Cor 10:16–17; 1 Cor 11:26–28

4 Gen 17:10–11; Ex 12:11, 13; 1 Pet 3:21; 1 Cor 10:1–4

78 Q. Why then does Christ call the bread his body, and the cup his blood or the new covenant in his blood; while Paul speaks of a participation in Christ's body and blood?

[SCat 96]

- A.** Christ speaks this way with good reason:
firstly, to teach us by these words
that as bread and wine
nourish our present life,
so too his crucified body and shed blood
truly nourish our souls for eternal life;¹
but also, much more, to assure us
by this visible sign and pledge,
that we share in his true body and blood,
through the Holy Spirit's work,
just as truly
as our mouths receive these holy signs
in his remembrance,²
and that all of his suffering and obedience are ours
just as surely
as if we ourselves
had suffered and paid for our sins.³

1 John 6:51, 55

2 1 Cor 10:16–17; 1 Cor 11:26

3 Rom 6:5–11

Lord's Day 30

80 Q. How does the Lord's Supper differ from the Roman Catholic mass?

[SCat –

- A. The Lord's Supper testifies to us
that all our sins
have been fully forgiven
through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ,
which he himself accomplished
on the cross once for all.¹

It also testifies to us
that the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ,²
who is with his true body
is now in heaven
at the right hand of the Father*,³
where we are to worship him.⁴

But the Mass teaches
that the living and the dead
do not have their sins forgiven
through the sufferings of Christ,
unless Christ is still offered for them
daily by the priests.

It also teaches
that Christ is bodily present
in the form of bread and wine
where he is therefore to be worshipped.

Therefore the Mass is
at its heart
nothing but a denial
of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ
and an idolatry utterly condemned.⁵

1 John 19:30; Heb 7:27; Heb 9:12, 25–26; Heb 10:10–18

2 1 Cor 6:17; 1 Cor 10:16–17

3 Luke 24:36–43, 50–51; Heb 8:1; Phil 3:20

4 Acts 7:55–56, 59

5 Heb 1:3; Ex 20:3–5; Col 3:1–3

81 Q. Who are to come to the Lord's table?

[SCat 97]

- A.** Those who are grieved with themselves
because of their sins,
but yet trust that their sins are pardoned
and their ongoing weakness is covered
by the suffering and death of Christ,
and who also desire
more and more
to strengthen their faith
and put right their life.

But hypocrites and those who do not repent
eat and drink judgement on themselves.¹

¹ 1 Cor 11:26–32; 1 Cor 10:19–22

**82 Q. May those be admitted to the Lord's Supper
who show, by their words and their lives,
that they are unbelieving and ungodly?**

[SCat 97]

- A.** No; for them God's covenant
would be treated with contempt,
and his* anger brought down
on the whole congregation.¹
Therefore the Christian Church is bound,
as commanded by Christ and his apostles,
to exclude such people
by the keys of the kingdom* of heaven
until they amend their lives.²

¹ 1 Cor 11:17–32; Ps 50:14–16; Isa 1:11–17; Isa 66:3–4

² 1 Cor 11:29; 1 Cor 5:9–13; Matt 16:19

The Keys of the Kingdom* of Heaven

Lord's Day 31

83 Q. What are the keys of the kingdom* of heaven?

[SCat 88]

- A.** The preaching of the holy gospel
and Church discipline.
By both of these
the kingdom* of heaven
is opened to believers
and closed to unbelievers.¹

¹ Matt 16:19; John 20:22–23

84 Q. How does the preaching of the gospel open and close the kingdom* of heaven?

[SCat 89, 90

- A.** According to the command of Christ
the kingdom* of heaven is opened
when it is proclaimed and openly testified
to believers, one and all,
that as often as they, in true faith,
accept the promise of the gospel,
God, because of what Christ has done,
truly forgives all their sins.

But the realm of heaven is closed
when it is proclaimed and openly testified
to unbelievers and hypocrites
that, as long as they do not repent,
the anger of God and eternal condemnation
rest upon them.

