

Daily Bible Study

“Catechism & Communion” Westminster Larger #168

Selected Scripture

October 25- 31, 2009

THE LORD’S DAY – This week we return to our study of the Lord’s Table entitled “*Catechism & Communion*”. We are using The Westminster Larger Catechism for an outline in our study. This week we will look at Question #168 which simply asks “What is The Lord’s Supper?” Much of what we will cover is review of things we have gone over again and again in times past. So repetition is valuable for learning because it is very important to understand what and why we do the things we do as The People of God, The Body of Christ, or if you prefer, The Church or Ekklesia (a called out and gathered people, assembly). The following is taken from the introduction or what is technically called the “Act of approving the Larger Catechism”: “...the said Catechism is agreeable to the Word of God, and in nothing contrary to the received doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this Kirk; a necessary part of the intended uniformity in religion, and a rich treasure for increasing knowledge among the people of God: and therefore the Assembly, as they bless the Lord that so excellent a Catechism is prepared, so they approve the same, as a part of uniformity; agreeing, for their part, that it be a common Catechism for the three kingdoms, and a Directory for catechizing such as have made some proficiency in the knowledge of the grounds of religion.” In no way do we put The Larger Catechism on par with Holy Scripture as God’s eternal truth stands alone on its own authority. We do recognize that such things as The Larger Catechism are helpful as they summarize, bring together and illustrate to us the truths taught in Scripture. Read **2 Timothy 2:1-2**.

The Word Applied: What does Paul tell Timothy he is to do with his teaching?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, teach me this week as I study and feed upon Your Word.

MONDAY – #168 of the Larger Catechism: **Question: What is the Lord’s supper? Answer: The Lord’s supper is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to the appointment of Jesus Christ, his death is showed forth; and they that worthily communicate feed upon his body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace; have their union and communion with him confirmed; testify and renew their thankfulness, and engagement to God, and their mutual love and fellowship each with the other, as members of the same mystical body.** In this question and answer we find the general issue of The Lord’s Supper discussed as to its origin, observance, and objective. Before we look at the particulars of this question, notice that I have used an outline containing three words that begin with the letter “O” to help summarize what is being said. This is a “method” which is used to help us remember. The “method” of catechizing is used in The Larger Catechism with the goal of teaching, learning, and growth. The Catechism does not replace God’s Word rather it is a summary statement of the truths of God’s Word. The men who put this catechism together understood this fact; we as God’s people need to be taught the truths of God’s Word so that we would ever grow and become more “proficient in our knowledge” as they put it. They got that language from Sacred Scripture as The Apostle Peter tells us this very thing in his second epistle. The following quote which is again taken from the Introduction of The Larger Catechism illustrates the desire of the men compiling the catechism to see God’s people grow. Please notice that the way they have attempted to “catechize” and teach finds its authority or “proofs” from Scripture. “...APPROVED ANNO 1648, BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, TO BE A DIRECTORY FOR CATECHISING SUCH AS HAVE MADE SOME PROFICIENCY IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GROUNDS OF RELIGION, WITH THE PROOFS FROM THE SCRIPTURE.” Read **2 Peter 1:2-11, 3:18**.

The Word Applied: These verses tell us Christians should grow in their knowledge of God and Jesus Christ. This is an intimate knowledge of God which serves as the foundation for a life of obedience & blessing. In whose power do genuine Christians live? God has given believers the needed resources to live mature, stable, & Godly

life; He has given us _____ things (vs. 3). What things can you point to in your life from this text which demonstrate you are growing in Jesus?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, thanks for giving us as Your children the power through Jesus to live Godly and grow in You. Thanks for Your Word which explains to us and teaches us how.

TUESDAY – The beginning of **Question #168** speaks to the origin and author of The Supper when it calls it, “The *Lord’s Supper*”. It goes on to say that “it is a sacrament of the New Testament”. We know that it was Jesus Himself that instituted this sacrament (**1 Corinthians 11:23**). I am using the word sacrament to be understood by its definition of: “an outward sign of an inward grace”. At The Supper we have physical bread and wine which represent the body and blood of Jesus. But more than the physical reality of the mere presence of these physical elements, we understand that there is also a spiritual reality demonstrated as we eat the elements. In eating we are illustrating our union with Jesus by saving faith. This thought of both a physical and spiritual reality is expressed in **Question #163** of The Catechism: **Question:** “What are the parts of a sacrament?” **Answer:** “*The parts of the sacrament are two; the one an outward and sensible sign, used according to Christ’s own appointment; the other an inward and spiritual grace thereby signified.*” Jesus ordained the use of bread and wine in The Supper (**Matthew 26:26-27**) as the *outward and sensible sign* if you will; but He also told us of the *inward and spiritual grace* of the remission of sins that was *thereby signified by the outward and sensible sign* (**Matthew 26:28**). Jesus said “*For this is My blood of the covenant*”. Some manuscripts have the word *new* covenant. The sacrament is a *New Testament* sacrament in that it represents the blood of Jesus which ratifies the covenant of God to forgive the sins of His people. The blood used in the signs of the Old Testament was the blood of animals which only pointed forward to the future sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Both were signs for God’s people to look to Him alone by faith and trust Him for the forgiveness of sins. For further study on The New Covenant & the blood of the covenant read **Jeremiah 31:31-34** , **Hebrews 9:11-28**.

