

The Heidelberg Catechism

The Heidelberg Catechism was written in Heidelberg at the request of Elector Frederick III, ruler of the most influential German province, the Palatinate, from 1559 to 1576. This Protestant prince commissioned Zacharius Ursinus, twenty-eight years of age and professor of theology at the Heidelberg University, to prepare a catechism for instructing the youth and for guiding pastors and teachers. Ursinus was assisted by Caspar Olevianus, twenty-six years old and Frederick's court preacher. Others had a hand in its preparation as is evident from the preface written by the Elector, in which he wrote that it was prepared "with the advice and cooperation of our entire theological faculty in this place, and of all superintendents and distinguished servants of the church."

The Heidelberg Catechism was adopted by a synod in Heidelberg and published in German in 1563. A second and third German edition, each with some small additions, as well as a Latin translation, were published in Heidelberg in the same year. The Catechism was soon divided into fifty-two sections so that a section of the Catechism could be explained to the churches each Sunday of the year.

In the Netherlands the Heidelberg Catechism became generally and favourably known almost as soon as it came from the press, mainly through the efforts of Petrus Dathenus, who translated it into the Dutch language and added this translation of the Catechism to his Dutch rendering of the *Genevan Psalter*, which was published in 1566. In the same year Peter Gabriel set the example of explaining this catechism to his congregation at Amsterdam in his Sunday afternoon sermons. The national synods of the sixteenth century adopted it as one of the *Three Forms of Unity*, requiring office bearers to subscribe to it and ministers to explain it to the churches. These requirements were strongly emphasised by the Synod of Dort in 1618–19.

The Heidelberg Catechism has been translated into many languages and is the most widely used and most widely praised catechism of the Reformation period.

This translation is based on the first German edition of the Catechism and was produced by the Christian Reformed Church of North America and adopted by their synod in 1975. Scripture quotations are from the New International Version 1984.

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 Saviour 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 whole-heartedly willing and ready
from now on to live for him.¹⁰

¹ 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.

² Romans 14:7–9.

³ 1 Corinthians 3:23; Titus 2:14.

⁴ 1 Peter 1:18, 19; 1 John 1:7–9; 2:2.

⁵ John 8:34–36; Hebrews 2:14, 15; 1 John 3:1–11.

⁶ John 6:39, 40; 10:27–30; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 1 Peter 1:5.

⁷ Matthew 10:29–31; Luke 21:16–18.

⁸ Romans 8:28.

⁹ Romans 8:15, 16; 2 Corinthians. 1:21, 22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13, 14.

¹⁰ Romans 8:1–17.

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

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

¹ Romans 3:9, 10; 1 John 1:10.

² John 17:3; Acts 4:12; 10:43.

³ Matthew 5:16; Romans 6:13; Ephesians 5:8–10; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 2:9, 10.

Part 1: man's misery

Lord's Day 2

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

A. The law of God tells me.¹

¹ Romans 3:20; 7:7–25.

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

A. Christ teaches us this in summary in Matthew 22—

love the Lord your God

with all your heart,

and with all your soul,

and with all your mind,

and with all your strength.¹

This is the first and greatest commandment.

And a second is like it:

love your neighbour as yourself.²

All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

¹ Deuteronomy 6:5.

² Leviticus 19:18.

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

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

¹ Romans 3:9–20, 23; 1 John 1:8, 10.

² Genesis 6:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 7:23, 24; 8:7; Ephesians 2:1–3; Titus 3:3.

Lord's Day 3

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

A. No. God created man good¹ and in his own image,²
that is, in true righteousness and holiness,³

so that he might

truly know God his creator,⁴

love him with all his heart,

and live with him in eternal happiness

for his praise and glory.⁵

¹ Genesis 1:31.

² Genesis 1:26, 27.

³ Ephesians 4:24.

⁴ Colossians 3:10.

⁵ Psalm 8.

7 Q. Then where does man’s corrupt nature come from?

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 born sinners—
corrupt from conception on.³

¹ Genesis 3.

² Romans 5:12, 18, 19.

³ Psalm 51:5.

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 Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Job 14:4; Isaiah 53:6.

² John 3:3–5.

Lord’s Day 4

9 Q. But doesn’t God do man an injustice by requiring in his law what man is unable to do?

A. No, God created man with the ability to keep the law.¹

Man, however, tempted by the devil,²
in reckless disobedience,³
robbed himself and his descendants of these gifts.⁴

¹ Genesis 1:31; Ephesians 4:24.

² Genesis 3:13; John 8:44.

³ Genesis 3:6.

⁴ Romans 5:12, 18, 19.

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

A. Certainly not.

He is terribly angry
about the sin we are born with
as well as the sins we personally commit.

As a just judge
he punishes them now and in eternity.¹

He has declared:

“Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do
everything written in the Book of the Law.”²

¹ Exodus 34:7; Psalm 5:4–6; Nahum 1:2; Romans 1:18; Ephesians 5:6; Hebrews 9:27.

² Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3:10.

11 Q. But isn't God also merciful?

- A. God is certainly 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.³

¹ Exodus 34:6, 7; Psalm 103:8, 9.

² Exodus 34:7; Deuteronomy 7:9–11; Psalm 5:4–6; Hebrews 10:30, 31.

³ Matthew 25:35–46.

Part 2: man's deliverance

Lord's Day 5

12 Q. According to God's righteous judgment we deserve punishment both in this world and forever after: how then can we escape this punishment and return to God's favour?

- A. God requires that his justice be satisfied.¹
Therefore the claims of his justice
must be paid in full,
either by ourselves, or by another.²

¹ Exodus 23:7; Romans 2:1–11.

² Isaiah 53:11; Romans 8:3, 4.

13 Q. Can we pay this debt ourselves?

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

¹ Matthew 6:12; Romans 2:4, 5.

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

- A. No.
To begin with,
God will not punish another creature
for man's guilt.¹
Besides,
no mere creature can bear the weight
of God's eternal anger against sin
and release others from it.²

¹ Ezekiel 18:4, 20; Hebrews 2:14–18.

² Psalm 49:7–9; 130:3.

