

18-03 Report of the General Assembly Special Committee on the Heidelberg Catechism to the 220th General Assembly (2012).

Source: Agencies **Sponsor:** No Assignment
Committee: [18-03] Confessions of the Church **Type:** General Assembly Full Consideration

Topic: Unassigned

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RECOMMENDATION

The General Assembly Special Committee on the Heidelberg Catechism recommends that the 220th General Assembly (2012) do the following:

1. Approve the proposed new translation of the Heidelberg Catechism, with accompanying Scriptural references, as amendments to The Book of Confessions, and direct the Stated Clerk to send the proposed amended Heidelberg Catechism to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes by July 2013.

2. Dismiss the Special Committee on the Heidelberg Catechism.

RATIONALE

These recommendations are in response to the following referral: 2010 Referral: Item 16-11. Response to Recommendation to Present a New Translation of the Present Heidelberg Catechism in The Book of Confession in Cooperation with Christian Reformed Church in America and the Reformed Church of America and to Consider Inclusion of Scriptural Citations—From the Report of the General Assembly Special Committee on the Heidelberg Catechism to the 219th General Assembly (2010) (Minutes, 2010, Part I, pp. 8, 9, 1209 of the electronic version; pp. 8, 9, 387 of the printed version).

The 219th General Assembly (2010) took the following actions:

1. Appoint the presently constituted Special Committee on the Heidelberg Catechism to recommend to the 220th General Assembly (2012) a new translation of the present Heidelberg Catechism in The Book of Confessions in cooperation with the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) and the Reformed Church of America (RCA).
2. Instruct the Special Committee on the Heidelberg Catechism to consider inclusion of appropriate Scriptural citations. ... (Minutes, 2010, Part I, p. 1209 of the electronic version; p. 387 of the printed version)

The composition of the special committee is as follows:

The Reverend Heidi Husted Armstrong of Tacoma, Washington; the Reverend Warner M. Bailey of Fort Worth, Texas; Elder Dawn DeVries of Richmond, Virginia; Elder Sylvia Dooling of Loveland, Colorado; the Reverend James Edwards of Spokane, Washington; the Reverend Christopher Elwood of Louisville, Kentucky; the Reverend Gary Neal Hansen of Dubuque, Iowa; Elder Susan Haskell of Birmingham, Alabama; Elder Patrick Hunt of San Francisco, California; Elder David Todd Mulford of Baton Rouge, Louisiana; the Reverend Shelly Barrick Parsons of Morgantown, West Virginia; the Reverend Neal D. Presa of Middlesex, New Jersey; the Reverend Lorna Shoemaker of Indianapolis, Indiana; the Reverend David Stubbs of Holland, Michigan; the Reverend Floretta Watkins of Charlotte, North Carolina.

The Reverend Neal D. Presa served as chair.

The special committee was staffed by the Reverend Thomas Hay of the Office of the General Assembly and the Reverend Charles Wiley of the Office of Theology Worship and Education (General Assembly Mission Council).

- A. Work of the Special Committee

Regarding Recommendation 1 of our mandate, the special committee continued work with representatives of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) and the Reformed Church of America (RCA) in finalizing a common new translation of the Heidelberg Catechism that was in keeping with the original 16th century versions of the catechism.

Consequently, the special committee unanimously approved the common new translation and recommends this new translation to the 220th General Assembly (2012). The CRCNA and the RCA, in their respective national synods, have approved the new translation.

Regarding Recommendation 2 of our mandate, the committee decided to restore the Scripture citations that were originally published with the catechism in 1563. Other current translations either have no Scripture citations (as is the case in the present version in The Book of Confessions) or include sets of citations developed by modern interpreters. Our hope has been to give the catechism back to the church in full as it was first presented, with the Scripture citations that allow the readers to explore the text in conversation with the texts of the Bible that informed the people who wrote it.

The special committee was divided into three subgroups, with each subgroup carefully and meticulously analyzing the scriptural references in the 1563 German and Latin editions of the Catechism. Because the Latin edition provided versification to scriptural references whereas the German edition used only book and chapter reference, the special committee decided to use the Latin edition as the "base" text. In some instances, the Latin edition corrected citations in the German edition, omitted some of the citations that were in the German, added citations not found in the German, or shifted citations in the German edition to another part of the given section of the catechism. From the beginning, the special committee sought to retain the historical accuracy of the scriptural reference as found in both the German and Latin editions, and used the following textual notation markers:

- Citations in ordinary type reflect the citations of the Latin where the Latin simply adds verse numbers to a citation found in the German.
- Citations in italics indicate texts present in the German original but omitted from the Latin edition.
- Citations in **bold** indicate texts not found in the German original but added in the Latin edition.
- Square brackets [] indicate the present editors' corrections of apparent typographical errors in the 1563 texts as well as necessary clarifications.

As noted above, the special committee did make editorial corrections where there was an apparent typographical error in the 1563 texts; such practice was done very sparingly and after extensive and intensive committee deliberations, careful verification of the 1563 texts, and reviewing cited Scripture texts with their scriptural context.

Subgroups met via teleconference and corresponded electronically, then exchanged their work with the other subgroups as the whole special committee held a face-to-face meeting, March 7–9, 2011, in Louisville, Kentucky. The special committee unanimously approved the scriptural references, pending further double checking by the subgroup leaders and committee chair.

A subsequent round of review and editing by the subgroup leaders and committee chair further refined the scriptural references.

The whole committee reviewed the re-edited scriptural references, submitted further suggestions, and the whole committee approved the scriptural references as is being presented to the assembly.

The special committee conferred with representatives of the Office of the General Assembly to ensure that the scriptural references could be printed underneath each corresponding Question-and-Answer, with the citations pegged to the pertinent line of the catechism, all to make them

more usable by readers. Also, the special committee has proposed updated language for a revised historical-theological introduction for this new translation that would be included in a reprinted version of *The Book of Confessions*, if the way be clear with the approval of this catechism by the assembly and ratification by presbyteries.

B. Closing Words

What began in 2008 by action of the 218th General Assembly to review proposed corrections to five sections of the catechism has resulted in a monumental and historic project involving three Reformed churches in North America, an ecumenical partnership that bears witness to our common commitment to seek the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and which appropriately recognizes the Heidelberg Catechism on the eve of its 450th anniversary in 2013 as a chief standard of Reformed confessional documents because of its widespread liturgical, catechetical, and devotional usage in North America and throughout the world.

It is our hope that this new translation and the accompanying Scriptural references, coupled with the worldwide celebration of the 450th anniversary of the catechism in 2013, will spark renewed interest in studying the Reformed tradition and appreciation of its evangelical message of God's deliverance through our Mediator Jesus Christ.

Attachment—Proposed New Translation of Heidelberg Catechism with Scripture References and Editorial Notation in Preface

[Below is the editorial notation that would be printed as a preface on its own page following a revised historical-theological introduction.]

The biblical citations in this text are those found in the German 3rd edition of 1563 and the Latin translation of 1563. The citations in the German 3rd edition include book and chapter without verse numbers, inviting the reader to use the Catechism as an aid to the study of larger passages of Scripture. The citations in the Latin edition are often a place to begin reading on a topic, or the conclusion of a relevant passage, rather than simple proof-texts. Placement of the notes varies slightly in the German, the Latin, and here in English according to the nature of the language.

Here, citations in ordinary type reflect the citations of the Latin where the Latin simply adds verse numbers.

Citations in italics indicate texts present in the German original but omitted from the Latin edition.

Citations in **bold** indicate texts not found in the German original but added in the Latin edition.

Square brackets [] indicate the present editors' corrections of apparent typographical errors in the 1563 texts as well as necessary clarifications.