As the gospel here testifies,
so God will judge,
both in this life and the life to come.¹

¹ Matt 16:19; John 20:21–23; John 3:31–36

85 Q. How does Church discipline open and close the kingdom* of heaven?

[SCat –

- A.** According to the command of Christ,
those who bear the name of Christian
but show themselves unchristian
in doctrine or life,
are counselled and warned,
time and again, with love.
If they refuse to give up
their errors or wicked ways,
they are reported to the Church,
that is, to its proper officers.
If they also fail to heed
the officers' counsel and warning,
they are excluded by them
from the holy sacraments
and the Christian fellowship,
and by God himself*
from the kingdom of Christ.
If later they promise
and can show
true amendment,
they are received again
as members of Christ and his Church.²

¹ Matt 18:15–20; 1 Cor 5:3–5, 11–13; 2 Thess 3:14–15

² Luke 15:20–24; 2 Cor 2:6–11

Part III: Gratitude

Why Must We Still do Good?

Lord's Day 32

**86 Q. Since, then, we are delivered from our misery
by grace alone through Christ
without any merit of our own,
why must we still do good?**

[SCat 85]

A. Christ has indeed redeemed us by his blood.

But we also do good because Christ
is also renewing us by his Spirit
to be like himself,
so that we, in all parts of our life,
may show we are thankful to God
for all he* has done for us,¹
and so that he* may be praised through us.²

And we do good also
so that we may be assured of our faith
by its fruits,³
and so that our neighbours, too,
may be won to Christ by our godly living.⁴

1 Rom 6:13; Rom 12:1–2 with 1 Pet 2:5–10; 2 Cor 5:15

2 Matt 5:16; 1 Cor 6:19–20; 1 Pet 2:11–12

3 Matt 7:17–18; Gal 5:22–24; 2 Pet 1:10–11

4 Matt 5:14–16; Rom 14:17–19; 1 Pet 2:12

**87 Q. Can those, then, be saved
who do not turn to God
from their unthankful and impenitent ways?**

[SCat 84]

A. By no means.

For, as the Scripture says,
no unchaste person,
no idolater, adulterer, thief,
no covetous person,
no drunkard, slanderer, robber,
or any such one
will inherit the kingdom* of God.¹

1 1 Cor 6:9–10; Gal 5:19–21; Eph 5:1–20, esp. vv. 5–6; 1 John 3:14

Conversion and Obedience

Lord's Day 33

88 Q. What takes place in true repentance or conversion? *[SCat 31]*

A. Two things take place:
the dying of the old self,
and the coming to life of the new.¹

1 Eph 4:22–24; Col 3:5–10; Rom 6:1–11; 2 Cor 5:17

89 Q. What is the dying of the old self? *[SCat 87]*

A. Heartfelt sorrow for sin,
causing us constantly, more and more,
to hate sin and flee from it.¹

1 Joel 2:12–13; Ps 51:3–4; Ps 51:17; Rom 8:12–13; 2 Cor 7:10

90 Q. What is the coming to life of the new self? *[SCat 87]*

A. Heartfelt joy, through Christ, in God,¹
and a delight to do every kind of good
as God wants us to do.²

1 Ps 51:8, 12; Isa 57:15; Rom 5:1; Rom 14:17

2 Rom 6:10–11; Gal 2:20

91 Q. But what are good works? *[SCat 39, 40]*

A. Good works are only those
which arise from true faith,¹
conform to God's law,²
and are done for God's glory:³
they are not those
which rest on our own opinion
or on human commandments.⁴

1 Heb 11:6; John 15:5

2 Lev 18:4; 1 Sam 15:22; Eph 2:10

3 1 Cor 10:31

4 Deut 12:32; Ezek 20:18–19; Isa 29:13; Matt 15:7–9

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Lord's Day 34

92 Q. What does the Lord* say in his* Law?

[SCat 41]

A. God spoke all these words:

“I am the LORD your God,
who brought you out of the land of Egypt,
out of the house of slavery.”*

The First Commandment^a

“You shall have no other gods before me.”