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

- A. He must be truly human¹ and truly righteous,² yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, he must also be true God.³

¹ Romans 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:21; Hebrews 2:17.

² Isaiah 53:9; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 7:26.

³ Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Jeremiah 23:6; John 1:1.

Lord's Day 6

16 Q. Why must he be truly human and truly righteous?

- A. God's justice demands it: man has sinned, man must pay for his sin,¹ but a sinner cannot pay for others.²

¹ Romans 5:12, 15; 1 Corinthians 15:21; Hebrews 2:14–16.

² Hebrews 7:26, 27; 1 Peter 3:18.

17 Q. Why must he also be true God?

- A. So that, by the power of his divinity, he might bear the weight of God's anger in his humanity and earn for us and restore to us righteousness and life.¹

¹ Isaiah 53; John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

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

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

¹ Matthew 1:21–23; Luke 2:11; 1 Timothy 2:5.

² 1 Corinthians 1:30.

19 Q. How do you come to know this?

- A. The holy gospel tells me.
God himself began to reveal the gospel already in Paradise;¹
later, he proclaimed it
by the holy patriarchs² and prophets,³
and portrayed it
by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law;⁴
finally, he fulfilled it
through his own dear Son.⁵

¹ Genesis 3:15.

² Genesis 22:18; 49:10.

³ Isaiah 53; Jeremiah 23:5, 6; Micah 7:18–20; Acts 10:43; Hebrews 1:1, 2.

⁴ Leviticus 1–7; John 5:46; Hebrews 10:1–10.

⁵ Romans 10:4; Galatians 4:4, 5; Colossians 2:17.

Lord's Day 7

20 Q. Are all men saved through Christ just as all were lost through Adam?

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

¹ Matthew 7:14; John 3:16, 18, 36; Romans 11:16–21.

21 Q. What is true faith?

- A. True faith is
not only a knowledge and conviction
that everything God reveals in his Word is true;¹
it is also a deep-rooted assurance,²
created in me by the Holy Spirit³ through the gospel⁴
that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ,⁵
not only others, but I too,⁶
have had my sins forgiven,
have been made forever right with God,
and have been granted salvation.⁷

¹ John 17:3, 17; Hebrews 11:1–3; James 2:19.

² Romans 4:18–21; 5:1; 10:10; Hebrews 4:14–16.

³ Matthew 16:15–17; John 3:5; Acts 16:14.

⁴ Romans 1:16; 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:21.

⁵ Romans 3:21–26; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8–10.

⁶ Galatians 2:20.

⁷ Romans 1:17; Hebrews 10:10.

22 Q. What then must a Christian believe?

- A. Everything God promises us in the gospel.¹
That gospel is summarised for us
in the articles of our Christian faith—
a creed beyond doubt,
and confessed through the world.

¹ Matthew 28:18–20; John 20:30, 31.

23 Q. What are these articles?

- A. I believe in God the Father, Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary;
suffered under Pontius Pilate;
was crucified, dead, and buried;
he descended into hell;
the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from there he shall come
to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit;
I believe a holy catholic church, the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting.

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;
God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification.

**25 Q. Since there is but one God,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 Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4, 6.

² Matthew 3:16, 17; 28:18, 19; Luke 4:18 (Isaiah 61:1); John 14:26; 15:26;
2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 4:6; Titus 3:5, 6.

Lord's Day 9

26 Q. What do you believe when you say, "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker 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 his Son.³

I trust him so much that I do not doubt
he will provide
whatever I need
for body and soul,⁴
and he will turn to my good
whatever adversity he sends me
in this sad world.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 Genesis 1 & 2; Exodus 20:11; Psalm 33:6; Isaiah 44:24; Acts 4:24; 14:15.

² Psalm 104; Matthew 6:30; 10:29; Ephesians 1:11.

³ John 1:12, 13; Romans 8:15, 16; Galatians 4:4–7; Ephesians 1:5.

⁴ Psalm 55:22; Matthew 6:25, 26; Luke 12:22–31.

⁵ Romans 8:28.

⁶ Genesis 18:14; Romans 8:31–39.

⁷ Matthew 7:9–11.

Lord's Day 10

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

- A. Providence is
the almighty and ever present power of God¹
by which he upholds, as with his hand,
heaven
and earth
and all creatures,²
and so rules them that
leaf and blade,
rain and drought,
fruitful and lean years,
food and drink,
health and sickness,
prosperity and poverty—³
all things, in fact, come to us
not by chance⁴
but from his fatherly hand.⁵

¹ Jeremiah 23:23, 24; Acts 17:24–28.

² Hebrews 1:3.

³ Jeremiah 5:24; Acts 14:15–17; John 9:3; Proverbs 22:2.

⁴ Proverbs 16:33.

⁵ Matthew 10:29.

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 Father
that nothing will separate us from his love.³
All creatures are so completely in his hand
that without his will
they can neither move nor be moved.⁴

¹ Job 1:21; James 1:3.

² Deuteronomy 8:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

³ Psalm 55:22; Romans 5:3–5; 8:38, 39.

⁴ Job 1:12; 2:6; Proverbs 21:1; Acts 17:24–28.

Lord's Day 11

29 Q. Why is the Son of God called “Jesus” meaning “saviour”?

- A. Because he saves us from our sins.¹
Salvation cannot be found in anyone else;
it is futile to look for any salvation elsewhere.²

¹ Matthew 1:21; Hebrews 7:25.

² Isaiah 43:11; John 15:5; Acts 4:11, 12; 1 Timothy 2:5.

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

- A. No.
Although they boast of being his,
by their deeds they deny
the only saviour and deliverer, Jesus.¹

Either Jesus is not a perfect saviour,
or those who in true faith accept this saviour
have in him all they need for their salvation.²

¹ 1 Corinthians 1:12, 13; Galatians 5:4.

² Colossians 1:19, 20; 2:10; 1 John 1:7.