LORD'S DAY 1

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

A. That I am not my own,¹ but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—² to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.³ He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,⁴ and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.⁵ He also watches over me in such a way⁶ that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven;⁷ in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.⁸ Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life⁹ and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.¹⁰

¹ 1 Cor. 6:19

² Rom. 14:8

- ³ 1 Cor. 3:23
⁴ 1 Pet. 1:18; 1 Jn. 1:7; 2:2
⁵ 1 Jn. 3:8
⁶ Jn. 6:39
⁷ Mt. 10:30; Lk. 21:18
⁸ Rom. 8:28
⁹ 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14; Rom. 8:16
¹⁰ Rom. 8:14

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

A. Three things:¹ first, how great my sin and misery are;² second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery;³ third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.⁴

¹ Lk. 24:47; 1 Cor. 6:11; Tit. 3:3

² **Jn. 9:41**; Jn. 15:[6-]7

³ Jn. 17:3

⁴ Eph. 5:10

Part I: Misery

LORD'S DAY 2

3 Q. How do you come to know your misery?

A. The law of God tells me.¹

¹ Rom. 3:20

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

A. Christ teaches us this in summary in Matthew 22:37-40: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

5 Q. Can you live up to all this perfectly?

A. No.¹ I have a natural tendency to hate God and my neighbor.²

¹ Rom. 3:10; 3:23; 1 Jn. 1:8

² Rom. 8:7; Eph. 2:3

LORD'S DAY 3

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

A. No.¹ God created them good and in his own image,² that is, in true righteousness and holiness, so that they might truly know God their creator, love him with all their heart, and live with God in eternal happiness, to praise and glorify him.³

¹ Gen. 1:31

² Gen. 1:26-27

³ 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24

7 Q. Then where does this corrupt human nature come from?

A. The fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise.¹ This fall has so poisoned our nature that we are all conceived and born in a sinful condition.²

¹ Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12, 18–19

² Ps. 51:5; **Gen. 5:3**

8 Q. But are we so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good and inclined toward all evil?

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

¹ Jn. 3:6; **Gen. 6:5**; Job 14:4; 15:16, [35]; Isa. 53:6

² Jn. 3:5

LORD'S DAY 4**9 Q. But doesn't God do us an injustice by requiring in his law what we are unable to do?**

A. No,¹ God created human beings with the ability to keep the law. They, however, provoked by the devil,² in willful disobedience, robbed themselves and all their descendants of these gifts.

¹ Eph. 4:[22–23], 24–25

² **Lk. 10:30[–37]**

10 Q. Does God permit such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?

A. Certainly not.¹ God is terribly angry with the sin we are born with as well as the sins we personally commit. As a just judge, God will punish them both now and in eternity, having declared: "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law."²

¹ Rom. 5:12; Heb. 9:27

² Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10

11 Q. But isn't God also merciful?

A. God is certainly merciful,¹ but also just.² God's 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

² Ex. 20:5; Ps. 5:5; 2 Cor. 6:14

Part II: Deliverance**LORD'S DAY 5****12 Q. According to God's righteous judgment we deserve punishment both now and in eternity: how then can we escape this punishment and return to God's favor?**

A. God requires that his justice be satisfied.¹ Therefore the claims of this justice must be

paid in full, either by ourselves or by another.²

¹ Ex. 20:5; 23:7

² Rom. 8:3–4

13 Q. Can we make this payment ourselves?

A. Certainly not. Actually, we increase our debt every day.¹

¹ Job 9:3; 15:15; Mt. 6:12

14 Q. Can another creature—any at all—pay this debt for us?

A. No. To begin with, God will not punish any other creature for what a human is guilty of.¹ Furthermore, no mere creature can bear the weight of God's eternal wrath against sin and deliver others from it.²

¹ Heb. 2:14

² Ps. 130:3

15 Q. What kind of mediator and deliverer should we look for then?

A. One who is a true¹ and righteous human,² yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is also true God.³

¹ 1 Cor. 15:21

² Jer. 33:15; **Isa. 53:9**; Ps. 53; 2 Cor. 5:21

³ Heb. 7:[15–]16; Isa. 7:14; Rom. 8:3; Jer. 23:6

LORD'S DAY 6

16 Q. Why must the mediator be a true and righteous human?

A. God's justice demands that human nature, which has sinned, must pay for sin;¹ but a sinful human could never pay for others.²

¹ Rom. 5:12, 15

² 1 Pet. 3:18; Isa. 53:3-5, 10–11

17 Q. Why must the mediator also be true God?

A. So that the mediator, by the power of his divinity, might bear the weight of God's wrath in his humanity¹ and earn for us and restore to us righteousness and life.²

¹ Isa. 53:8; Acts 2:24; 1 Pet. 3:18

² Jn. 3:16; **1 Jn. 1:2, 4:12**; Acts 20:18 [28]; Jn. 1[:4,12]

18 Q. Then who is this mediator—true God and at the same time a true and righteous human?

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ,¹ who was given to us to completely deliver us and make us right with God.²

¹ Mt. 1:23; 1 Tim. 3:16; Lk. 2:11

² 1 Cor. 1:30

19 Q. How do you come to know this?

A. The holy gospel tells me. God began to reveal the gospel already in Paradise;¹ later God proclaimed it by the holy patriarchs and prophets² and foreshadowed it by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law;³ and finally God fulfilled it through his own beloved Son.⁴

¹ Gen. 3:15

² Gen. 22:18; 49:10–11; Rom. 1:2; Heb. 1:1; Acts 3:22–24; 10:43

³ Jn. 5:46; Heb. 10:7 [1–10]

⁴ Rom. 10:4; Gal. 4:4

LORD'S DAY 7

20 Q. Are all people then saved through Christ just as they were lost through Adam?

A. No. Only those are saved who through true faith are grafted into Christ and accept all his benefits.¹

¹ Jn. 1:12; **3:36**; Isa. 53:11, Ps. 2:11[–12]; Rom. 11:17, 19; Heb. 4:2; 10:39

21 Q. What is true faith?

A. True faith is not only a sure knowledge by which I hold as true all that God has revealed to us in Scripture;¹ it is also a wholehearted trust,² which the Holy Spirit³ creates in me by the gospel,⁴ that God has freely granted, not only to others but to me also, forgiveness of sins, eternal righteousness, and salvation.⁵ These are gifts of sheer grace, granted solely by Christ's merit.⁶

¹ Heb. 11:1, 3; Jas. 2:19

² **Rom. 4:16[–25]; Jas. 1:6**; Rom. 5:1; Rom. 10[:9–10]

³ 2 Cor. 4[:6, 13]; Eph. 2[:8, 18]; **Mt. 16:17; Jn. 3:[5–]13; Gal. 5:22; Phil. 1:29**

⁴ Rom. 1:16; **10:17**

⁵ Heb. 2[:9–11]; Rom. 1[:16]; **Heb. 10:38; Hab. 2:4; Mt. 9:2; Eph. 2:7–9; Rom. 5:1**

⁶ Eph. 2[:8]; Rom. 3:24–25; **Gal. 2:16**

22 Q. What then must a Christian believe?

A. All that is promised us in the gospel,¹ a summary of which is taught us in the articles of our universal and undisputed Christian faith.

¹ Jn. 20:31; Mt. 28:20

23 Q. What are these articles?

A. I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead. 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.

LORD'S DAY 8

24 Q. How are these articles divided?

- A.** Into three parts: God the Father and our creation; God the Son and our deliverance; and God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification.

25 Q. Since there is only one divine being,¹ why do you speak of three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

- A.** Because that is how God has revealed himself in his Word:² these three distinct persons are one, true, eternal God.

¹ Deut. 6:4

² Isa. 61:1; Ps. 110:1; Mt. 3:16–17; Mt. 28:19; 1 Jn. 5:7[–8]

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"?

