

Introduction to The Trinity Catechism

Class 2: What's in It? Part 1

Introduction and Recap of last week...

What is a Catechism?

- The word comes from a Greek word (*katēcheō*) that means “to make hear,” “to teach” or “to instruct.” (Luke 1:3–4; Acts 18:25).
- The Greek word (*katēcheō*) was not a technical term or specialized word—it simply means to *teach* or *instruct*, but over time this term has been associated with a specific method of teaching.
- **From John last week: A “catechism” is a tool used to teach others verbally, usually through question and answer.**

Older Examples

- Early church “catechumens” to prepare for baptism were trained from months to a couple years, working through discipleship material.
- 1648 *Westminster Shorter Catechism*
- 1693 *The Baptist Catechism Commonly Called “Keach’s Catechism”*

The sources behind the 104 questions in *The Trinity Catechism*

- **22 questions¹** are original to *The Trinity Catechism*, capturing our distinctives. Examples: Complementarianism (15–18), Continuationism (43, 88), Connectionalism (103), Missional (101–102), and Gospel-Centeredness (26, 37, 79).
- **42 questions²** from the [Westminster Shorter Catechism](#) with *very slight changes* to make it clearer. An example:
 - **WSC Q3.** What do the Scriptures principally teach? A. The Scriptures principally teach, what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man. (2 Tim. 1:13; 2 Tim. 3:16.)
 - **TC Q7.** What do the Scriptures principally teach? A. The Scriptures principally teach what we are to believe concerning God and what duty

¹ Original Questions: 15–18, 24, 26, 35, 37, 43, 49–53, 79, 81, 86, 88, 101–104

² From WSC with minimal changes (42 tot): Q2, 7–13, 19–20, 23, 27–34, 36, 38–39, 45, 48, 54–60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 70, 72, 74, 80, 92, 97

he requires of us. (2 Tim 3:16–17; John 20:30-31; Acts 24:14; 1 Cor 10:11; Eccl 12:13)

- **29 questions³** from the WSC but with *significant or very significant changes*. An example:
 - **WSC Q36.** What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification? A. The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end. (Rom. 5:1-2, 5; Rom. 14:17; Prov. 4:18; 1 John 5:13; 1 Pet. 1:5)
 - **TC Q42.** What benefits do we experience in this life as a result of our justification, adoption, and progressive sanctification? A. **These works of the Spirit** bring with them **communion with God**, assurance of his love, peace in our conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, **spiritual gifts**, and the grace to persevere to the end. (1 John 1:3; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 5:22–23; Rom 5:5; 1 Cor 12:7; 1 Peter 1:5)
- **6 questions⁴** from what is sometimes called, “The Baptist Catechism Commonly Called Keach’s Catechism” from 1693.
- **4 questions⁵** come from Piper’s 1986 [A Baptist Catechism](#).⁶
- **1 question** comes from the 1563 [Heidelberg Catechism](#) (our Q3). Written in Heidelberg, Germany, mostly by Zacharius Ursinus (1534–1583).

One Thing to Add: A Change in Person

- One change we made was in the perspective of the person answering the question.
- WSC speaks only in 3rd person (He is, they are). Allows for great precision but a bit impersonal.
- *Heidelberg* speaks in 1st person singular (I am, my). Very personal, but it takes away the corporate side of being the church.
- We decided on 1st person plurals, so the questions/answers are spoken as if by the church gathered together or as if by a Christian in union with all the saints. For example, Q3: “What is our only comfort in life and death? A. Our only comfort is...”

³ From 1647 WSC with changes (sometimes theologically significant) (29 tot): Q5, 14, 21–22, 25, 40–42, 44, 61, 63, 65, 67, 69, 71, 73, 75–76, 78, 82, 89–91, 93–96, 98–100.

⁴ *Trinity Catechism* from Keach's Catechism (Rev. John Bippon's 1794 edition as found in 1851 edition published by American Baptist Publication Society): 1, 4, 46–47, 83–84.

⁵ *Trinity Catechism* from Piper's 1986 "A Baptist Catechism": 6, 77, 85, 87.

⁶ Accessed at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/a-baptist-catechism>.

Today's Class

Last week John looked at Section 1: "Our Chief End and Comfort" (Questions 1–3).

The goal of today's class is to dive into the contents of the *Trinity Catechism* in more detail. We'll do a flyover of Questions 4–47. Sections 2–6.

Benjamin will finish next week with Questions 48–104.

