

## A SHORT CATECHISM OF OUR FAITH



**"Teach me your way, O LORD,  
that I may walk in your truth;  
unite my heart to fear your name."**

*Psalm 86.11*

## Preface

This catechism is by no means the product solely of my own labor. With permission, I have borrowed elements of various catechisms and adapted the language to be suitable for all ages. The hope is that the language is simple yet not simplistic because while the truths of our faith should be put in a form that can be grasped even by the young, the truths of our faith remain profound and perpetually mysterious even to the most intelligent among us.

But why a catechism? Well, the art of teaching through question and answer has a long history in the Church and in the Scriptures. God instructed his people to practice a sort of catechesis in order to teach about redemptive events (Exodus 12.26; Deuteronomy 6.20; Joshua 4.6), and catechesis was a favorite practice in Jesus' teaching as well (Matthew 22.42; Mark 8.29; Luke 20.24).

But why else do we use catechesis? In short, catechesis is a helpful way to capture and explain the basics of our faith. No catechism is exhaustive, but a good catechism highlights the core of what we believe and why. And the goal of it all? To make us into mature disciples of Jesus (Matthew 28.18-20). Of course, learning a catechism does not automatically yield a disciple any more than attending weekly services automatically yields a disciple. But just as weekly services are crucial in our growth as Christians when we meet Christ weekly in word and sacrament, so a systematic presentation of our faith is crucial if we are to respond more fully to what the Scripture teaches us about God, creation, and ourselves.

This catechism follows the narrative structure of the Bible, starting with creation and then working forward through history. But it also aims to be intensely personal, emphasizing how we, both individually and as God's corporate people, respond to God's revelation, especially the revelation of his Son, Jesus.

This catechism is good for individual use, small groups, or for family devotions. It is designed to be memorized but is also useful for launching a general discussion. And, of course, the Scriptures attached to each answer should always be consulted.

My prayer is that this catechism will bring you closer to the God who created you, who saved you in Jesus, and who will deliver you fully to stand with him in his kingdom on the Last Day. May it urge you forward to walk in God's grace and love.

Rev. Shawn Honey

## Introduction

### 1. Who are you?

I am a child of God by his grace.

*(1 Corinthians 3.23; Galatians 4.6-7; Ephesians 1.7-9; 1 John 3.1)*

### 2. Who is God?

God is God. He can do all things, knows all things, and is everywhere. He is the holy, righteous, and loving Creator, Redeemer, and Judge of all things.

*(Genesis 1.1; Exodus 34.6-7; Psalm 103; Psalm 139.7-8; Romans 11.33-36; Revelation 1.8)*

### 3. What is the Trinity?

The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. But there are not three gods; there is one God in three persons. This is a glorious mystery we cannot fully explain.

*(Matthew 3.16-17; 28.19; 2 Corinthians 13.14; 1 Peter 1.2; Psalm 45.6; John 1.1; 17.5; Acts 5.3-4; Romans 9.5; Colossians 2.9; Jude 24-25)*

## Creation

### 4. What did God create?

God created all things out of nothing by the power of his word. Everything he created is good.

*(Genesis 1.1, 31; Acts 4.24; Hebrews 11.3)*

### 5. How did God create man?

God created man male and female, in his image, to multiply and to rule over all the earth.

*(Genesis 1.26-28)*

## Man's Fall into Sin

### 6. What did God ask of our first human parents?

God asked our first human parents to trust in him and not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But they did not trust God, ate the forbidden fruit, and so fell into sin and death.

*(Genesis 2.16-17; Genesis 3.1-7, 17-19)*

### 7. What is sin?

Sin is when I disobey God in my thoughts, words, and actions. Sin has broken my relationship with God, with others, and with all of creation.

*(James 4.17; 1 John 3.4; Genesis 3.8-19; Romans 1.18-32)*

### 8. Are you a sinner and will you die?

Yes, I am a sinner and will one day die. But because Jesus died and rose again, God forgives my sin and will raise me to new life.

*(Romans 5.6-8, 12, 19a; 6.23; 1 John 1.8; John 10.11, 27-28; Colossians 3.12-17; Revelation 22.1-2)*

## The Old Covenant

### 9. What happened after Adam sinned?

After Adam sinned, God set out to redeem humanity. Although he made a new beginning through Noah, people rebelled at the Tower of Babel. But God chose Abraham and his offspring, the nation of Israel, to bless the world.

*(Genesis 3.15; Genesis 6-8; 11.1-9; 12.1-3; Exodus 19.4-6)*

### 10. What did God do for the nation of Israel?

Through Moses, God freed Israel from slavery in Egypt, gave them his Law, and brought them into their own land.

*(Exodus 12.40-42; Exodus 20.1-17)*

### 11. What is the summary of God's Law?

The Ten Commandments, where God said to Israel: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

1. You shall have no other gods but me.
2. You shall not make for yourself any image or likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or worship them.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet.