- A.** That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and everything in them,¹ who still upholds and rules them by his eternal counsel and providence,² is my God and Father because of Christ the Son.³ I trust God so much that I do not doubt he will provide whatever I need for body and soul,⁴ and will turn to my good whatever adversity he sends upon me in this sad world.⁵ God is able to do this because he is almighty God⁶ and desires to do this because he is a faithful Father.⁷

¹ Gen. 1; Ps. 33:6

² Ps. 104; Ps. 115:3; Mt. 10:29; Heb. 1:3

³ Jn. 1:12; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5–7; Eph. 1:5

⁴ Ps. 55:22; Mt. 6:25–26; Luke 12:22

⁵ Rom. 8:28

⁶ Rom. 10:12

⁷ Mt. 6:32; 7:9

LORD'S DAY 10

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

- A.** The almighty and ever present power of God¹ by which God upholds, as with his hand, heaven and earth and all creatures, and so rules them² that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink,³ health and sickness,⁴ prosperity and poverty—⁵all things, in fact, come to us not by chance but by his fatherly hand.

¹ Acts 17:25[–28]

² Heb. 1:3

³ Jer. 5:24; Acts 14:17

⁴ Jn. 9:3

⁵ Prov. 22:2

28 Q. How does the knowledge of God's creation and providence help us?

- A.** We can be patient when things go against us,¹ thankful when things go well,² and for the

future we can have good confidence in our faithful God and Father³ that nothing in creation will separate us from his love.⁴ For all creatures are so completely in God's hand that without his will they can neither move nor be moved.⁵

¹ Rom. 5:3; Jas. 1:3; Job 1:21

² Deut. 8:10; 1 Thess. 5:18

³ **Rom. 5:5–6**

⁴ Rom. 8:38–39

⁵ Job 1:12; **2:6**; Acts 17:28; Prov. 21:1

God the Son

LORD'S DAY 11

29 Q. Why is the Son of God called "Jesus," meaning "savior"?

A. Because he saves us from our sins,¹ and because salvation should not be sought and cannot be found in anyone else.²

¹ Mt. 1:21; **Heb. 7:25**

² Acts 4:12

30 Q. Do those who look for their salvation in saints, in themselves, or elsewhere really believe in the only savior Jesus?

A. No. Although they boast of being his, by their actions they deny the only savior, Jesus.¹ Either Jesus is not a perfect savior, or those who in true faith accept this savior have in him all they need for their salvation.²

¹ 1 Cor. 1:13, 31; Gal. 3[:1–4]; **Gal. 5:4**

² **Heb. 12:2**; Isa. 9:6; Col. 1:19–20; 2:10; Jn. 1:16

LORD'S DAY 12

31 Q. Why is he called "Christ," meaning "anointed"?

A. Because he has been ordained by God the Father and has been anointed with the Holy Spirit¹ to be our chief prophet and teacher² who fully reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our deliverance;³ our only high priest⁴ who has delivered us by the one sacrifice of his body, and who continually pleads our cause with the Father;⁵ and our eternal king who governs us by his Word and Spirit, and who guards us and keeps us in the freedom he has won for us.⁶

¹ **Ps. 45:[7]**; Heb. 1:9

² **Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22**

³ **Jn. 1:18; 15:15**

⁴ Ps. 110; Heb. 7:21; **10:12**

⁵ Rom. 8:34; 5:9–10

⁶ Ps. 2:6; Lk. 1:33; Mt. 28:18; **Jn. 10:28**

32 Q. But why are you called a Christian?

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

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

¹ Acts 11:26, **1 Cor. 6:15**

² 1 Jn. 2:27; **Isa. 59:21**; Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28; Mark 8:[34–]38

³ Rom. 12:1; Rev. 5:8[–14]; **1 Pet. 2:9**

⁴ Rom. 6:12; Rev. 1:6

⁵ **1 Tim. 1:19**

⁶ **2 Tim. 2:12**

LORD'S DAY 13

33 Q. Why is he called God's "only begotten Son" when we also are God's children?

A. Because Christ alone is the eternal, natural Son of God.¹ We, however, are adopted children of God—adopted by grace through Christ.²

¹ Jn. 1:29; Heb. 1:2

² Rom. 8:15; Eph. 1:[5–]6

34 Q. Why do you call him "our Lord"?

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

¹ 1 Pet. 1:18–19; 2:9; 1 Cor. 6:20; **7:23**

LORD'S DAY 14

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

A. That the eternal Son of God, who is¹ and remains true and eternal God,² took to himself, through the working of the Holy Spirit,³ from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary, a truly human nature⁴ so that he might also become David's true descendant,⁵ like his brothers and sisters in every way⁶ except for sin.⁷

¹ Jn. 1:1; **17:5**; Rom. 1:4

² Rom. 9:5; Gal. 4[:4]

³ Mt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:27, 35; Eph. 1

⁴ John 1:14; **Gal. 4:4**

⁵ Ps. 132:11; Rom. 1:3

⁶ Phil. 2:7

⁷ Heb. 4:15; **7:26**

36 Q. How does the holy conception and birth of Christ benefit you?

A. He is our mediator¹ and, in God's sight, he covers with his innocence and perfect holiness my sinfulness in which I was conceived.²

¹ **Heb. 2:16–17**

² Ps. 32:1; 1 Cor. 1:30

LORD'S DAY 15**37 Q. What do you understand by the word "suffered"?**

A. That during his whole life on earth, but especially at the end, Christ sustained in body and soul the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race.¹ This he did in order that, by his suffering as the only atoning sacrifice,² he might deliver us, body and soul, from eternal condemnation, and gain for us God's grace, righteousness, and eternal life.

¹ 1 Pet. 2:24; **3:18**; Isa. 53:12

² 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10; Rom. 3:25

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

A. So that he, though innocent, might be condemned by an earthly judge,¹ and so free us from the severe judgment of God that was to fall on us.²

¹ Lk. 23:14; Jn. 19:4

² Ps. 69:5; Isa. 53; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13

39 Q. Is it significant that he was "crucified" instead of dying some other way?

A. Yes. By this I am convinced that he shouldered the curse which lay on me,¹ since death by crucifixion was cursed by God.²

¹ Gal. 3[:10]

² Deut. 21: [23]; Gal. 3:13

LORD'S DAY 16**40 Q. Why did Christ have to suffer death?**

A. Because God's justice and truth require it: ¹ nothing else could pay for our sins except the death of the Son of God.²

¹ Gen. 2:17

² Heb. 2:9, 15; **Phil. 2:8**

41 Q. Why was he "buried"?

A. His burial testifies that he really died.¹

¹ Acts 13:29; Mt. 27:60; Lk. 23:50[-53]; Jn. 19:38[-42]

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

A. Our death does not pay the debt of our sins. Rather, it puts an end to our sinning and is our entrance into eternal life.¹

¹ Jn. 5:24; Phil. 1:23; Rom. 7:24 [21-25]

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

A. By Christ's power our old selves are crucified, put to death, and buried with him,¹ so that the evil desires of the flesh may no longer rule us,² but that instead we may offer ourselves as a sacrifice of gratitude to him.³

¹ Rom. 6:6–8, 11–12; Col. 2[:11–12]

² Rom. 6:12

³ Rom. 12:1

44 Q. Why does the creed add, “He descended to hell”?

A. To assure me during attacks of deepest dread and temptation that Christ my Lord, by suffering unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul, on the cross but also earlier, has delivered me from hellish anguish and torment.¹

¹ Isa.53:10; Mt. 27:46

LORD’S DAY 17

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

A. First, by his resurrection he has overcome death, so that he might make us share in the righteousness he obtained for us by his death.¹ Second, by his power we too are already raised to a new life.² Third, Christ’s resurrection is a sure pledge to us of our blessed resurrection.³

¹ 1 Cor. 15:17, 54–55; Rom. 4:25; 1 Pet. 1:3, 21

² Rom. 6:4; Col. 3:1–5; Eph. 2:5

³ 1 Cor. 15:12; Rom. 8:11

LORD’S DAY 18

46 Q. What do you mean by saying, “He ascended to heaven”?

A. That Christ, while his disciples watched, was taken up from the earth into heaven¹ and remains there on our behalf² until he comes again to judge the living and the dead.³

¹ Acts 1:9; Mt. 26[:64]; Mk. 16[:19]; Lk. 24[:51]

² Heb. 4:14; 7:15[–25]; 9:11; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 4:10; Col. 3:1

³ Acts 1:11; Mt. 24:30

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

A. Christ is true human and true God. In his human nature Christ is not now on earth;² but in his divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit he is never absent from us.³

¹ Mt. 28:20

² Mt. 26:11; Jn. 16:28; 17:11; Acts 3:21

³ Jn. 14:17[–19]; 16:13; Mt. 28:20; Eph. 4:8, 12; also cited: **Augustine, Tractates on the Gospel of John 50**

48 Q. If his humanity is not present wherever his divinity is, then aren’t the two natures of Christ separated from each other?