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 perfectly reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God for our deliverance;³
 - our only high priest⁴
 - who has set us free by the one sacrifice of his body,⁵
 - and who continually pleads our cause with the Father;⁶
 - and our eternal king⁷
 - who governs us by his Word and Spirit
 - and who guards us and keeps us in the freedom he has won for us.⁸

¹ Luke 3:21, 22; 4:14–19 (Isaiah 61:1); Hebrews 1:9 (Psalm 45:7).

² Acts 3:22 (Deuteronomy 18:15).

³ John 1:18; 15:15.

⁴ Hebrews 7:17 (Psalm 110:4).

⁵ Hebrews 9:12; 10:11–14.

⁶ Romans 8:34; Hebrews 9:24.

⁷ Matthew 21:5 (Zechariah 9:9).

⁸ Matthew 28:18–20; John 10:28; Revelation 12:10, 11.

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 good conscience against sin and the devil in this life,⁵
 - and afterward to reign with Christ over all creation for all eternity.⁶

¹ 1 Corinthians 12:12–27.

² Acts 2:17 (Joel 2:28); 1 John 2:27.

³ Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9, 10; Hebrews 13:15.

⁴ Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5, 9.

⁵ Galatians 5:16, 17; Ephesians 6:11; 1 Timothy 1:18, 19.

⁶ Matthew 25:34; 2 Timothy 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 John 1:1–3, 14, 18; Hebrews 1.

² John 1:12; Romans 8:14–17; Ephesians 1:5, 6.

34 Q. Why do you call him “our Lord”?

- 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 Peter 1:18, 19.

² Colossians 1:13, 14; Hebrews 2:14, 15.

³ 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6.

Lord's Day 14

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

- A. That the eternal Son of God,
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
a truly human nature
so that he might become David's true descendant,⁴
in all things like us his brothers⁵
except for sin.⁶

¹ John 1:1; 10:30–36; Acts 13:33 (Psalm 2:7); Colossians 1:15–17; 1 John 5:20.

² Luke 1:35.

³ Matthew 1:18–23; John 1:14; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 2:14.

⁴ 2 Samuel 7:12–16; Psalm 132:11; Matthew 1:1; Romans 1:3.

⁵ Philippians 2:7; Hebrews 2:17.

⁶ Hebrews 4:15; 7:26, 27.

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

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

¹ 1 Timothy 2:5, 6; Hebrews 9:13–15.

² Romans 8:3, 4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 4:4, 5; 1 Peter 1:18, 19.

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 anger 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 set us free, body and soul,
from eternal condemnation,³
and gain for us
God's grace,
righteousness,
and eternal life.⁴

¹ Isaiah 53; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18.

² Romans 3:25; Hebrews 10:14; 1 John 2:2; 4:10.

³ Romans 8:1–4; Galatians 3:13.

⁴ John 3:16; Romans 3:24–26.

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

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

¹ Luke 23:13–24; John 19:4, 12–16.

² Isaiah 53:4, 5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13.

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

- A. Yes.
This death convinces me that he shouldered the curse
which lay on me,
since death by crucifixion was accursed by God.¹

¹ Galatians 3:10–13 (Deuteronomy 21:23).

Lord's Day 16

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

- A. Because God's justice and truth demand it:¹
only the death of God's Son could pay for our sin.²

¹ Genesis 2:17.

² Romans 8:3, 4; Philippians 2:8; Hebrews 2:9.

41 Q. Why was he “buried”?

A. His burial testifies
that he really died.¹

¹ Isaiah 53:9; John 19:38–42; Acts 13:29; 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4.

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.¹
Rather, it puts an end to our sinning
and is our entrance into eternal life.²

¹ Psalm 49:7.

² John 5:24; Philippians. 1:21–23; 1 Thessalonians 5:9, 10.

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

A. Through Christ’s death
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 dedicate ourselves
as an offering of gratitude to him.³

¹ Romans 6:5–11; Colossians 2:11, 12.

² Romans 6:12–14.

³ Romans 12:1; Ephesians 5:1, 2.

44 Q. Why does the creed add, “he descended into hell”?

A. To assure me in times of personal crisis and temptation
that Christ my Lord,
by suffering unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul,
especially on the cross but also earlier,
has delivered me from the anguish and torment of hell.¹

¹ Isaiah 53; Matthew 26:36–46; 27:45, 46; Luke 22:44; Hebrews 5:7–10.

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 won for us by his death.¹

Second, by his power we too
are already now resurrected to a new life.²

Third, Christ’s resurrection
is a guarantee of our glorious resurrection.³

¹ Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:16–20; 1 Peter 1:3–5.

² Romans 6:5–11; Ephesians 2:4–6; Colossians 3:1–4.

³ Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians. 15:12–23; Philippians. 3:20, 21.

Lord’s Day 18

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

A. That Christ,
while his disciples watched,
was lifted up from the earth into heaven¹
and will be there for our good²
until he comes again
to judge the living and the dead.³

¹ Luke 24:50, 51; Acts 1:9–11.

² Romans. 8:34; Ephesians 4:8–10; Hebrews 7:23–25; 9:24.

³ Acts 1:11.

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

A. Christ is true man and true God.

In his human nature Christ 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 Matthew 28:20.

² Acts 1:9–11; 3:19–21.

³ Matthew 28:18–20; John 14:16–19.

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 he has taken on,
but at the same time his divinity is in
and remains personally united to
his humanity.²

¹ Jeremiah 23:23, 24; Acts 7:48, 49 (Isaiah 66:1).

² John 1:14; 3:13; Colossians 2:9.

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

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

Second, we have our own flesh in heaven—
a guarantee that Christ our head
will take us, his members,
to himself in heaven.²

Third, he sends his Spirit to us on earth
as a further guarantee.³
By the Spirit's power
we make the goal of our lives,
not earthly things,
but the things above where Christ is,
sitting at God's right hand.⁴

¹ Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1.

² John 14:2; 17:24; Ephesians 2:4–6.

³ John 14:16; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; 5:5.

⁴ Colossians 3:1–4.

Lord's Day 19

50 Q. Why the next words, "And sits at the right hand of God"?

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

¹ Ephesians 1:20–23; Colossians 1:18.

² Matthew 28:18; John 5:22, 23.

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

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

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

¹ Acts 2:33; Ephesians 4:7–12.