The Second Commandment

*“You shall not make for yourself a carved image
in the form of anything in heaven above,
or on earth beneath,
or in the waters under the earth.
You shall not bow down to these or serve them;
for I, the LORD* your God, allow no unfaithfulness,
punishing the children
to the third and fourth generation
of those who hate me,
but showing steadfast love
to a thousand generations
of those who love me and keep my commandments.”*

The Third Commandment

“You shall not use the name of the LORD your God
for evil purposes,
for the LORD* will not hold guiltless
anyone who misuses his* name.”*

The Fourth Commandment

*“Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy.
For six days you shall labour and do all your work,
but the seventh is a sabbath to the LORD* your God.
On it you shall do no work —
you, your son or your daughter,
your male or your female slave,
your livestock,
or the foreigner living in your land.
For in six days the LORD* made the heavens and the earth,
the sea, and all that is in them,
but he* rested on the seventh day.
Therefore the LORD* blessed the sabbath day
and made it holy.”*

The Fifth Commandment

*“Honour your father and your mother,
so that you may live long in the land
that the LORD* your god is giving you.”*

The Sixth Commandment

“You shall not murder.”

The Seventh Commandment

“You shall not commit adultery.”

The Eighth Commandment

“You shall not steal.”

The Ninth Commandment

“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.”

The Tenth Commandment

*“You shall not covet your neighbour’s house;
You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife,
or male or female slave,
or ox, or donkey.
or anything that is your neighbour’s.”¹*

¹ Ex 20:1–17; Deut 5:6–21

a This heading has been transposed to follow the preface.

93 Q. How are these commandments divided?

[SCat –

- A.** Into two parts:
the first four commandments teach
how we should live before God;
the second six teach
what duties we owe to our neighbour.¹

¹ Matt 22:37–39

The First Commandment

**94 Q. What does God require
in the First Commandment?**

[SCat 45–48]

- A.** That I, for the sake of my soul's salvation,
avoid and shun
all idolatry,¹ magic, superstitious rites,²
and prayers to saints or other creatures.³
Further, that I truly acknowledge
and come to know
the one true God,⁴
trust him* alone,⁵
look to him* for every good thing⁶
humbly⁷ and patiently,⁸
and love him*,⁹ fear him*,¹⁰ and honour him*¹¹
with all my heart.

In short, that I give up anything in all creation
rather than do the least thing against God's will.¹²

1 1 Cor 6:9–10; 1 Cor 10:6–7; 1 Cor 10:14; 1 John 5:21

2 Lev 19:31; Deut 18:9–12

3 Matt 4:10; Rev 19:10; Rev 22:8–9

4 John 17:3

5 Ps 31:6; Ps 40:4; Jer 17:5, 7; Prov 3:5–6

6 Ps 104:27–28; Jas 1:17; Matt 7:11

7 1 Pet 5:5–6

8 Col 1:11; Heb 10:36; Ps 40:1–3

9 Matt 22:37 cf. Deut 6:5

10 Deut 10:20; Prov 9:10; 1 Pet 1:17

11 Matt 4:10 cf. Deut 6:13; 1 Tim 1:17

12 Matt 5:29–30; Matt 10:37–39

95 Q. What is idolatry?

[SCat 46]

- A.** Idolatry is to have or create,
with, or in place of,
the one true God
who has revealed himself* in his* Word,
any thing whatever
in which to place our trust.¹

1 Isa 44:6, 14–17; 1 Chron 16:26; Phil 3:19; Eph 5:5; Gal 4:8–9

The Second Commandment

Lord's Day 35

**96 Q. What is God's will for us
in the Second Commandment?**

[SCat 49, 50]

A. That we make no image of God in any manner,¹
nor worship him* in any other way
than he* has commanded in his* Word.²

1 Deut 4:15–18; Isa 40:18–25; Acts 17:29; Rom 1:23

2 Deut 12:29–32; Lev 10:1–7; 2 Kings 16:2, 10–17; John 4:23–24

**97 Q. May we then
not make any image at all?**

[SCat 51]

A. God cannot and may not
be visibly pictured in any way.¹

Creatures may be represented,
but God forbids us
to make or have any such images
in order to worship them,
or serve God through them.²