A. Certainly not. Since divinity is not limited and is present everywhere,¹ it is evident that Christ’s divinity is surely beyond the bounds of the humanity that has been taken on, but at the same time his divinity is in and remains personally united to his humanity.²

¹ Acts 7:49; **17:28**; Jer. 23:24

² Col. 2:9; Jn. 3:13; 11:15; Mt. 28:6

49 Q. How does Christ's ascension to heaven benefit us?

A. First, he is our advocate in heaven in the presence of his Father.¹ Second, we have our own flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that Christ our head will also take us, his members, up to himself.² Third, he sends his Spirit to us on earth as a corresponding pledge.³ By the Spirit's power we seek not earthly things but the things above, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand.⁴

¹ 1 Jn. 2:1–2; Rom. 8:34

² Jn. 14:2; 20:17; Eph. 2:6

³ Jn. 14:16; **16:7**; Acts 2; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5

⁴ Col. 3:1; Phil. 3:14

LORD'S DAY 19**50 Q. Why the next words: "and is seated at the right hand of God"?**

A. Because Christ ascended to heaven to show there that he is head of his church,¹ the one through whom the Father rules all things.²

¹ Eph. 1:20–23; **5:23**; Col. 1:18

² Mt. 28:18; Jn. 5:22

51 Q. How does this glory of Christ our head benefit us?

A. First, through his Holy Spirit he pours out gifts from heaven upon us his members.¹ Second, by his power he defends us and keeps us safe from all enemies.²

¹ Eph. 4:10

² Ps. 2:9;**110:1-2**; John 10:28; Eph. 4:8

52 Q. How does Christ's return "to judge the living and the dead" comfort you?

A. In all distress and persecution, with uplifted head, I confidently await the very judge who has already offered himself to the judgment of God in my place and removed the whole curse from me.¹ Christ will cast all his enemies and mine into everlasting condemnation,² but will take me and all his chosen ones to himself into the joy and glory of heaven.³

¹ Lk. 21:28; Rom. 8:23, 33; Phil. 3:20; Titus 2:13

² 2 Thess. 1:6-7; 1 Thess. 4:16; Mt. 25:41

³ Mt. 25:34

God the Holy Spirit**LORD'S DAY 20****53 Q. What do you believe concerning "the Holy Spirit"?**

A. First, that the Spirit, with the Father and the Son, is eternal God.¹ Second, that the Spirit is given also to me,² so that, through true faith, he makes me share in Christ and all his benefits,³ comforts me,⁴ and will remain with me forever.⁵

¹ Gen. 1:2; Isa. 48:16; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Acts 5:3–4

² Mt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 1:21–22

³ Gal. 3:14; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Cor. 6:17

⁴ Acts 9:31

⁵ Jn. 14:16; 1 Pet. 4:14

LORD'S DAY 21

54 Q. What do you believe concerning "the holy catholic church"?

A. I believe that the Son of God¹ through his Spirit and Word,² out of the entire human race,³ from the beginning of the world to its end,⁴ gathers, protects, and preserves for himself,⁵ a community chosen for eternal life⁶ and united in true faith.⁷ And of this community I am⁸ and always will be⁹ a living member.

¹Jn. 10:11

² Isa. 59:21; Rom. 1:16; 10:14, 17; **Eph. 5:26**

³ Gen. 26:4

⁴ Ps. 71:18; 1 Cor. 11:26

⁵ Mt. 16:18; Jn. 10:28–30; 1 Cor. 1:8

⁶ Rom. 8:29–30; Eph. 1:10–13

⁷**Acts 2:46**; Eph. 4:3–5

⁸ 1 Jn. 3:21; **2 Cor. 13:5**

⁹ 1 Jn. 2:19

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

A. First, that believers one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ and in all his treasures and gifts.¹ Second, that each member should consider it a duty to use these gifts readily and joyfully for the service and enrichment of the other members.²

¹ 1 Jn. 1:3; 1 Cor. 1:9; Rom. 8:32

² **1 Cor.6:17**; 12:12–21; 13:5; Phil. 2:4–6

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

A. I believe that God, because of Christ's satisfaction,¹ will no longer remember any of my sins or my sinful nature which I need to struggle against all my life.² Rather, by grace God grants me the righteousness of Christ to free me forever from judgment.³

¹ 1 Jn. 2:2; 2 Cor. 5:19, 21

² Jer. 31:34; Ps. 103:3, 10–12; Rom. 7:24–25; 8:1–3

³ Jn. 3:18

LORD'S DAY 22

57 Q. How does "the resurrection of the body" comfort you?

A. Not only will my soul be taken immediately after this life to Christ its head,¹ but also my very flesh will be raised by the power of Christ, reunited with my soul, and made like Christ's glorious body.²

¹Lk. 23:43; Phil. 1:23

² 1 Cor. 15:53–54; Job 19:25–26; 1 Jn. 3:2; Phil. 3:21

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

A. Even as I already now 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, no human heart has ever imagined:² a blessedness in which to praise God forever.³

¹ 2 Cor. 5:2–3

² 1 Cor. 2:9

³ John 17

LORD'S DAY 23**59 Q. What good does it do you, however, to believe all this?**

A. In Christ I am righteous before God and heir to life everlasting.¹

¹ Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Jn. 3:36

60 Q. How are you righteous before God?

A. Only by true faith in Jesus Christ.¹ Even though my conscience accuses me of having grievously sinned against all God's commandments, of never having kept any of them,² and of still being inclined toward all evil,³ nevertheless, without any merit of my own,⁴ out of sheer grace,⁵ God grants and credits to me⁶ the perfect satisfaction,⁷ righteousness, and holiness of Christ,⁸ as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner, and as if I had been as perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for me.⁹ All I need to do is accept this gift with a believing heart.¹⁰

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

² Rom. 3:9[–18]

³ Rom. 7:23

⁴ 2 Tim. 3:5

⁵ Rom. 3:24; Eph. 2:8

⁶ Rom. 4:4; 2 Cor. 5:19

⁷ 1 Jn. 2:2

⁸ 1 Jn. 2:1

⁹ 2 Cor. 5:21

¹⁰ Rom. 3:22; Jn. 3:18

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

A. Not because I please God by the worthiness of my faith. It is because only Christ's satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness make me righteous before God,¹ and because I can accept this righteousness and make it mine in no other way than through faith.²

¹ 1 Cor. 1:30; 2:2

² 1 Jn. 5:10

LORD'S DAY 24**62 Q. Why can't our good works be our righteousness before God, or at least a part of our righteousness?**

A. Because the righteousness which can pass God's judgment must be entirely perfect and

must in every way measure up to the divine law.¹ But even our best works in this life are imperfect and stained with sin.²