² Psalm 110:1, 2; John 10:27–30; Revelation 19:11–16.

52 Q. How does Christ’s return “to judge the living and the dead” comfort you?

- A. In all my distress and persecution
I turn my eyes to the heavens
and confidently await as judge the very one
 who has already stood trial in my place before God
 and so has removed the whole curse from me.¹
All his enemies and mine
 he will condemn to everlasting punishment;
but me and all his chosen ones
 he will take along with him
 into the joy and the glory of heaven.²
¹ Luke 21:28; Romans 8:22–25; Philippians 3:20, 21; Titus 2:13, 14.
² Matthew 25:31–46; 2 Thessalonians. 1:6–10.

Lord’s Day 20

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

- A. First, he as well as the Father and the Son,
 is eternal God.¹

Second, he has been given to me personally,²
 so that, by true faith,
 he makes me share in Christ and all his blessings,³
 comforts me,⁴
 and remains with me forever.⁵
¹ Genesis 1:1, 2; Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3, 4.
² 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; Galatians 4:6.
³ Galatians 3:14.
⁴ John 15:26; Acts 9:31.
⁵ John 14:16, 17; 1 Peter 4:14.

Lord’s Day 21

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

- A. I believe that the Son of God,
 through his Spirit and Word,¹
 out of the entire human race,²
 from the beginning of the world to its end,³
gathers, protects, and preserves for himself
 a community chosen for eternal life⁴
 and united in true faith.⁵
And of this community I am⁶ and always will be⁷
 a living member.
¹ John 10:14–16; Acts 20:28; Romans 10:14–17; Colossians 1:18.
² Genesis 26:3b, 4; Revelation 5:9.
³ Isaiah 59:21; 1 Corinthians 11:26.
⁴ Matthew 16:18; John 10:28–30; Romans 8:28–30; Ephesians 1:3–14.
⁵ Acts 2:42–47; Ephesians 4:1–6.
⁶ 1 John 3:14, 19–21.
⁷ John 10:27, 28; 1 Corinthians 1:4–9; 1 Peter 1:3–5.

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 his duty
to use his gifts
readily and cheerfully
for the service and enrichment
of the other members.²

¹ Romans 8:32; 1 Corinthians 6:17; 12:4–7, 12, 13; 1 John 1:3.

² Romans 12:4–8; 1 Corinthians 12:20–27; 13:1–7; Philippians 2:4–8.

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

A. I believe that God,
because of Christ’s atonement,
will never hold against me
any of my sins¹
nor my sinful nature
which I need to struggle against all my life.²

Rather, in his grace
God grants me the righteousness of Christ
to free me forever from judgment.³

¹ Psalm 103:3, 4, 10, 12; Micah 7:18, 19; 2 Corinthians 5:18–21; 1 John 1:7; 2:2.

² Romans 7:21–25.

³ John 3:17, 18; Romans 8:1, 2.

Lord’s Day 22

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

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

¹ Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:21–23.

² 1 Corinthians 15:20, 42–46, 54; Philippians. 3:21; 1 John 3:2.

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 mind has conceived:
a blessedness in which to praise God eternally.²

¹ Romans 14:17.

² John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 2:9.

Lord’s Day 23

59 Q. What good does it do you, however, to believe all this?

- A. In Christ I am right with God
and heir to life everlasting.¹
¹ John 3:36; Romans 1:17 (Habakkuk. 2:4); Romans 5:1, 2.

60 Q. How are you right with 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
and of never having kept any of them,²
and even though I am still inclined toward all evil,³
nevertheless,
without my deserving it at all,⁴
out of sheer grace,⁵
God grants and credits to me
the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ,⁶
as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner,
as if I had been as perfectly obedient
as Christ was obedient for me.⁷

All I need to do
is to accept this gift of God with a believing heart.⁸

¹ Romans 3:21–28; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Philippians. 3:8–11.

² Romans 3:9, 10.

³ Romans. 7:23.

⁴ Titus 3:4, 5.

⁵ Romans 3:24; Ephesians 2:8.

⁶ Romans 4:3–5 (Genesis 15:6); 2 Corinthians 5:17–19; 1 John 2:1, 2.

⁷ Romans 4:24, 25; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

⁸ John 3:18; Acts 16:30, 31.

61 Q. Why do you say that by faith alone you are right with God?

- A. It is not because of any value my faith has
that God is pleased with me.
Only Christ's satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness
make me right with God.¹
And I can receive this righteousness and make it mine
in no other way than
by faith alone.²

¹ 1 Corinthians 1:30, 31.

² Romans 10:10; 1 John 5:10–12.

Lord's Day 24

62 Q. Why can't the good we do make us right with God, or at least help make us right with him?

- A. Because the righteousness
which can pass God's scrutiny
must be entirely perfect
and must in every way measure up to the divine law.¹
Even the very best we do in this life
is imperfect
and stained with sin.²

¹ Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:10 (Deuteronomy 27:26).

² Isaiah 64:6.

63 Q. How can you say that the good we do doesn't earn anything when God promises to reward it in this life and the next?¹

- A. This reward is not earned;
it is a gift of grace.²

¹ Matthew 5:12; Hebrews 11:6.

² Luke 17:10; 2 Timothy 4:7, 8.

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

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

¹ Luke 6:43–45; John 15:5.

Lord's Day 25

65 Q. You confess that by faith alone you share in Christ and all his blessings: where does that faith come from?

A. The Holy Spirit produces it in our hearts¹
by the preaching of the holy gospel,²
and confirms it
through our use of the holy sacraments.³

¹ John 3:5; 1 Corinthians 2:10–14; Ephesians 2:8.

² Romans 10:17; 1 Peter 1:23–25.

³ Matthew 28:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 10:16.

66 Q. What are sacraments?

A. Sacraments are holy signs and seals for us to see.
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 might put his seal on that promise.¹

And this is God's gospel promise:
to forgive our sins and give us eternal life
by grace alone
because of Christ's one sacrifice
finished on the cross.²

¹ Genesis 17:11; Deuteronomy 30:6; Romans 4:11.