Section 2: "God the Creator" (Questions 4–19)

- This section covers the doctrines of revelation (general, special), God (nature of God, God as Trinity), decree (creation, providence).
- From Piper: "Q6. How do we know that the Bible is the Word of God? A. The Bible evidences itself to be God's Word by the heavenliness of its doctrine, the unity of its parts, and its power to convert sinners and to edify saints. Yet, only the Spirit of God, bearing witness by and with the Scriptures in our hearts, is able to persuade us fully that the Bible is the Word of God.
- From WSC: "Q8. What is God? A. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth."
- Questions 13–18 cover the doctrine of Creation. Here is where we introduced teaching on sexuality, gender, and marriage. This was never considered necessary until 21st century documents. And yet, *it's very necessary in our day to speak to these issues.*
- Let's look at these questions. Q14 we modified from WSC. Q15–18 are new to the TC:
 - Q14. How did God create us?
 - A. God created us male and female after his own image in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. He gave us *an immortal soul* and dominion over the creatures. *We are each either a man or a woman according to his good purposes for us.* (Gen 1:26–28; 2:7–8, 15–18, 21–23; Col 3:10; Eph 4:24; Rom 2:14–15; Eccl 7:29; Matt 10:28)
 - Q15. What does it mean to be a man?
 - A. A man is created a biological male by God to work, cultivate, and keep what is entrusted to him. Spiritually, he is a son, brother, and

father; and these are potentially true in his body as well. (Gen 2:7–8, 15, 24; 1 Cor 16:13; Eph 6:4; Phil 2:22; 1 Tim 5:1; 1 Cor 11:3, 8–9)

- The question is wrestling with, *What are we by creation?*
 - Starts with our maleness. This is unalterable and from conception.
 - Then it turns to our vocation, what we are called to do by God—“to work, cultivate, and keep.”
 - Then it turns to what we are in our natures.
 - A man is a “son” not just because he is male, though that’s true. It’s also true of us “spiritually” (i.e., in our souls, nature, non-physical aspect of us). I act in a “son-ly” way toward by physical and spiritual fathers and especially toward God. As a child of God I am especially a “son of God.”
 - A man is a “brother” also not just because he is male, again this could be true of me physically. Yet, the NT refers to men as “brothers” in Christ and women as “sisters.” I act in a “brotherly” way toward others. A bit fatherly without the authority aspect.
 - A man is also a “father,” sometimes physically but always in his nature. There is a way I relate to those younger or “under” me as a father to a son or daughter.
- Q16. What does it mean to be a woman?
 - A. A woman is created a biological female by God to help, nurture, and bring life to those given to her. Spiritually, she is a daughter, sister, and mother; and these are potentially true in her body as well. (Gen 2:18, 21, 23–24; 3:20; Rom 16:13; 1 Tim 5:2)
 - The same kind of answer is given here for the woman.
 - Starts with femaleness at creation.
 - Then vocation: “to help, nurture, and bring life to those given to her.”
 - Notice the subtle change. For the man, his vocation is about “WHAT is entrusted to him.” For the woman, his vocation is about “THOSE given to her.” Of course, a man’s “WHAT is entrusted”

includes people! And a woman's "THOSE given" includes tasks. But it points to something distinct in the created order. The man is given a task and placed in the Garden. The woman is made *from* his rib and *for* the man as a helpmate.

- Then the woman, too, is addressed in her nature, her spiritual self. She is a daughter, sister, and mother. She will relate to those older and "above" her as a daughter. Her peers in a "sisterly" way. Those younger and "below" her as a mother.
- Q17. What is distinctive of a man and a woman in marriage?
- A. Marriage is between one man and one woman. In a marriage, the husband is the head of the wife, and he is called to love her as Christ loved the church and also to honor and understand her; and the wife is called to love, respect, and submit to her husband, and she is also to adorn herself with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit. (Gen 2:24; 1 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:25–27; 1 Peter 3:7; Eph 5:22, 33; Titus 2:4; 1 Peter 3:4)
- Q18. What is God's purpose for marriage?
- A. God created marriage as a mystery that reflects Christ's relationship with the Church. It is a covenant ordained at creation. It is for the mutual help, joy, and comfort of husband and wife in prosperity and adversity. It is the exclusive relationship for sexual intimacy and union, for the procreation of children who are to be brought up in the Lord, and for protection from sexual temptation. (Eph 5:31–32; Gen 2:24; Prov 31:12; Song of Songs 1:2; 4:10; Mal 2:15; Eph 6:4; 1 Peter 3:7; 1 Cor 7:3–5)

Section 3: "Sin and the Fall" (Q 20–24)

- Creation leads to the fall. Genesis 1–2 and then Genesis 3, right?
- Here we introduce the unique role of Adam and the "covenant of works" God set up with him. As Adam went, so went the whole human race. This is covered in Questions 20–21.
 - This is a place where we strengthened the WSC. WSC Q13 & Q15 speak about the sin of "our first parents" instead of the sin of "Adam," but this

seems confusing. It seems to indicate that Adam and Eve's sin is "the fall of mankind," but it's technically only the sin of Adam where all mankind fell. You can see that in Romans 5:12–21. Adam alone is the type of Christ. Just as Christ's work affects a people, so does Adam's. This isn't true of Eve.