1 Isa 40:25; Deut 4:15–18

2 Rom 10:14–15, 17; 2 Tim 3:16–17; 2 Pet 1:19

**98 Q. But may not images be permitted
be permitted in the churches
as books to teach the unlearned?**

[SCat 51, 52]

A. No; for we should not be wiser than God,
who wants his* people taught
not by unspeaking idols,¹
but by the living preaching of his* Word.²

1 Jer 10:8; Hab 2:18–20

2 Rom 10:14–15, 17; 2 Tim 3:16–17; 2 Pet 1:19

The Third Commandment

Lord's Day 36

**99 Q. What is required
in the Third Commandment?**

[SCat 51]

- A.** That we do not blaspheme or misuse
the name of God
by cursing,¹ perjury,² or needless oaths,³
or share in such horrible sins
by looking on in silence.⁴

In a word, it requires that we use
God's holy name
only with awe and reverence,⁵
so that we may rightly
confess him*,⁶
call upon him*,⁷
and honour him* in all we do and say.⁸

1 Lev 24:10–16

2 Lev 19:12

3 Matt 23:16–22; Matt 5:34–37; Jas 5:12

4 Prov 29:24 with Lev 5:1

5 Ps 99:1–5; Deut 10:20

6 Ps 119:46; Dan 3:16–18; Matt 10:32–33; Rom 10:9–10

7 Ps 50:14–15; Ps 145:18; Isa 12:4

8 Ps 71:8; Ps 34:1–3; Col 3:17; 1 Cor 10:31

**100 Q. Is blaspheming God's name
by swearing and cursing
really so grievous a sin
that God is angry too with those
who fail to prevent and forbid it
as much as they can?**

[SCat 55, 56]

- A.** Most certainly:¹
no sin is greater,
or provokes God's anger more
than blaspheming his* name.
Therefore he* even commanded
that it be punished by death.²

1 Prov 29:24 with Lev 5:1

2 Lev 24:10–17

Lord's Day 37

**101 Q. But may we swear an oath
by the name of God
in a reverent manner?**

[SCat –

A. Yes, when the government demands it,
or necessity requires it,
to maintain and promote
faithfulness and truth
for the glory of God
and the good of our neighbour.

Such oaths are based on God's Word¹
and were therefore rightly used by believers
in the Old and New Testaments.²

¹ Deut 6:13; Deut 10:20; Jer 4:1–2; Heb 6:16

² Gen 21:22–24; Gen 31:51–53; Josh 9:15; 1 Kings 1:29–30; Rom 1:9; 2 Cor 1:23

**102 Q. May we swear by saints
or other creatures?**

[SCat –

A. No:
a lawful oath means calling upon God,
as the only searcher of hearts,
to witness to my truthfulness
and to punish me if I swear falsely.¹
No creature is worthy of such honour.²

¹ Gen 31:48–53; 2 Cor 1:23; Rom 9:1; Heb 4:13

² Ps 7:9; 1 Sam 16:7; Luke 16:14; Gen 18:25; 1 Pet 1:17

The Fourth Commandment

Lord's Day 38

103 Q. What does God require in the Fourth Commandment?

[SCat 57–62]

A. First,
that the gospel ministry
and training for it
be maintained,¹
and also that I,
especially on the day of rest,
take care to join with God's people²
to learn from God's Word,³
to share in the sacraments,⁴
to call on God publicly,⁵
and to give as a Christian
for those in need.⁶
And second,
that every day of my life
I rest from my evil ways,
and let the Lord work in me
through his* Spirit,
and so begin in this life
the everlasting sabbath.⁷

1 Tit 1:5; 2 Tim 3:13–17; 2 Tim 2:2; Deut 6:4–9, 20–25; 1 Cor 9:13–14

2 Deut 12:5–12; Ps 122:1; Ps 111:1; Ps 68:26; Acts 2:42–47; Heb 10:23–25

3 Acts 2:42; Acts 5:42–6:4; Rom 10:14–17; 1 Tim 4:13

4 1 Cor 11:23–24, 33

5 Col 3:16; 1 Tim 2:1

6 1 Cor 16:2; Deut 15:10–11; 2 Cor chs 8–9, esp 8:1–3, 7 and 9:7

7 Heb 4:9–11

The Fifth Commandment

Lord's Day 39

104 Q. What is God's will for you in the Fifth Commandment?

[SCat 63–66]