² Matthew 26:27, 28; Acts 2:38; Hebrews 10:10.

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. Right!
In the gospel the Holy Spirit teaches us
and through the holy sacraments he assures us
that our entire salvation
rests on Christ's one sacrifice for us on the cross.¹

¹ Romans 6:3; 1 Corinthians 11:26; Galatians 3:27.

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

A. Two: baptism and the Lord's Supper.¹
¹ Matthew 28:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26.

Lord's Day 26

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

A. In this way:

Christ instituted this outward washing¹
and with it gave the promise 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,
in other words, all my sins.²

¹ Acts 2:38.

² Matthew 3:11; Romans 6:3–10; 1 Peter 3:21.

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 my sins
because of Christ's blood
poured out for me in his sacrifice on the cross.¹

To be washed with Christ's Spirit means
that the Holy Spirit has renewed me and
set me apart to be a member of Christ
so that more and more I become dead to sin,
and increasingly live a holy and blameless life.²

¹ Zechariah 13:1; Ephesians 1:7, 8; Hebrews 12:24; 1 Peter 1:2; Revelation 1:5.

² Ezekiel 36:25–27; John 3:5–8; Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Colossians 2:11, 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:
“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,
baptising them in the name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit.”¹

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

This promise is repeated when Scripture calls baptism
the washing of regeneration³ and
the washing away of sins.⁴

¹ Matthew 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, only Jesus Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit
cleans us from all sins.¹

¹ Matthew 3:11; 1 Peter 3:21; 1 John 1:7.

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

A. God has good reason for these words.

He wants to teach us that

the blood and Spirit of Christ wash away our sins
just as water washes away dirt from our bodies.¹

But more important,

he wants to assure us, by this divine pledge and sign,
that the washing away of our sins spiritually
is as real as physical washing with water.²

¹ 1 Corinthians 6:11; Revelation 1:5; 7:14.

² Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3, 4; Galatians 3:27.

74 Q. Should infants, too, be baptised?

A. Yes.

Infants as well as adults

are in God's covenant and are his people.¹

They, no less than adults, are promised

the forgiveness of sin through Christ's blood
and the Holy Spirit who produces faith.²

Therefore, by baptism, the mark of the covenant,

infants should be received into the Christian church

and should be distinguished from the children of unbelievers.³

This was done in the Old Testament by circumcision,⁴

which was replaced in the New Testament by baptism.⁵

¹ Genesis 17:7; Matthew 19:14.

² Isaiah 44:1–3; Acts 2:38, 39; 16:31.

³ Acts 10:47; 1 Corinthians 7:14.

⁴ Genesis 17:9–14.

⁵ Colossians 2:11–13.

Lord's Day 28

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

A. In this way:

Christ has commanded me and all believers
to eat this broken bread and to drink this cup.

With this command he gave this promise:¹

First,

as surely as I see with my eyes
the bread of the Lord broken for me
and the cup given to 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 him 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.

¹ Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–25.

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 by believing
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 members of our body are by one soul.⁵

¹ John 6:35, 40, 50–54.

² John 6:55, 56; 1 Corinthians 12:13.

³ Acts 1:9–11; 1 Corinthians 11:26; Colossians 3:1.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 6:15–17; Ephesians 5:29, 30; 1 John 4:13.

⁵ John 6:56–58; 15:1–6; Ephesians 4:15, 16; 1 John 3:24.

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:

“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 Corinthians 11:23–26.

² 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17.

Lord’s Day 29

78 Q. Are the bread and wine changed into 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 God’s sign and assurance,¹
so too the bread of the Lord’s Supper
is not changed into the actual body of Christ²
even though it is called the body of Christ³
in keeping with the nature and language of sacraments.⁴

¹ Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5.

² Matthew 26:26–29.

³ 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17; 11:26–28.

⁴ Genesis 17:10, 11; Exodus 12:11, 13; 1 Corinthians 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? (Paul uses the words, a participation in Christ's body and blood.)

A. Christ has good reason for these words.

He wants to teach us that
as bread and wine nourish our temporal life,
so too his crucified body and poured-out blood
truly nourish 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 paid for our sins.³

¹ John 6:51, 55.

² 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17; 11:26.

³ Romans 6:5–11.

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 our sins have been completely forgiven
through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ
which he himself finished on the cross once for all.¹

It also declares to us
that the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ,²
who with his very body
is now 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
in the form of bread and wine
where Christ is therefore to be worshipped.

Thus the Mass is basically
nothing but a denial
of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ
and a condemnable idolatry.

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

² 1 Corinthians 6:17; 10:16, 17.

³ Acts 7:55, 56; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1.

⁴ Matthew 6:20, 21; John 4:21–24; Philippians 3:20; Colossians 3:1–3.

81 Q. Who are to 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 continuing 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 Corinthians 10:19–22; 11:26–32.

82 Q. Are those to be admitted to the Lord's Supper who show by what they say and do that they are unbelieving and ungodly?

- A. No, that would dishonour God's covenant and bring down God's anger 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 Corinthians 11:17–32; Psalm 50:14–16; Isaiah 1:11–17.

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 preaching and discipline open the kingdom of heaven to believers and close it to unbelievers.¹

¹ Matthew 16:19; John 20:22, 23.

84 Q. How does preaching the 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 each and every believer, that
as often as he accepts the gospel promise in true faith,
God, because of what Christ has done,
truly forgives all his 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 anger of God and eternal condemnation
rest on them.

God's judgment, both in this life and in the life to come,
is based on this gospel testimony.¹

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

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

A. According to the command of Christ:

If anyone, though called a Christian,
professes unchristian teachings or lives an unchristian life,
if after repeated brotherly counsel,
he refuses to abandon his errors and wickedness, and,
if after being reported to the church, that is, to its officers,
he fails to respond also to their admonition—
such a one the officers exclude from the Christian fellowship
by withholding the sacraments from him,
and God himself excludes him from the kingdom of Christ.¹

Such a person,
when he promises and demonstrates genuine reform,
is received again
as a member of Christ
and of his church.²

¹ Matthew 18:15–20; 1 Corinthians 5:3–5, 11–13; 2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15.