- Question 23 updates only slightly the great WSC question, "What is sin?", and answers it with, "Sin is any lack of conformity to, or transgression of, the law of God."
 - Note that it's not just in our behaviors. It can also be in our desires and even human nature. In all these areas there can be a "lack of conformity to...the law of God."

Section 4: "Christ the Redeemer" (Q 25–33)

- Section 3 leaves us in our sin. Is there a remedy to our sin? Yes! "The Redeemer given by God to men, the man Christ Jesus" (Q26). He is provided to humanity in a "Covenant of Grace" (Q26).
- Covenant of Grace (Q 26)
 - The WSC is pretty minimal about the covenant of grace. The WLC has much, much more. We wanted to bring in some of the content from our Confession.
 - Q26. What is this covenant of grace?
 - A. The covenant of grace is God's promise to save his elect through the Redeemer given by God to men, the man Christ Jesus. This covenant is first revealed in the Garden and then more fully throughout the Bible until its most complete expression in the new covenant. It is founded in the eternal covenant transaction made between the Father and the Son regarding the redemption of the elect. (Gen 3:15; 15:6; Eph 1:3–6; Heb 11:4–7; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6–13; Ps 2:7–8; Isa 42:1)
- Wonderful Christology:
 - Doctrine of two natures in the one person of Christ (Q27)
 - Three offices: Prophet, Priest, King (Q28–31)

- Two states: humiliation in his becoming a man, suffering, death, burial (Q32); and exaltation beginning with his resurrection (Q33).

Section 5: “The Holy Spirit and the Order of Salvation” (Q 34–41)

- Section 4 is the WORK of Christ, but the work of Christ does not benefit us unless the Holy Spirit APPLIES it to us. That’s where Q34–41 comes in. Issues like “Effectual Calling” (Q38).
- Some rich new questions we added: “Who is the Holy Spirit?” (35).
- Q35. Who is the Holy Spirit?
- A. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead, equal in power, glory, majesty, and deity with the Father and the Son. (Gen 1:2; Ps 104:30; Matt 28:19; Acts 5:3–4)
- Q37. What is the gospel?
- A. The gospel is the good news of Christ’s victory over sin, death, and the devil through his righteous life, atoning death, victorious resurrection, present reign, and imminent return. Through faith in him we are saved from God’s wrath, forgiven of our sins, made new creations, adopted as sons and daughters, and kept for eternity. (Isa 52:7; Col 2:15; Mark 1:15; Rom 1:16–17; 3:23–25; 1 Cor 15:1–5)

Section 6: “The Benefits of Our Salvation in Life, Death, and the Resurrection” (Q 42–47)

- Our salvation by the Spirit has incalculable benefits. And you can think of these as occurring in life, death, and the resurrection.
- You can hear some of our Continuationist perspective in Q42–43, part of the “benefits in this life”:
 - Q42. What benefits do we experience in this life as a result of our justification, adoption, and progressive sanctification?
 - A. These works of the Spirit bring with them communion with God, assurance of his love, peace in our conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, and the grace to persevere to the end. (1 John 1:3; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 5:22–23; Rom 5:5; 1 Cor 12:7; 1 Peter 1:5)

- Q43. What spiritual gifts can we experience in this life?
- A. Since all the gifts of the Spirit found in the New Testament continue in this present age, God in his kindness might give any of these to us according to his boundless grace and the need of the moment. We are to desire them earnestly and never to despise them. (Luke 11:13; Eph 4:7-14; 1 Cor 12:4-7; 14:1, 39; 1 Thess 5:19-21)
- I'll finish out our look at the questions by reading one on our death and one on our resurrection:
- Q44. What benefits do we receive from Christ at death?
- A. At death our souls are made perfect in holiness and immediately go to the very presence of God. Our bodies rest in their graves until the resurrection. (Luke 23:43; Phil 1:23; 2 Cor 5:8; 1 Thess 4:14; Job 19:26) Q45. What benefits do we receive from Christ at the resurrection?
- A. At the resurrection we are raised up bodily in glory, acquitted on the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God for all eternity. (1 Cor 15:43; Matt 25:23; 10:32; 1 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 4:17-18)

Conclusion

At a practical level: let us know about any mistakes or things that are unclear or where you wonder about the theology.

What is the *Trinity Catechism*?

- A tool to help you grow as a Christian.
- A tool to help you understand your Bible better.
- A tool to help you disciple others.

Let's pray.