- A.** That I honour, love, and be faithful
to my father and mother
and to all those
in authority over me,
obey and submit to them
as is proper,
when they instruct or punish me,¹
also be patient with their failings;²
for it is God's will
through such people
to govern all of us.³

1 Eph 6:1–9; Eph 5:21–23; Col 3:18–4:1; Prov 1:8; Prov 4:1; Exod 21:17; Rom 13:1–2

2 Prov 20:20; Prov 23:22; 1 Pet 2:18

3 Matt 22:21; Rom 13:1–2; Eph 6:1–2

The Sixth Commandment

Lord's Day 40

105 Q. What is God's will for you in the Sixth Commandment?

[SCat 67–69]

- A.** That I am not,
by my thoughts, my words,
my looks or gestures,
and much less by my deeds,
to belittle, hate, injure or kill my neighbour
by myself or through others;¹
rather, I am to put away
all desire for revenge.²

Further, I am not to harm myself,
or run recklessly into danger.³

For the same reason, to prevent murder,
the government is armed with the sword.⁴

1 Matt 5:21–22; Lev 19:17–18; Gen 9:6; Matt 26:52

2 Rom 12:19; 1 Thess 5:5; Eph 4:26; Prov 25:21–22; Matt 18:32–35

3 2 Pet 2:12–14, 19; Prov 23:29–32; Matt 4:5–7; Matt 26:52

4 Rom 13:4; Gen 9:6; Exod 21:14

106 Q. But doesn't this commandment speak only of killing?

[SCat 69

- A.** By forbidding murder, God teaches us that he* abhors
what lies at the root of murder:
envy, hatred, anger,
and the wish for revenge;¹
and that in his* sight
all these are acts of hidden murder.²

1 Ezek 35:2–3, 11–12; Rom 1:29; Rom 12:19; Gal 5:19–21; 1 John 2:9–11

2 Matt 5:21–22; 1 John 3:15

107 Q. Is it enough, then, that we do not kill our neighbour in any way?

[SCat 68, 69

- A.** No;
for by condemning envy, hatred, and anger
God tells us
to love our neighbours as ourselves,¹
to be patient, peacable, gentle,
merciful, and kind towards them,²
to protect them from harm as far as we can,
and to do good even to our enemies.³

1 Matt 22:39; Matt 7:12; Rom 13:8–10

2 Eph 4:2; Rom 12:14–18; Matt 5:3–12, esp. v. 5; Gal 6:1–2; Luke 6:36; Luke 10:30–37; Col 3:12; 1 Pet 3:8

3 Exod 23:4–5; Matt 5:44–45; Rom 12:20–21 cf. Prov 25:21–22

The Seventh Commandment

Lord's Day 41

108 Q. What does the Seventh Commandment teach us?

[SCat 70–72

- A.** That all unchastity is condemned by God.¹
We should therefore detest it
from our hearts²
and, married or single,
live chaste and self-controlled lives.³

1 Eph 5:3–5

2 Lev 18:30; Matt 5:29

3 1 Thess 4:3–8; 1 Cor 7:1–9; Heb 13:4

109 Q. Does God, in this commandment forbid only such shameful sins as adultery?

[SCat 71, 72]

A. Since we are temples of the Holy Spirit
both in body and soul,
it is God's will
that both be kept pure and holy.

For this reason he* forbids
all unchaste actions, looks,
words, thoughts or desires,¹
and whatever else may incite us to unchastity.²

1 Matt 5:27–29; 1 Cor 6:18–20; Eph 5:3–4

2 Eph 5:18; 1 Cor 15:33

The Eight Commandment

Lord's Day 42

110 Q. What does God forbid in the Eighth Commandment?

[SCat 73, 75]

A. God forbids not only outright theft and robbery,
punishable by law.¹
both in body and soul,

In his* sight theft includes
all tricks and schemes
that use force,
or seem legitimate,
by which we seek to take our neighbour's goods—²
false weights or measures,
false goods or false money,
unjust interest,
or any other means which God prohibits.