² Luke 15:20–24; 2 Corinthians. 2:6–11.

Part 3: man's gratitude

Lord's Day 32

86 Q. We have been delivered from our misery by God's grace alone through Christ and not because we have earned it. Why then must we still do good?

A. To be sure, Christ has redeemed us by his blood.

But we do good because

Christ by his Spirit is also renewing us to be like himself,
so that in all our living
we may show that 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
so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits,³
and so that by our godly living
our neighbours may be won over to Christ.⁴

¹ Romans 6:13; 12:1, 2; 1 Peter 2:5–10.

² Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.

³ Matthew 7:17, 18; Galatians 5:22–24; 2 Peter 1:10, 11.

⁴ Matthew 5:14–16; Romans 14:17–19; 1 Peter 2:12; 3:1, 2.

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

A. By no means.

Scripture tells us that

no sexually immoral person,
no idolater, adulterer, thief,
no greedy person,
no drunkard, slanderer, swindler,
or the like

is going to inherit the kingdom of God.¹

¹ 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Galatians 5:19–21; Ephesians 5:1–20; 1 John 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,
and the coming-to-life of the new.¹

¹ Romans 6:1–11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:22–24; Colossians 3:5–10.

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

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

¹ Psalm 51:3, 4, 17; Joel 2:12, 13; Romans 8:12, 13; 2 Corinthians 7:10.

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

A. It is wholehearted joy in God through Christ¹
and a delight to do every kind of good
as God wants us to.²

¹ Psalm 51:8, 12; Isaiah 57:15; Romans 5:1; 14:17.

² Romans 6:10, 11; Galatians 2:20.

91 Q. What do we do that is good?

A. Only that which

arises out of true faith,¹
conforms to God's law,²
and is done for his glory;³

and not that which is based
on what we think is right
or on established human tradition.⁴

¹ John 15:5; Hebrews 11:6.

² Leviticus 18:4; 1 Samuel 15:22; Ephesians 2:10.

³ 1 Corinthians 10:31.

⁴ Deuteronomy 12:32; Isaiah 29:13; Ezekiel 20:18, 19; Matthew 15:7–9.

Lord's Day 34

92 Q. What does the Lord say in his law?

- A. And God spoke all these words:
I am the LORD your God,
who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.
1. You shall have no other gods before me.
 2. You shall not make for yourself an idol
in the form of anything in heaven above
or on the earth beneath
or in the waters below.
You shall not bow down to them or worship them;
for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God,
punishing the children for the sin of the fathers
to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,
but showing love to a thousand generations
of those who love me and keep my commandments.
 3. You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God,
for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless
who misuses his name.
 4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
Six days you shall labour and do all your work,
but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God.
On it you shall not do any work,
neither you, nor your son or daughter,
nor your manservant or maidservant,
nor your animals,
nor the alien within your gates.
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.
 5. Honour your father and your mother,
so that you may live long
in the land the LORD your God is giving you.
 6. You shall not murder.
 7. You shall not commit adultery.
 8. You shall not steal.
 9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.
 10. You shall not covet your neighbour's house.
You shall not covet your neighbour's wife,
or his manservant or maidservant,
his ox or donkey,
or anything that belongs to your neighbour.¹

¹ Exodus 20:1–17; Deuteronomy 5:6–21.

93 Q. How are these commandments divided?

- A. Into two tables.
The first has four commandments,
teaching us what our relation to God should be.
The second has six commandments,
teaching us what we owe our neighbour.¹
¹ Matthew 22:37–39.

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

- A. That I, not wanting to endanger my very salvation,
avoid and shun
all idolatry,¹ magic, superstitious rites,²
and prayer to saints or to other creatures.³

That I sincerely acknowledge the only true God,⁴
trust him alone,⁵
look to him for every good thing⁶
humbly⁷ and patiently,⁸
love him,⁹ fear him,¹⁰ and honour him¹¹
with all my heart.

In short,

that I give up anything
rather than go against his will in any way.¹²

¹ 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; 10:5–14; 1 John 5:21.

² Leviticus 19:31; Deuteronomy 18:9–12.

³ Matthew 4:10; Revelation 19:10; 22:8, 9.

⁴ John 17:3.

⁵ Jeremiah 17:5, 7.

⁶ Psalm 104:27, 28; James 1:17.

⁷ 1 Peter 5:5, 6.

⁸ Colossians 1:11; Hebrews 10:36.

⁹ Matthew 22:37 (Deuteronomy 6:5).

¹⁰ Proverbs 9:10; 1 Peter 1:17.

¹¹ Matthew 4:10 (Deuteronomy 6:13).

¹² Matthew 5:29, 30; 10:37–39.

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 his Word.¹
¹ 1 Chronicles 16:26; Galatians 4:8, 9; Ephesians 5:5; Philippians 3:19.

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 he has commanded in his Word.²
¹ Deuteronomy 4:15–19; Isaiah 40:18–25; Acts 17:29; Romans 1:23.
² Leviticus 10:1–7; 1 Samuel 15:22, 23; John 4:23, 24.

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

- A. God cannot 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 Exodus 34:13, 14, 17; 2 Kings 18:4, 5.

98 Q. But may not images be permitted in the churches as teaching aids for the unlearned?

- A. No, we shouldn't try to be wiser than God.
He wants his people instructed
by the living preaching of his Word—¹
not by idols that cannot even talk.²
¹ Romans 10:14, 15, 17; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:19.
² Jeremiah 10:8; Habakkuk 2:18–20.

Lord's Day 36

99 Q. What is God's will for us in the third commandment?

- A. That we neither blaspheme nor misuse the name of God
by cursing,¹ perjury,² or unnecessary oaths,³
nor share in such horrible sins
by being silent bystanders.⁴

In a word, it requires
that we use the holy name of God
only with reverence and awe,⁵
so that we may properly
confess him,⁶
pray to him,⁷
and praise him in everything we do and say.⁸

¹ Leviticus 24:10–17.

² Leviticus 19:12.

³ Matthew 5:37; James 5:12.

⁴ Leviticus 5:1; Proverbs 29:24.