*(Exodus 20.1-17)*

### 12. Was Israel saved by keeping God's Law?

No, people have always been saved by trusting in the one true God. Through the Law, Israel was to show the world how to love God, one another, and all of creation.

*(Psalm 1; Habakkuk 2.4)*

### 13. What kinds of sacrifices did God give Israel in the Law?

He gave them (1) sin and (2) guilt offerings to cover their sins,  
 (3) burnt offerings to show their full devotion to God,  
 (4) grain offerings to give thanks to God,  
 (5) and peace offerings to eat with God and his people.  
 All of these offerings pointed to Jesus, who is our perfect sacrifice.

*(Leviticus 1-7)*

### 14. What did God give Israel to help them keep the Law?

He gave them (1) prophets to call them to faithfulness,  
 (2) priests to teach them and to make sacrifices for them in the Temple,  
 (3) and kings to serve them.

All of these offices pointed to Jesus, who is our perfect prophet, priest, and king.

*(Leviticus 10.11; 1 Samuel 16.1, 17.1-58; 2 Samuel 7.12-17; Deuteronomy 18.15-22; Hebrews 9.11; Matthew 21.5; Galatians 4.4-7)*

### **15. Did Israel keep God's Law?**

Some in Israel trusted God, but many turned to other gods. Israel was sent into exile from their land, but many returned to rebuild the Temple and to wait for a Savior.

*(Deuteronomy 29.25-28)*

### **16. Why did Israel need something better than the Law?**

The Law could not destroy the reign of sin and death; for that, Israel and the world needed Jesus.

*(Hebrews 10.11-14; Romans 8.1-4)*

## **The New Covenant**

### **17. Who is Jesus?**

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Lord and Savior. In Jesus, God took onto himself a real human body and soul and was born of the Virgin Mary.

*(Galatians 3.16; Deuteronomy 18.15-19; Hebrews 5.7-10; Romans 1.1-3; John 1.1, 14; Matthew 1.18-25)*

### **18. How did Jesus fulfill the promises made to God's people?**

Jesus is Eve's offspring, who would crush the serpent's head; Abraham's offspring, who would bless the nations; the Prophet like Moses, who would speak for God; the perfect Priest, who would reconcile all things to God; and David's offspring, who would be King forever.

*(Genesis 3.15; Galatians 3.16; Deuteronomy 18.15-19; Hebrews 9.11-14; Matthew 1.1)*

### **19. What did Jesus do during his life on earth?**

When Jesus was thirty years old, he was baptized by John the Baptist and began to preach the good news of God's kingdom: He taught the truth, battled the devil, befriended the lonely, fed the hungry, forgave the guilty, and healed the sick. In this way, Jesus began to make all things new.

*(Luke 3.21-23a; Mark 1.9-15, 17; Luke 4.1-13; Matthew 15.29-39; Mark 10.13-16; John 4.7-10; 5.14; Luke 17.20-37; Luke 5.20; Matthew 26.63-68; Mark 15.21-26; John 20)*

### **20. How did Jesus teach his disciples to pray?**

He promised that the Father would do whatever we ask in Jesus' name and taught us the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
 hallowed be thy Name,  
 thy kingdom come,  
 thy will be done,  
                   on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,  
 as we forgive those

who trespass against us.  
 And lead us not into temptation,  
 but deliver us from evil.  
 For thine is the kingdom,  
 and the power, and the glory  
 for ever and ever. Amen.  
 (Matthew 6.9-13)

### **21. How did Jesus prove to be our Savior?**

He lived a perfect life. In his death on the cross he took away our sins. In his resurrection three days later he conquered death for us. In this way, Jesus reconciled us and all things to God.

(1 Peter 2.22, 24; 1 Corinthians 15.20-22; Colossians 2.20)

### **22. How does God give us the blessings of Jesus' death and resurrection?**

By uniting us to Jesus' death and resurrection in baptism. In Jesus:

- (1) I am born again into God's kingdom,
- (2) justified and (3) adopted as God's forgiven child,
- (4) sanctified as one of God's holy priests,
- (5) and glorified—filled with the Holy Spirit and promised resurrection.

I will enjoy these blessings of my baptism only by walking with Jesus in faith.

(John 3.5; 1 Corinthians 6.11; Romans 6.3-4; 8.15-17; 1 Corinthians 1.2; 12.13; Romans 8.30; John 15.1-11)

### **23. What happened after Jesus rose from the dead?**

After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to his disciples for 40 days and then ascended into heaven. Ten days later on Pentecost, he poured out the Holy Spirit on his disciples, who began to preach the gospel to the nations.

(1 Corinthians 15.1-8; Acts 1.6-11; Acts 2.1-12)

## **The Gospel**

### **24. What is the gospel?**

The gospel is the good news that Jesus is God's promised Savior. Through his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus has conquered sin, death, and the devil and will return again to raise the dead, judge the world, and make all things new.