He* also views as theft all greed,⁴
and the abuse or waste of his* gifts.⁵

1 Exod 22:1; Ezek 18:10–13; 1 Cor 6:9–10; 1 Cor 5:9–10

2 Mic 6:9–11; Luke 3:14; Jas 5:1–6

3 Prov 11:1; Prov 12:22; Amos 8:4–7; Deut 25:13–16; Ezek 45:9–12; Ps 15:5; Luke 6:35

4 Mic 2:1–2; Luke 12:15; Eph 5:5

5 Prov 23:20–21; Prov 21:20; Luke 16:10–13

111 Q. What does God require of you in this commandment?

[SCat 74

- A.** That I do what I rightly can
for my neighbour's good;
that I treat others
as I would want them to treat me;
and that I work faithfully
so that I may help those in need.¹

1 Isa 58:5–10; Matt 7:12; Gal 6:9–10; Eph 4:28; Prov 16:11

The Ninth Commandment

Lord's Day 43

112 Q. What is God's will for you in the Ninth Commandment?

[SCat 76, 77

- A.** God's will is that
I give false testimony against no one,
twist no one's words,
refuse to gossip or slander,
and join in condemning no one
unheard or without just cause.¹
Rather, I should avoid lies and deceit of every kind
as deeds worthy of the devil,
which provoke God's great anger.²

For I must love the truth.
speak it honestly,
and acknowledge it openly
in court and everywhere else.³
And I must do whatever I can
to protect and advance
my neighbour's good name.⁴

1 Prov 19:5; Ps 15; Rom 1:28–32; Luke 6:37

2 1 Kings 21:11–13, 17–19; Prov 13:5; Prov 12:22; Lev 19:11–12; John 8:44; Rev 21:8

3 Eph 4:25; 1 Cor 13:6; Matt 26:59–64

4 Prov 22:1 with Mark 12:31; Prov 17:9; 1 Pet 3:8–9; 1 Pet 4:8

The Tenth Commandment

Lord's Day 44

113 Q. What does God require of us in the Tenth Commandment?

[SCat 79–81]

- A.** That not the slightest thought or desire against any of God's commandments should ever arise in our hearts;¹ but that always, with all of our heart, we should hate every sin and delight in whatever is right.²

¹ Rom 7:7–8

² Ps 119:7–14; Rom 12:9; Amos 5:15; Ps 139:23–24

Keeping the Commandments

114 Q. But can those converted to God keep these commandments perfectly?

[SCat 82]

- A.** No; in this life even the holiest have only the small beginnings of this obedience.¹ But nevertheless, with earnest purpose, they do begin to live according to all, not only some, of God's commandments.²

¹ 1 John 1:8–10; Rom 7:14–15; Eccl 7:20; Prov 20:9

² Ps 1:1–2; Rom 7:22–25; Phil 3:12–16

**115 Q. No one in this life
can keep the Ten Commandments:
why, then, does God want them preached so strongly?**

[SCat 35

A. First,
so that all our life long,
we may learn more and more
to know our sinful nature,
and so the more earnestly
turn to Christ
for forgiveness of sins
and righteousness.¹

Second,
so that, pleading with God
for the grace of the Holy Spirit,
we may never stop striving
to be more and more
renewed in God's image,
until after this life we reach the goal
of full perfection.²

1 Rom 3:19–26; 1 John 1:9; Ps 32:5; Rom 7:7, 24–25

2 1 Cor 9:24; Phil 3:12–14; 1 John 3:1–3

PRAYER

Lord's Day 45

116 Q. Why do Christians need to pray?

[SCat 88, 98

A. Because prayer
is the most important part
of the thankfulness God requires of us;¹
and because God gives
his* grace and Holy Spirit
only to those who
with heartfelt longing and without ceasing,
plead with him* for these gifts
and thank him* for them.²