⁵ Psalm 99:1–5; Jeremiah 4:2.

⁶ Matthew 10:32, 33; Romans 10:9, 10.

⁷ Psalm 50:14, 15; 1 Timothy 2:8.

⁸ Colossians 3:17.

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 it and to forbid it?

- A. Yes, Indeed.¹
No sin is greater,
no sin makes God more angry
than blaspheming his name.

That is why he commanded the death penalty for it.²

¹ Leviticus 5:1.

² Leviticus 24:10–17.

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 neighbour's good.

Such oaths are approved in God's Word¹
and were rightly used by Old and New Testament believers.²

¹ Deuteronomy 6:13; 10:20; Jeremiah 4:1, 2; Hebrews 6:16.

² Genesis 21:24; Joshua 9:15; 1 Kings 1:29, 30; Romans 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:23.

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

- A. No.
A legitimate oath means calling upon God
as the 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 honour.²

¹ Romans 9:1; 2 Corinthians 1:23.

² Matthew 5:34–37; 23:16–22; James 5:12.

Lord's Day 38

103 Q. What is God's will for us 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 regularly 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 already in this life the eternal sabbath.⁷

¹ Deuteronomy 6:4–9, 20–25; 1 Corinthians 9:13, 14; 2 Timothy 2:2; 3:13–17; Titus 1:5.

² Deuteronomy 12:5–12; Psalm 40:9, 10; 68:26; Acts 2:42–47; Hebrews 10:23–25.

³ Romans 10:14–17; 1 Corinthians 14:31, 32; 1 Timothy 4:13.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 11:23, 24.

⁵ Colossians 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:1.

⁶ Psalm 50:14; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9.

⁷ Isaiah 66:23; Hebrews 4:9–11.

Lord's Day 39

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

A. That I honour, love, and be loyal to

my father and mother
and all those in authority over me;

that I obey and submit to them, as is proper,
when they correct and punish me;¹

and also that I be patient with their failings—²
for through them God chooses to rule us.³

¹ Exodus 21:17; Proverbs 1:8; 4:1; Romans 13:1, 2; Ephesians 5:21, 22; 6:1–9; Colossians 3:18–4:1.

² Proverbs 20:20; 23:22; 1 Peter 2:18.

³ Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1–8; Ephesians 6:1–9; Colossians 3:18–21.

Lord's Day 40

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

- A. I am not to belittle, insult, hate, or kill my neighbour—
not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture,
and certainly not by actual deeds—
and I am not to be party to this in others;¹
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 Genesis 9:6; Leviticus 19:17, 18; Matthew 5:21, 22; 26:52.

² Proverbs 25:21, 22; Matthew 18:35; Romans 12:19; Ephesians 4:26.

³ Matthew 4:7; 26:52; Romans 13:11–14.

⁴ Genesis 9:6; Exodus 21:14; Romans 13:4.

106 Q. Does this commandment refer only to killing?

- A. By forbidding murder God teaches us
that he hates the root of murder:
envy, hatred, anger, vindictiveness.¹

In God's sight all such are murder.²

¹ Proverbs 14:30; Romans 1:29; 12:19; Galatians 5:19–21; 1 John 2:9–11.

² 1 John 3:15.

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

- A. No.
By condemning envy, hatred, and anger
God tells us
to love our neighbour as ourselves,¹
to be patient, peace-loving, gentle,
merciful, and friendly to him,²
to protect him from harm as much as we can,
and to do good even to our enemies.³

¹ Matthew 7:12; 22:39; Romans 12:10.

² Matthew 5:3–12; Luke 6:36; Romans 12:10, 18; Galatians 6:1, 2; Ephesians 4:2;
Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 3:8.

³ Exodus 23:4, 5; Matthew 5:44, 45; Romans 12:20, 21 (Proverbs 25:21, 22).

Lord's Day 41

108 Q. What is God's will for us in the seventh commandment?

- A. God condemns all unchastity.¹
We should therefore thoroughly detest it²
and, married or single,
live decent and chaste lives.³

¹ Leviticus 18:30; Ephesians 5:3–5.

² Jude 22, 23.

³ 1 Corinthians 7:1–9; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8; Hebrews 13:4.

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 he forbids
everything which incites to unchastity,¹
whether it be actions, looks, talk, thoughts, or desires.²

¹ 1 Corinthians 15:33; Ephesians 5:18.

² Matthew 5:27–29; 1 Corinthians 6:18–20; Ephesians 5:3, 4.

Lord's Day 42

110 Q. What does God forbid in the eighth commandment?

- A. He forbids not only outright theft and robbery,
punishable by law.¹

But in God's sight theft also includes
cheating and swindling our neighbour
by schemes made to appear legitimate,²
such as:

inaccurate measurements of weight, size, or volume;
fraudulent merchandising;
counterfeit money;
excessive interest;
or any other means forbidden by God.³

In addition he forbids all greed⁴
and pointless squandering of his gifts.⁵

¹ Exodus 22:1; 1 Corinthians 5:9, 10; 6:9, 10.

² Micah 6:9–11; Luke 3:14; James 5:1–6.

³ Deuteronomy 25:13–16; Psalm 15:5; Proverbs 11:1; 12:22; Ezekiel 45:9–12; Luke 6:35.

⁴ Luke 12:15; Ephesians 5:5.

⁵ Proverbs 21:20; 23:20, 21; Luke 16:10–13.

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

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

¹ Isaiah 58:5–10; Matthew 7:12; Galatians 6:9, 10; Ephesians 4:28.

Lord's Day 43

112 Q. What is God's will for us in the ninth commandment?

- A. God's will is that I
never give false testimony against anyone,
twist no one's words,
not gossip or slander,
nor join in condemning anyone
without a hearing or without a just cause.¹

Rather, in court and everywhere else,
I should avoid lying and deceit of every kind;
these are devices the devil himself uses, and they would call down on
me God's intense anger.²

I should love the truth,
speak it candidly,
and openly acknowledge it.³

And I should do what I can
to guard and advance my neighbour's good name.⁴

¹ Psalm 15; Proverbs 19:5; Matthew 7:1; Luke 6:37; Romans 1:28–32.