¹ Gal. 3:10; Deut. 27:26

² Isa. 64:6

63 Q. How can our good works be said to merit nothing when God promises to reward them in this life and the next?

A. This reward is not earned; it is a gift of grace.¹

¹ Luke 17:10

64 Q. But doesn't this teaching make people indifferent and wicked?

A. No. It is impossible for those grafted into Christ through true faith not to produce fruits of gratitude.¹

¹ Matt. [7]:18

The Holy Sacraments

LORD'S DAY 25

65 Q. It is through faith alone that we share in Christ and all his benefits: where then does that faith come from?

A. The Holy Spirit produces it in our hearts¹ by the preaching of the holy gospel, and confirms it by the use of the holy sacraments.²

¹ Eph. 2:8; Jn. 3:5

² Mt. 28:19–20; 1 Pet. 1:22–23

66 Q. What are sacraments?

A. Sacraments are visible, holy signs and seals. They were instituted by God so that by our use of them he might make us understand more clearly the promise of the gospel, and seal that promise. And this is God's gospel promise: to grant us forgiveness of sins and eternal life by grace because of Christ's one sacrifice accomplished on the cross.¹

¹ Gen. 17:11; Rom. 4:11; Deut. 30:6; Lev. 6:25; Heb. 9:8–9, [11–]24; Ezek. 20:12; **1 Sam. 17:36[–37]; Isa. 6:6–7**

67 Q. Are both the word and the sacraments then intended to focus our faith on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only ground of our salvation?

A. Yes! In the gospel the Holy Spirit teaches us and by the holy sacraments confirms that our entire salvation rests on Christ's one sacrifice for us on the cross.¹

¹ Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27

68 Q. How many sacraments did Christ institute in the New Testament?

A. Two: holy baptism and the holy supper.

Holy Baptism

LORD'S DAY 26

69 Q. How does baptism remind and assure you that Christ's one sacrifice on the cross benefits you personally?

A. In this way: Christ instituted this outward washing and with it promised that, as surely as water washes away the dirt from the body, so certainly his blood and his Spirit wash away my soul's impurity, that is, all my sins.¹

¹ Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3

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

A. To be washed with Christ's blood means that God, by grace, has forgiven our sins because 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 and sanctified us to be members of Christ, so that more and more we become dead to sin and live holy and blameless lives.²

¹ Heb. 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:2; Rev. 1:5; **22:14**; Zech. 13:1; Ezek. 36:25

² Jn. 1:33; 3:5; 1 Cor. 6:11; 12:13; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12

71 Q. Where does Christ promise that we are washed with his blood and Spirit as surely as we are washed with the water of baptism?

A. In the institution of baptism, where he says: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."¹ "The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned."² This promise is repeated when Scripture calls baptism "the water of rebirth"³ and the washing away of sins.⁴

¹ Matt. 28:19

² Mark 16:16

³ Titus 3:5

⁴ Acts 22:16

LORD'S DAY 27

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

A. No,¹ only Jesus Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit cleanse us from all sins.²

¹ Mt. 3:11; 1 Pet. 3:21; Eph. 5:26

² 1 Jn. 1:7; 1 Cor. 6:11

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

A. God has good reason for these words. To begin with, God wants to teach us that the blood and Spirit of Christ take away our sins just as water removes dirt from the body.¹ But more important, God wants to assure us, by this divine pledge and sign, that we are as truly washed of our sins spiritually as our bodies are washed with water physically.²

¹ Rev. 1:5; 7:14; 1 Cor. 6:11

² Mk. 16:16; Gal. 3:[2]7

74 Q. Should infants also be baptized?

A. Yes. Infants as well as adults are included in God's covenant and people,¹ and they, no

less than adults, are promised deliverance from sin through Christ's blood² and the Holy Spirit who produces faith.³ Therefore, by baptism, the sign of the covenant, they too should be incorporated into the Christian church and distinguished from the children of unbelievers.⁴ This was done in the Old Testament by circumcision,⁵ which was replaced in the New Testament by baptism.⁶

¹ Gen. 17:7

² Matt. 19:14

³ Luke 1:15, [4]4; Ps. 22:[9-]11; Isa. 46:1-5; Acts 2:39

⁴ Acts 10:47

⁵ Gen. 17:[9-]14

⁶ Col. 2:11-13

The Holy Supper of Jesus Christ

LORD'S DAY 28

75 Q. How does the holy supper remind and assure you that you share in Christ's one sacrifice on the cross and in all his benefits?

A. In this way: Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat this broken bread and to drink this cup in remembrance of him. With this command come these promises: First, as surely as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord broken for me and the cup shared with me, so surely his body was offered and broken for me and his blood poured out 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 me as sure signs of Christ's body and blood, so surely he nourishes and refreshes my soul for eternal life with his crucified body and poured-out blood.

76 Q. What does it mean to eat the crucified body of Christ and to drink his poured-out blood?

A. It means to accept with a believing heart the entire suffering and death of Christ and thereby to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.¹ But it means more. Through the Holy Spirit, who lives both in Christ and in us, we are united more and more to Christ's blessed body.² And so, although he is in heaven³ and we are on earth, we are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone.⁴ And we forever live on and are governed by one Spirit, as the members of our body are by one soul.⁵

¹ Jn. 6:35, 40, 47-48, 50-54

² Jn. 6:55-56

³ Acts 1:9; 3:21; 1 Cor. 11:26

⁴ Eph. 3:17; 5:29-32; 1 Cor. 6:15, 17-19; 1 Jn. 3:24; 4:13; Jn. 14:23

⁵ Jn. 6:56-58; 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 broken bread and drink this cup?

A. In the institution of the Lord's Supper:¹ "The Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is [broken]* for you.' In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood;² do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'³ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim

the Lord's death until he comes." This promise is repeated by Paul in these words: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread."⁴

¹ 1 Cor. 11:23[–26]; Mt. 26:26[–29]; Mk. 14:22[–25]; Lk. 22:17[–20]

² **Ex. 24:8; Heb. 9:20**

³ **Ex. 13:9**

⁴ 1 Cor. 10:16–17

*The word "broken" does not appear in the NRSV text, but it was present in the original German of the Heidelberg Catechism.

LORD'S DAY 29

78 Q. Do the bread and wine become the real body and blood of Christ?

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 a divine sign and assurance of these things,¹ so too the holy bread of the Lord's Supper does not become the actual body of Christ,² even though it is called the body of Christ in keeping with the nature and language of sacraments.³

¹ Mt. 26:[28–]29; Mk. 14:24

² 1 Cor. 10:16–17; 11:26–28

³ Gen. 17:10, 14–19; Ex. 12:27, 43–48; **13:9; 24:8; 29:36; Acts 7:8; 22:16; Lev. 16:10; 17:11; Isa. 6:6–7; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21; 1 Cor. 10:1–4**

79 Q. Why then does Christ call the bread his body and the cup his blood, or the new covenant in his blood, and Paul use the words, a participation in Christ's body and blood?

A. Christ has good reason for these words. He wants to teach us that just as bread and wine nourish the temporal life, so too his crucified body and poured-out blood are the true food and drink of our souls for eternal life.¹ But more important, he wants to assure us, by this visible sign and pledge, that we, through the Holy Spirit's work, share in his true body and blood as surely as our mouths receive these holy signs in his remembrance,² and that all of his suffering and obedience are as definitely ours as if we personally had suffered and made satisfaction for our sins.

¹ Jn. 6:51, 55

² 1 Cor. 10:16–17

LORD'S DAY 30

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

A. The Lord's Supper declares to us that all our sins are completely forgiven through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which he himself accomplished on the cross once for all.¹ It also declares to us that the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ² who with his true body is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father³ where he wants us to worship him.⁴ But the Mass teaches that the living and the dead do not have their sins forgiven through the suffering of Christ unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests. It also teaches that Christ is bodily present under the form of bread and wine where Christ is therefore to be worshiped. Thus the Mass is basically nothing but a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ and a condemnable idolatry.