1 Ps 50:14–15; Ps 116:12–19; 1 Thess 5:16–18

2 Matt 7:7–8; Luke 11:9–13; Ps 145:18; Isa 55:6–7; Luke 17:12–19

117 Q. How does God want us to pray so that we may be heard by him*?

[SCat 98]

A. First, we must call from the heart
only on the one true God
who has revealed himself* in his* Word,
for all he* has commanded us to ask.¹

Second, we must thoroughly know
our need and misery,
so as to humble ourselves
before God's majesty.²

Third, we must rest on this sure foundation:
that though we deserve nothing,
God, because of Christ our Lord,
will surely listen to our prayer,
as he* has promised us
in his* Word.³

1 John 4:22–24; Ps 145:18–20; Rom 8:26–27; Rev 19:9–10; Jas 1:5; 1 John 5:14–15

2 2 Chron 7:14; Ps 2:11; Ps 34:18; Ps 62:8; Isa 66:2; Rev 4

3 Rom 10:13; Jas 1:6; John 14:13–14; John 16:23; Dan 9:17–19; Matt 7:8

118 Q. What has God commanded us to pray for?

[SCat 99]

A. Everything we need
for soul and body,¹
as shown in the prayer
which Christ our Lord has taught us.

1 Jas 1:17; Matt 6:33

The Lord's Prayer

119 Q. What is this prayer?

[SCat –

A. <i>Our Father* in heaven,</i>	Pref.
<i>hallowed be your name,</i>	1
<i>your kingdom* come,</i>	2
<i>your will be done,</i>	3
<i>on earth as in heaven.</i>	
<i>Give us today our daily bread.</i>	4
<i>Forgive us our sins,</i>	5
<i>as we forgive those who sin against us.</i>	
<i>Save us from the time of trial,</i>	6
<i>and deliver us from evil.</i>	
<i>For yours are the kingdom*, the power, and the glory,</i>	Concl.
<i>now and for ever. Amen.</i> ¹	

1 Matt 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4. The conclusion of the prayer, *For yours ... Amen*, occurs in the version in Matthew. There it is absent from a number of early manuscripts.

Lord's Day 46

120 Q. Why has Christ commanded us to call God “our Father”?

[SCat 100]

- A.** To awaken in us
from the start of our prayer
that childlike awe
and trust toward God
from which our prayer should grow:

that is, that God, through Christ,
has become our Father*,
and will much less refuse
what we ask from him* in faith
than our parents refuse us
the things of this life.¹

1 Matt 6:9–11; Luke 11:11–13

121 Q. Why are the words “in heaven” used?

[SCat 100]

- A.** To teach us not to think
of God's heavenly majesty
as something earthly;¹
and to teach us to expect
from his* almighty power
all that is needed for body and soul.²

1 Jer 23:23–24; Acts 17:24–25

2 Matt 6:25–34; Rom 8:31–32

Lord's Day 47

122 Q. What is the first request?

[SCat 101]

A. *"Hallowed be your name;"*

that is,

Grant us first

to rightly know you,¹
and to worship and praise you
in your holiness
for all your works
and all that shines out from them:
your almighty power,
your wisdom, goodness, justice,
mercy, and truth.²

And grant us, too

that we may so direct our lives,
in all we think, say, and do,
that your name
may never be blasphemed
because of us,
but always be honoured and praised.³

1 John 17:3; Jer 9:23–24; Jer 31:33–34; Matt 16:17

2 Ps 145; Exod 34:5–8; Jer 32:16–20; Luke 1:46–55; Luke 1:68–75; Rom 11:33–36

3 Ps 115:1; Matt 5:6; 1 Cor 10:31

Lord's Day 48

123 Q. What is the second request?

[SCat 102]

A. *"Your kingdom* come;"*

that is,

So rule us by your Word and Spirit

that more and more we submit to you;¹
preserve and increase your Church;²
destroy the works of the devil—
every power that rises up against you
and every plan conceived against your Word;³
until your reign has fully come
and you are all in all.⁴