² Leviticus 19:11, 12; Proverbs 12:22; 13:5; John 8:44; Revelation 21:8.

³ 1 Corinthians 13:6; Ephesians 4:25.

⁴ 1 Peter 3:8, 9; 4:8.

Lord's Day 44

113 Q. What is God's will for us in the tenth commandment?

- A. That not even the slightest thought or desire
contrary to any one of God's commandments
should ever arise in my heart.

Rather, with all my heart
I should always hate sin
and take pleasure in whatever is right.¹

¹ Psalm 19:7–14; 139:23, 24; Romans 7:7, 8.

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 Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 7:14, 15; 1 Corinthians 13:9; 1 John 1:8–10.

² Psalm 1:1, 2; Romans 7:22–25; Philippians 3:12–16.

115 Q. No one in this life can obey the Ten Commandments perfectly. Why then does God want them preached so pointedly?

- A. First, so that the longer we live
the more we may come to know our sinfulness
and the more eagerly look to Christ
for forgiveness of sins and righteousness.¹

Second, so that,
while praying to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit,

we may never stop striving
to be renewed more and more after God's image,
until after this life we reach our goal:
perfection.²

¹ Psalm 32:5; Romans 3:19–26; 7:7, 24, 25; 1 John 1:9.

² 1 Corinthians 9:24; Philippians 3:12–14; 1 John 3:1–3.

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 him for them.²

¹ Psalm 50:14, 15; 116:12–19; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18.

² Matthew 7:7, 8; Luke 11:9–13.

117 Q. How does God want us to pray so that he will listen to us?

- A. First, we must pray from the heart
to no other than the one true God,
who has revealed himself in his Word,
asking for everything he has commanded us to ask for.¹

Second, we must acknowledge our need and misery,
hiding nothing,
and humble ourselves in his majestic presence.²

Third, we must rest on this unshakeable foundation:
even though we do not deserve it,
God will surely listen to our prayer
because of Christ our Lord.

That is what he promised us in his Word.³

¹ Psalm 145:18–20; John 4:22–24; Romans 8:26, 27; James 1:5; 1 John 5:14, 15.

² 2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 2:11; 34:18; 62:8; Isaiah 66:2; Revelation 4.

³ Daniel 9:17–19; Matthew 7:8; John 14:13, 14; 16:23; Romans 10:13; James 1:6.

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 James 1:17; Matthew 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 today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
forever and ever.

Amen.¹

¹ Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4.

Lord's Day 46

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

- A. At the very beginning of our prayer
Christ wants to kindle in us
what is basic to our prayer—
the childlike awe and trust
that God through Christ has become
our Father.

Our fathers do not refuse us
the things of this life;
God our Father will even less refuse to give us
what we ask in faith.¹

¹ Matthew 7:9–11; Luke 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
for body and soul
from his almighty power.²

¹ Jeremiah 23:23, 24; Acts 17:24, 25.

² Matthew 6:25–34; Romans 8:31, 32.

Lord's Day 47

122 Q. What does the first request mean?

- A. *Hallowed be your name* means,
Help us to really know you,¹
to bless, worship, 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 honoured and praised.³

¹ Jeremiah 9:23, 24; 31:33, 34; Matthew 16:17; John 17:3.

² Exodus 34:5–8; Psalm 145; Jeremiah 32:16–20; Luke 1:46–55, 68–75; Romans 11:33–36.

³ Psalm 115:1; Matthew 5:16.

Lord's Day 48

123 Q. What does the second request 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

Keep your church strong, and add to it.²

Destroy the devil's work;
destroy every force which revolts against you
and every conspiracy against your Word.³

Do this until your kingdom is so complete and perfect
that in it you are
all in all.⁴

¹ Psalm 119:5, 105; 143:10; Matthew. 6:33.

² Psalm 122:6–9; Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:42–47.

³ Romans 16:20; 1 John 3:8.

⁴ Romans 8:22, 23; 1 Corinthians 15:28; Revelation 22:17, 20.

Lord's Day 49

124 Q. What does the third request mean?

A. *Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven* means,

Help us and all men
to reject our own wills
and to obey your will without any back talk.
Your will alone is good.¹

Help everyone carry out the work he is called to²
as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven.³

¹ Matthew 7:21; 16:24–26; Luke 22:42; Romans 12:1, 2; Titus 2:11, 12.

² 1 Corinthians 7:17–24; Ephesians 6:5–9.

³ Psalm 103:20, 21.

Lord's Day 50

125 Q. What does the fourth request mean?

A. *Give us today 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 to put trust in you alone.⁴

¹ Psalm 104:27–30; 145:15, 16; Matthew 6:25–34.

² Acts 14:17; 17:25; James 1:17.

³ Deuteronomy 8:3; Psalm 37:16; 127:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 15:58.

⁴ Psalm 55:22; 62; 146; Jeremiah 17:5–8; Hebrews 13:5, 6.

Lord's Day 51

126 Q. What does the fifth request mean?

A. *Forgive us our sins,*
as we forgive those who sin against us 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 neighbours.²

¹ Psalm 51:1–7; 143:2; Romans 8:1; 1 John 2:1, 2.

² Matthew 6:14, 15; 18:21–35.

Lord's Day 52

127 Q. What does the sixth request mean?

A. *And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil* 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—⁴
never 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 Psalm 103:14–16; John 15:1–5.

² 2 Corinthians 11:14; Ephesians 6:10–13; 1 Peter 5:8.

³ John 15:18–21.

⁴ Romans 7:23; Galatians 5:17.

⁵ Matthew 10:19, 20; 26:41; Mark 13:33; Romans 5:3–5.

⁶ 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 5:23.

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

A. *For yours is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, forever and ever* means,

We have made all these requests of you
because, as our all-powerful king,
you not only want to,
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, forever.²

¹ Romans 10:11–13; 2 Peter 2:9.

² Psalm 115:1; John 14:13.

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

A. *Amen* means, This is sure to be!

It is even more sure
that God listens to my prayer,
than that I really desire
what I pray for.¹

¹ Isaiah 65:2