¹ Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 26–28; 10:10, 12–14; Jn. 19:30; Mt. 26:28; Lk. 22:19–20

² 1 Cor. 6:17; 10:16; **12:13**

³ Heb. 1:3; 8:1

⁴ Jn. 4:21–23; 20:17; Lk. 24:52; Acts 7:55–56; Col. 3:1; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 1:10

*Question and Answer 80 reflects the polemical debates of the Reformation and was added in the second German edition of 1563. The second and fourth sentences of the Answer, as well as the concluding phrase, were added in the third German edition of 1563. After the fourth sentence, the third German and Latin texts have a note to the section on consecration in the Canon of the Mass.

As detailed in the preface to The Book of Confessions, these condemnations and characterizations of the Catholic Church are not the position of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and are not applicable to current relationships between the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Catholic Church.

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

A. Those who are displeased with themselves because of their sins, but who nevertheless trust that their sins are pardoned and that their remaining weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to lead a better life. Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant, however, eat and drink judgment on themselves.¹

¹ 1 Cor. 10:21; 11:28[–29]

82 Q. Should those be admitted to the Lord's Supper who show by what they profess and how they live that they are unbelieving and ungodly?

A. No, that would dishonor God's covenant and bring down God's wrath upon the entire congregation.¹ Therefore, according to the instruction of Christ and his apostles, the Christian church is duty-bound to exclude such people, by the official use of the keys of the kingdom, until they reform their lives.

¹ 1 Cor. 11:20, 34; Isa. 1:11; 66:3; Jer. 7:21[–26]; Ps. 50:16

LORD'S DAY 31

83 Q. What are the keys of the kingdom?

A. The preaching of the holy gospel and Christian discipline toward repentance. Both of them open the kingdom of heaven to believers and close it to unbelievers.

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

A. According to the command of Christ: The kingdom of heaven is opened by proclaiming and publicly declaring to all believers, each and every one, that, as often as they accept the gospel promise in true faith, God, because of Christ's merit, truly forgives all their sins. The kingdom of heaven is closed, however, by proclaiming and publicly declaring to unbelievers and hypocrites that, as long as they do not repent, the wrath of God and eternal condemnation rest on them.¹ God's judgment, both in this life and in the life to come, is based on this gospel testimony.

¹ Jn. 20:21–23; Mt. 16:19

85 Q. How is the kingdom of heaven closed and opened by Christian discipline?

A. According to the command of Christ: Those who, though called Christians, profess unchristian teachings or live unchristian lives, and who after repeated personal and loving admonitions, refuse to abandon their errors and evil ways, and who after being reported

to the church, that is, to those ordained by the church for that purpose, fail to respond also to the church's admonitions—such persons the church excludes from the Christian community by withholding the sacraments from them, and God also excludes them from the kingdom of Christ. Such persons, when promising and demonstrating genuine reform, are received again as members of Christ and of his church.¹

¹ Mt. 18:15–18; 1 Cor. 5; 2; Thess. 3:14–15; Jn. 2[:13–22]; **2 Jn. 10-11**

Part III: Gratitude

LORD'S DAY 32

86 Q. Since we have been delivered from our misery by grace through Christ without any merit of our own, why then should we do good works?

A. Because Christ, having redeemed us by his blood, is also restoring us by his Spirit into his image, so that with our whole lives we may show that we are thankful to God for his benefits,¹ so that he may be praised through us,² so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits,³ and so that by our godly living our neighbors may be won over to Christ.⁴

¹ Rom. 6:13; 12:1–2; 1 Pet. 2:5–10; 1 Cor. 6:20

² Mt. 5:16; 1 Pet. 2:12

³ 1 Pet. 1:[6–]10; Mt. 7:17; Gal. 5:6, 22

⁴ 1 Pet. 3:1–2; Rom. 14:19

87 Q. Can those be saved who do not turn to God from their ungrateful and unrepentant ways?

A. By no means. Scripture tells us that no unchaste person, no idolater, adulterer, thief, no covetous person, no drunkard, slanderer, robber, or the like will inherit the kingdom of God.¹

¹ 1 Cor. 6:9–10; Eph. 5:5–6; 1 Jn. 3:14

LORD'S DAY 33

88 Q. What is involved in genuine repentance or conversion?

A. Two things: the dying-away of the old self,¹ and the rising-to-life of the new.

¹ Rom. 6:4–6; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:5–10; 1 Cor. 5:7

89 Q. What is the dying-away of the old self?

A. To be genuinely sorry for sin and more and more to hate and run away from it.¹

¹ Rom. 8:13; Joel 2:13

90 Q. What is the rising-to-life of the new self?

A. Wholehearted joy in God through Christ¹ and a love and delight to live according to the will of God by doing every kind of good work.²

¹ Rom. 5:1; 14:17; Isa. 57:15

² Rom. 6:10–11; Gal. 2:20

91 Q. What are good works?

A. Only those which are done out of true faith,¹ conform to God’s law,² and are done for God’s glory;³ and not those based on our own opinion or human tradition.⁴

¹ Rom. 14:23

² 1 Sam. 11; **1 Sam. [15]:22**; Eph. 2:10

³ 1 Cor. 10:31

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

The Ten Commandments

LORD’S DAY 34

92 Q. What is God’s law?

A. God spoke all these words:

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.”

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

“You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

“You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.”

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

“Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made the heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.”

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

“Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving to 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 bear false witness against your neighbor."

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."¹

¹ Ex. 20[:1–17]; Deut. 5[:6–21]

93 Q. How are these commandments divided?

A. Into two tables.¹ The first has four commandments, teaching us how we ought to live in relation to God. The second has six commandments, teaching us what we owe our neighbor.²

¹ Ex. 34:28; Deut. 4:13; 10:3–4

² Mt. 22:37–39

94 Q. What does the Lord require in the first commandment?

A. That I, not wanting to endanger my own salvation, avoid and shun all idolatry,¹ sorcery, superstitious rites,² and prayer to saints or to other creatures.³ That I rightly know the only true God,⁴ trust him alone,⁵ and look to God for every good thing⁶ humbly⁷ and patiently,⁸ and love,⁹ fear,¹⁰ and honor¹¹ God with all my heart. In short, that I give up anything rather than go against God's will in any way.¹²

¹ 1 Cor. 6:9–10; 10:7,14

² Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:11

³ Mt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10; 22:[8]–9

⁴ Jn. 17:3

⁵ Jer. 17:5

⁶ Ps. 104: 27–30; Isa. 45:7; Jas. 1:17

⁷ 1 Pet. 5:5–6

⁸ Heb. 10:36; Col. 1:11; Rom. 5:3–4; 1 Cor. 10:10; Phil. 2:14

⁹ Deut. 6:5; Mt. 22:37

¹⁰ Deut. 6:2; Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Mt. 10:28

¹¹ Mt. 4:10; Deut. 10:20

¹² Mt. 5:29–30; 10:37; Acts 5:29

95 Q. What is idolatry?

A. Idolatry is having or inventing something in which one trusts in place of or alongside of the only true God, who has revealed himself in the Word.¹

¹ Eph. 5:5; 1 Chr. 16:26; Phil. 3:19; Gal. 4:8; Eph. 2:12; 1 Jn. 2:23; 2 Jn. 9; Jn. 5:23

LORD'S DAY 35**96 Q. What is God's will for us in the second commandment?**

A. That we in no way make any image of God¹ nor worship him in any other way than has been commanded in God's Word.²

¹ Deut. 4:15[–19]; Isa. 40:18; Rom. 1:23; Acts 17:29

² 1 Sam. 15:23; Deut. 12:30; Mt. 15:9

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

A. God can not and may not be visibly portrayed in any way. Although creatures may be portrayed, yet God forbids making or having such images if one's intention is to worship them or to serve God through them.¹

¹ Ex. 23:24; 34:13; Num. 33:52; Deut. 7:5; 12:3; 16:22; 2 Kings 18:4

98 Q. But may not images be permitted in churches in place of books for the unlearned?

A. No, we should not try to be wiser than God. God wants the Christian community instructed by the living preaching of his Word—¹not by idols that cannot even talk.²

¹ 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:19

² Jer. 10:8; Hab. 2:18–19

LORD'S DAY 36

99 Q. What is the aim of the third commandment?

A. That we neither blaspheme nor misuse the name of God by cursing, perjury,¹ or unnecessary oaths,² nor share in such horrible sins by being silent bystanders. In summary, we should use the holy name of God only with reverence and awe,³ so that we may properly confess God,⁴ pray to God,⁵ and glorify God in all our words and works.⁶

¹ Lev. 24:11[–16];19:12

² Mt. 5:37; Jas. 5:12

³ Isa. 45:23

⁴ Mt. 10:32

⁵ 1 Tim. 2:8

⁶ Rom. **2:24**; 1 Tim. 6:1; Col. 3:16

100 Q. Is blasphemy of God's name by swearing and cursing really such serious sin that God is angry also with those who do not do all they can to help prevent and forbid it?