(Romans 1.1-4; Colossians 2.13-15; Acts 17.31; Revelation 21)

### **25. How must you respond to the gospel?**

I must, through the grace of God and not my own strength, repent of my sins, trust in Jesus, and follow him all the days of my life.

(Mark 1.15; Ephesians 2.1-7; Colossians 1.21-23)

### **26. Must you walk in good works to be saved?**

Yes, but not because good works earn my salvation; I am saved by God's grace in Christ. Rather, good works, empowered by the Holy Spirit, are faith made visible for all the world to see.

*(Ephesians 2.8-10; James 2.14-26; Romans 8.12-17)*

## **The Church and Revelation**

### **27. What is the Church?**

The Church is God's holy kingdom of priests, the body and bride of Christ, the Temple and household of God, the children of Abraham from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

*(1 Peter 2.9-10; Romans 12.4-8; Ephesians 5. 25-32; 2.19-22; Revelation 21.2; Galatians 3.28-29; 6.16)*

### **28. Who are the ministers God has given to the Church?**

God has given the Church

(1) bishops to preach, baptize, celebrate the Lord's Supper, and shepherd the Church;

(2) priests to help the bishops in their work;

(3) deacons to serve the priests and the Church;

(4) and lay people to serve the Church and the world.

Through the Holy Spirit the whole Church is equipped to be a blessing to the world.

*(Titus 1.7-9; 1 Timothy 3.1-7; Titus 1.5-6; 1 Timothy 3.8-13; 1 Peter 2.9-12)*

### **29. How is the Church a blessing to the world?**

The Church, like Israel before her, shows the world the beauty of loving God, one another, and all of creation. Through our relationships, callings, works of justice and mercy, and preaching the gospel, we share God's kingdom with the world.

*(1 Peter 2.9-12; 3.15-16; 1 Timothy 2.1-7; John 13.35; Matthew 5.16; Jeremiah 29.4-7)*

### **30. What revelation has God given the Church?**

God has given the Church the Bible, which is the only Spirit-inspired authority for what we believe and practice.

*(2 Timothy 3.16)*

## **Worship & the Sacraments**

### **31. What happens when the Church gathers for worship on Sunday?**

On Sunday God calls us into his presence, where we sing his praises, confess our sins, bring him our prayers and offerings, receive from him his word and sacraments, and are blessed and sent out into the world.

*(2 Timothy 4.1-2; John 20.23; Acts 2.41-42; 1 Corinthians 11.23-26; 16.1-2; Colossians 3.16; 4.2)*

### **32. What are the sacraments?**

The sacraments are baptism and the Lord's Supper. In the sacraments God uses created things of the earth to give us all that Jesus has done for us.

*(Matthew 28.18-20; 26.26-29)*

**33. What does God give us in baptism?**

When we are baptized in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, God pours out his Holy Spirit to unite us to Jesus and the Church. This promise is for believers and their children.

*(Acts 2.38-39; Romans 6.3-4; Galatians 3.27; 1 Corinthians 12.13)*

**34. How do we benefit from what God gives us in baptism?**

We can only benefit from the blessings of the Holy Spirit and union with Jesus if we believe. If we do not believe, we will be guilty of treating Jesus' blood as nothing and of insulting the Holy Spirit.

*(Hebrews 10.26-31; Romans 11.17-24; John 15.1-6; Colossians 1.21-23; 1 Corinthians 10.1-12)*

**35. What does God give us in the Lord's Supper?**

When we eat the bread and drink the wine in the Lord's Supper, God feeds us with the body and blood of Jesus for the strengthening of our souls and bodies. The Lord's Supper is for all the baptized.

*(1 Corinthians 10.16-17; 11.23-26; 12.12-13)*

**36. How do we benefit from what God gives us in the Lord's Supper?**

We can only benefit from the Lord's Supper if we are at peace with God and our neighbor. Otherwise, we will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.

*(1 Corinthians 11.27-30)*

**37. How are the sacraments for our comfort and assurance?**

We don't look to any power in the sacraments themselves but to God who gives them and to Jesus who is promised to us in them. In baptism, God assures us of our forgiveness and coming resurrection. In the Lord's Supper, God assures us that Jesus died for us and lives in us.

*(Romans 6.1-5; John 6.53-58)*

## The Consummation

**38. What will happen when you die?**

When I die, my spirit will go to be with the Lord, where I will wait for the fullness of my redemption—the resurrection of my body at the last day.

*(2 Corinthians 5.6-8; Philippians 1.23; Romans 8.23-25)*

**39. What will happen at the last day?**

At the last day, Jesus will return as a conquering King to raise the bodies of the dead and to judge all people according to their works. The unrighteous will be condemned to hell, but the righteous will live with God, free from sin and death, in the new heavens and the new earth forever.

*(John 5.25-29; Revelation 20.11-21.8, 22.12)*

## Conclusion

### 40. What is the summary of what you believe?

The summary of what we believe can be found in the Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God: The Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: By the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. on the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.