1 Matt 6:33; Ps 119:5; Jer 31:33; Ps 143:10; Rom 8:8–9, 14

2 Matt 16:18; Ps 122:6–9; Acts 2:42–47

3 1 John 3:8; Rom 16:20

4 Rev 22:17, 20; Rom 8:22–23; 1 Cor 15:28

Lord's Day 49

124 Q. What is the third request?

[SCat 103]

A. *"Your will be done
on earth as in heaven;"*
that is,

Grant that we and all people
may renounce our own wills,
and without any murmuring
obey your will, which alone is good,¹
so that one and all
we may complete
the work we are called to,²
as willingly and faithfully
as the angels in heaven.³

¹ Matt 16:24–26; Tit 2:11–12; Luke 22:42; Matt 7:21; Rom 12:1–2

² 1 Cor 7:17–24; Eph 6:5–9

³ Ps 103:20–21

Lord's Day 50

125 Q. What is the fourth request?

[SCat 104]

A. *"Give us today our daily bread;"*
that is,

Provide, we pray,
all the needs of our bodies,¹
so that we may come to know
that all good things come from you,²

and that neither our cares nor labour
nor your own gifts
can do us any good
without your blessing;³

and therefore cease our trust
in anything created,
and trust in you alone.⁴

¹ Ps 145:15–16; Matt 6:25–34; Phil 4:6

² Jas 1:17; Acts 14:17; Acts 17:25

³ Ps 127:1–2; 1 Cor 15:58; Deut 8:3; Ps 37:16

⁴ Ps 55:22; Ps 62; Ps 146; Ps 31:6; Jer 17:5–8; Prov 3:5–6; Heb 13:5–6

Lord's Day 51

126 Q. What is the fifth request?

[SCat 105]

A. *“Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us;”*
that is,

For the sake of Christ's blood, we pray,
do not hold against us—
poor sinners that we are—
our many sins
or the evil that always clings to us.¹

Forgive us;
just as we find
this sign of your grace in us:
that we are fully resolved
to forgive our neighbour
from our heart.²

¹ Ps 51:1–7; Ps 143:2; 1 John 1:8–9; 1 John 2:1–2; Rom 8:1

² Matt 6:14–15; Matt 18:21–35; Gen 45:3–5, 15

Lord's Day 52

127 Q. What is the sixth request?

[SCat 106]

A. *“Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil;”*
that is,

We ourselves are too weak
to hold out for a moment,¹
and our sworn enemies—
the devil, the world,³
and our own flesh⁴—
attack us without ceasing:

uphold us then,
and strengthen us, we pray,
by the power of your Holy Spirit,
that we may stand firm against them,
and never go down to defeat
in this spiritual battle,⁵
but win at last
the uttermost victory.⁶

1 Ps 17:8–9; John 15:1–5; Ps 103:13–16

2 1 Pet 5:8; Eph 6:10–13; 2 Cor 11:14

3 1 John 5:19; John 15:18–21

4 Rom 7:23; Gal 5:17

5 Matt 26:41; Matt 10:19–20; 1 Cor 10:13; Rom 5:3–5

6 1 Thess 5:23; 1 Thess 3:13; 1 John 5:4; Acts 7:54–60; Rev 3:21

128 Q. How do you conclude this prayer?

[SCat 107]

A. *“For yours are the kingdom*, the power and the glory,
now and for ever;”*
that is,

We ask all these things from you,
because as our king*,
having power over all things,
you not only desire, but are able
to give us all that is good;¹
and because your holy name,
and not we ourselves,
should receive all the praise, for ever.²

1 Rom 10:11–12; 2 Pet 2:9

2 Acts 12:21–23; Ps 115:1; Rev 4:10–11; Rev 8:11–12; 1 John 14:13

129 Q. What, lastly, does the little word “Amen” mean?

[SCat 107]

A. “Amen” means,
This will truly, surely be.

For I rest far more surely on this:
that God hears my prayer;
 than on the heartfelt desire
 with which I bring it.¹

¹ Isa 65:24; 2 Cor 1:20; 2 Tim 2:13