A. Yes, indeed.¹ No sin is greater or provokes God's wrath more than blaspheming his name. That is why God commanded it to be punished with death.²

¹ Lev. 5:1

² Lev. 24:15–16

LORD'S DAY 37

101 Q. But may we swear an oath in God's name if we do it reverently?

A. Yes, when the government demands it, or when necessity requires it, in order to maintain and promote truth and trustworthiness for God's glory and our neighbor's good. Such oaths are grounded in God's Word¹ and were rightly used by the people of God in the Old and New Testaments.²

¹ Deut. 6:13; 10:20; Isa. 48:1; Heb. 6:16

² Gen. 21:24; 31:53; Josh. 9:15, 19; 1 Sam.24:[21–22]; 2 Sam. 3:35; 1 Kings 1:29; Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:23

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

A. No. A legitimate oath means calling upon God as the only one who knows my heart to witness to my truthfulness and to punish me if I swear falsely.¹ No creature is worthy of such honor.²

¹ 2 Cor. 1:23

² Mt. 5:34–36; Jas. 5:12

LORD'S DAY 38

103 Q. What is God's will for you in the fourth commandment?

A. First, that the gospel ministry and education for it be maintained,¹ and that, especially on the festive day of rest, I diligently attend the assembly of God's people² to learn what God's Word teaches,³ to participate in the sacraments,⁴ to pray to God publicly,⁵ and to bring Christian offerings for the poor.⁶ Second, that every day of my life I rest from my evil ways, let the Lord work in me through his Spirit, and so begin in this life the eternal Sabbath.⁷

¹ Titus 1:5; 1 Tim. 3[:1]; 4:13; 5:17; 1 Cor. 9:11, 13–14; 2 Tim. 2:2; 3:15

² Ps. 68:27; 40:10–11; Acts [2]:42, 46

³ 1 Cor. 14:19, 29, 31

⁴ 1 Cor. 11:33

⁵ 1 Tim. 2:1–3, 8–9; 1 Cor. 14:16

⁶ 1 Cor. 16:2

⁷ Isa. 66:23

LORD'S DAY 39

104 Q. What is God's will for you in the fifth commandment?

A. That I honor, love, and be loyal to my father and mother and all those in authority over me;¹ that I submit myself with proper obedience to all their good teaching and discipline; and also that I be patient with their failings—²for through them God chooses to rule us.³

¹ Eph. 6:1[–9]; Col. 3:18, 20–24; Eph. 5:22; Prov. 1:8; 4:1; 15:20; 20:20; Exod. 21:17; Rom. 13: [1–5]

² Prov. 23:22; Gen. 9:25; 1 Pet. 2:18

³ Eph. 6:4,9; Col. 3:19, 21; Rom. 13:[1–5]; Mt. 22:21

LORD'S DAY 40

105 Q. What is God's will for you in the sixth commandment?

A. I am not to belittle, hate, insult, or kill my neighbor—not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture, and certainly not by actual deeds—¹and I am not to be party to this in others; rather, I am to put away all desire for revenge.² I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself either.³ Prevention of murder is also why government is armed with the sword.⁴

¹ Mt. 5:21–22; Gen. 9:6; Mt. 26:52

² Eph. 4:26; Rom. 12:19; Mt. 5:25; 18:35

³ Rom. 13:14; Col. 2:23; Sirach 3:27*; Mt. 4:7

⁴ Gen. 9:6; Exod. 21:14; Mt. 26:52; Rom. 13:4

*Sirach is a deuterocanonical book, treated with respect but not as canonical by the 16th century reformers.

106 Q. Does this commandment refer only to murder?

A. By forbidding murder God teaches us that he hates the root of murder: envy,¹ hatred,² anger,³ vindictiveness. In God's sight all such are disguised forms of murder.⁴

¹ Rom. 1:29

² 1 Jn. 2:9,11

³ Jas. 2:[13]; **1:20**; Gal. 5:20

⁴ 1 Jn. 3:15

107 Q. Is it enough then that we do not murder our neighbor in any such way?

A. No. By condemning envy, hatred, and anger God wants us to love our neighbors as ourselves,¹ to be patient, peace-loving, gentle,² merciful,³ and friendly toward them,⁴ to protect them from harm as much as we can,⁵ and to do good even to our enemies.⁶

¹ Mt. 22:39; 7:12

² Eph. 4:2; Gal. 6:1–2; Mt. 5:9; Rom. 12:18

³ Mt. 5:7; Lk. 6:36

⁴ Rom. 12:10

⁵ Exod. 23:5

⁶ Mt. 5:44–45; Rom. 12:20–21

LORD'S DAY 41

108 Q. What does the seventh commandment teach us?

A. That God condemns all unchastity,¹ and that therefore we should thoroughly detest it² and live decent and chaste lives,³ within or outside of the holy state of marriage.⁴

¹ Lev. 18:27–28

² Jude 23

³ 1 Thess. 4:3-5

⁴ Heb. 13:4; 1 Cor. 7

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

A. We are temples of the Holy Spirit, body and soul, and God wants both to be kept clean and holy. That is why God forbids all unchaste actions, looks, talk,¹ thoughts, or desires,² and whatever may incite someone to them.³

¹ Eph. 5:3–4; 1 Cor. 6:18–20

² Mt. 5:[27–28]

³ Eph. 5:18; 1 Cor. 15:33

LORD'S DAY 42**110 Q. What does God forbid in the eighth commandment?**

A. God forbids not only outright theft¹ and robbery,² punishable by law. But in God's sight theft also includes all scheming and swindling in order to get our neighbor's goods for ourselves, whether by force or means that appear legitimate,³ such as inaccurate measurements of weight,⁴ size, or volume;⁵ fraudulent merchandising; counterfeit money;⁶ excessive interest; or any other means forbidden by God. In addition God forbids all greed⁷ and pointless squandering of his gifts.⁸

¹ 1 Cor. 6:10

² 1 Cor. 5:10

³ Lk. 3:14; 1Thess. 4:6

⁴ Prov. 11:1; 16:11

⁵ Ezek. 45:9[-11]; Deut. 25:13[-16]

⁶ Ps. 15:5; Lk. 6:35

⁷ 1 Cor. 6:10

⁸ Prov. 5:16

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

A. That I do whatever I can for my neighbor's good, that I treat others as I would like them to treat me,¹ and that I work faithfully so that I may share with those in need.²

¹ Mt. 7:12

² Eph. 4:28

LORD'S DAY 43**112 Q. What is the aim of the ninth commandment?**

A. That I never give false testimony against anyone,¹ twist no one's words,² not gossip or slander,³ nor join in condemning anyone rashly or without a hearing.⁴ Rather, in court and everywhere else, I should avoid lying and deceit of every kind;⁵ these are the very devices the devil uses,⁶ and they would call down on me God's intense wrath. I should love the truth, speak it candidly, and openly acknowledge it.⁷ And I should do what I can to guard and advance my neighbor's good name.⁸

¹ Prov. 19:5, 9; 21:28

² Ps. 15:3

³ Rom. 1:29-30

⁴ Mt. 7:1[-2]; Lk. 6:37

⁵ Prov. 12:22; 13:5

⁶ Jn. 8:44

⁷ 1 Cor. 13:6; Eph. 4:25

⁸ 1 Pet. 4:8

LORD'S DAY 44**113 Q. What is the aim of the tenth commandment?**

- A.** That not even the slightest desire or thought contrary to any one of God's commandments should ever arise in our hearts. Rather, with all our hearts we should always hate sin and take pleasure in whatever is right.¹

¹ Rom. 7:7

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

- A.** No. In this life even the holiest have only a small beginning of this obedience.¹ Nevertheless, with all seriousness of purpose, they do begin to live according to all, not only some, of God's commandments.²

¹ 1 Jn. 1:8–10; Rom. 7:14–15; Eccl. 7:[20]

² Rom. 7:22; Jas. 2:10

115 Q. Since no one in this life can obey the Ten Commandments perfectly, why does God want them preached so pointedly?

- A.** First, so that the longer we live the more we may come to know our sinfulness¹ and the more eagerly look to Christ for forgiveness of sins and righteousness.² Second, so that, we may never stop striving, and never stop praying to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, to be renewed more and more after God's image, until after this life we reach our goal: perfection.³

¹ 1 Jn. 1:9; Ps. 32:5

² Rom. 7:24–25

³ 1 Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:11–14

The Lord's Prayer

LORD'S DAY 45

116 Q. Why do Christians need to pray?

- A.** Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us.¹ And also because God gives his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly, asking God for these gifts and thanking God for them.²

¹ Ps. 50:14–15

² Mt. 7:7[–8]; Lk. 11:9–13; Mt. 13:12; Ps. 50:15

117 Q. What is the kind of prayer that pleases God and that he listens to?

- A.** First, we must pray from the heart to no other than the one true God, revealed to us in his Word,¹ asking for everything God has commanded us to ask for.² Second, we must fully recognize our need and misery,³ so that we humble ourselves in God's majestic presence.⁴ Third, we must rest on this unshakable foundation:⁵ even though we do not deserve it, God will surely listen to our prayer because of Christ our Lord.⁶ That is what God promised us in his Word.⁷

¹ Jn. 4:22

² Rom. 8:26; 1 Jn. 5:14; Jn. 4:23–24; Ps. 145:18

³ 2 Chron. 20:12

⁴ Ps. 2:11, 34:19; Isa. 66:2

⁵ Rom. 10:[13]; 8:15; Jas. 1:6

⁶ Jn. 14:13–15; 15:16; 16:23; Dan 9:17–18

⁷ Mt. 7:8; Ps 143:1

118 Q. What did God command us to pray for?

A. Everything we need, spiritually and physically,¹ as embraced in the prayer Christ our Lord himself taught us.

¹ Jas. 1:17; Mt. 6:33

119 Q. What is this prayer?

A. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen.¹

¹ Mt. 6:9[–13]; Lk. 11:2[–4]

LORD'S DAY 46

120 Q. Why did Christ command us to call God "our Father"?

A. To awaken in us at the very beginning of our prayer what should be basic to our prayer—a childlike reverence and trust that through Christ God has become our Father, and that just as our parents do not refuse us the things of this life, even less will God our Father refuse to give us what we ask in faith.¹

¹ Mt. 7:9–11; Lk. 11:11–13

121 Q. Why the words "in heaven"?

A. These words teach us not to think of God's heavenly majesty as something earthly,¹ and to expect everything needed for body and soul from God's almighty power.²

¹ Jer. 23:23–24; Acts 17:24–25, 27

² Rom. 10:12

LORD'S DAY 47

122 Q. What does the first petition mean?

A. "Hallowed be your name" means: Help us to truly know you,¹ to honor, glorify, and praise you for all your works and for all that shines forth from them: your almighty power, wisdom, kindness, justice, mercy, and truth.² And it means, Help us to direct all our living—what we think, say, and do—so that your name will never be blasphemed because of us but always honored and praised.³

¹ Jn. 17:3; Mt. 16:17; Jas. 1:5; Ps. 119:105

² Ps. 119:137; **Lk. 1:46[–55], 68[–79]; Ps. 145:8–9, 17; Ex. 34:6–7; Ps 143:1–2, 5, 10–12; Jer. 32:18–19; 33:11, 20–21; Mt. 19:17;** Rom. 11:22, 33[–36]

³ Ps. 115:1; 71:8

LORD'S DAY 48

123 Q. What does the second petition mean?

- A.** “Your kingdom come” means: Rule us by your Word and Spirit in such a way that more and more we submit to you.¹ Preserve your church and make it grow.² Destroy the devil’s work; destroy every force which revolts against you and every conspiracy against your holy Word.³ Do this until your kingdom fully comes,⁴ when you will be all in all.⁵

¹ Mt. 6:33; Ps. 119:5; 143:10

² Ps. 51:18; 122:6

³ 1 Jn. 3:8; Rom. 16:20

⁴ Rev. 22:17, 20; Rom. 8:22–23

⁵ 1 Cor. 15:28

LORD’S DAY 49

124 Q. What does the third petition mean?

- A.** “Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” means: Help us and all people to reject our own wills¹ and to obey your will without any back talk.² Your will alone is good. Help us one and all to carry out the work we are called to,³ as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven.⁴

¹ Mt.16:24; Titus 2:12

² Lk. 22:42

³ 1 Cor. 7:24

⁴ Ps. 103:20–21

LORD’S DAY 50

125 Q. What does the fourth petition mean?

- A.** “Give us this day our daily bread” means: Do take care of all our physical needs¹ so that we come to know that you are the only source of everything good,² and that neither our work and worry nor your gifts can do us any good without your blessing.³ And so help us to give up our trust in creatures and trust in you alone.⁴

¹ Ps. 145:15; 104:27[–28]; Mt. 6:25[–34]

² Acts 17:27; 14:17

³ 1 Cor. 15:58; Deut. 8:3; Ps. 37:16–17

⁴ Ps. 62:11; 55:23

LORD’S DAY 51

126 Q. What does the fifth petition mean?

- A.** “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” means: Because of Christ’s blood, do not hold against us, poor sinners that we are, any of the sins we do or the evil that constantly clings to us.¹ Forgive us just as we are fully determined, as evidence of your grace in us, to forgive our neighbors.²

¹ Ps. 51:1[–7]; 143:2; 1 Jn. 2:1–2

² Mt. 6:14–15

LORD’S DAY 52

127 Q. What does the sixth petition mean?

A. “And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one” means: By ourselves we are too weak to hold our own even for a moment.¹ And our sworn enemies—the devil,² the world,³ and our own flesh—⁴never stop attacking us. And so, Lord, uphold us and make us strong with the strength of your Holy Spirit, so that we may not go down to defeat in this spiritual struggle,⁵ but may firmly resist our enemies until we finally win the complete victory.⁶

¹ Jn. 15:5; Ps. 103:14

² 1 Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:12

³ Jn. 15:19

⁴ Rom. 7:23; Gal. 5:17

⁵ Mt. 26:41; Mk. 13:33

⁶ 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23

128 Q. What does your conclusion to this prayer mean?

A. “For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever” means: We have made all these petitions of you because, as our all-powerful king, you are both willing and able to give us all that is good;¹ and because your holy name, and not we ourselves, should receive all the praise, forever.²

¹ Rom. 10:11–12; 2 Pet. 2:9

² Jn. 14:13; Ps. 115:1; **Jer. 33:8–9**

129 Q. What does that little word “Amen” express?

A. “Amen” means: This shall truly and surely be! It is even more sure that God listens to my prayer than that I really desire what I pray for.¹

¹ 2 Cor. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:13