The Word Applied: Meditate on the incredible reality proclaimed as we gather together around The Lord’s Table and eat The Supper. What a thought; “*For this is My blood of the covenant*”.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me understand the power of Your gospel and covenant to forgive Your people. Thank You for The Supper; where we remember and proclaim Jesus death.

WEDNESDAY – We have already touched on the observance of The Supper yesterday and as we continue we will look to the objective as well; or what we are to see and understand in the taking of The Lord’s Supper. The catechism continues: “...*wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to the appointment of Jesus Christ, his death is showed forth; and they that worthily communicate feed upon his body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.*” Tomorrow I will elaborate on the phrase speaking to our partaking worthily but now I would like to quote Francis Beattie, in The Presbyterian Standards as he comments: “*The Lord’s supper shows forth and commemorates the sufferings and death of Christ in the church and to the world until he comes again. It is thus a memorial service, looking back to his sufferings and death as a sacrifice upon the cross for our sins. It is also a prophetic ordinance, looking for ward to, and reminding us of, his coming a second time without sin unto salvation. The Lord’s supper is designed to signify and seal the benefits of Christ and the covenant of grace to believers...All the blessings which flow from the death of Christ for us are set forth in the supper; and by the blessing of Christ through the Spirit to the worthy recipient he obtains, by means of this sacrament, and has sealed to him thereby, the blessings exhibited to him in the ordinance to his spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.*” Beloved there is meaning and blessing illustrated here in The Supper. I fear it has been minimized to a mere act by many when there is a failure to see the profound depth of what Christ’s death and resurrection actually accomplished and brought to us as His people. This sacrament echoes through the ages the power of the gospel and the wondrous grace of God. Read and meditate on **1 Corinthians 11:26**.

The Word Applied: List some of the benefits of Christ’s death to You as a believer.

Suggestion for Prayer: *O God, help me never minimize the magnitude of what took place in Jesus death, burial, resurrection and ascension. Thank You for the benefits of Your grace.*

THURSDAY – The catechism stated, “...and they that worthily communicate feed upon his body and blood...” Not everyone who comes to The Table is a recipient of the blessings provided in The Gospel. We know that according to Scripture, the unconverted man is already living in a state of condemnation (**John 3:36**). But beyond that, a warning goes out to all who would come to The Table. In partaking of The Supper, we are proclaiming Christ’s death and also claiming that the gracious benefits of the Gospel which He purchased by His death belong to us. If we’re coming as either an unbeliever or a believer who is harboring unrepentant sin we are showing disgrace and contempt for Christ’s sacrifice which was for the sole purpose of dealing with sin. It is to mock Jesus death eating with indifference and holding unrepentantly to the very thing that made His death necessary. Read **1 Corinthians 11:27-32**.

The Word Applied: *As the Scripture commands, examine yourself in preparation for coming to The Table. Ask God for a true repentant heart and confess any known sin to Him.*

Suggestion for Prayer: *Have mercy upon me o God, according to Your loving kindness.*

FRIDAY – We are still looking at some of the benefits received in The Lord’s Supper by worthy communicants as we read further that they “...have their union and communion with Him confirmed; testify and renew their thankfulness, and engagement to God...” In The Supper, the believer sees clearly illustrated his union with Jesus in the “one bread”. The Apostle Paul, or better said, God Himself explained this union in Sacred Scripture, when he said we as believers have *koinonia* (fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, shared life) with Jesus in the partaking of the bread and cup. Our union is confirmed but we also express our thankfulness to God and are reminded as we partake of our covenant and pledge of obedience to our Lord. At The Table we renew our vows of loyalty to Christ and promise faithfulness to our King. We testify and renew our gratitude to God for all His mercy and grace towards us through His gift of the salvation in Christ. This strengthens and nourishes us spiritually. Read **1 Corinthians 10:14-22**.

The Word Applied: *Have you been loyal and obedient to Jesus Christ this week? In what ways?*

Suggestion for Prayer: *Jesus, remind me daily of all the obedience and thanks that I owe You.*

SATURDAY – The last line of the catechism says, “...and their mutual love and fellowship each with the other, as members of the same mystical body.” **1 Corinthians 10:17** says it all as far as this point is concerned. Although we are many individuals, because as believers we are in union with Christ, and one in Him, we have fellowship with each other as well. We belong to what is here called, the *mystical body*. We also pledge our mutual love and fellowship to each other. Our unity with Jesus and our brethren is illustrated in the one bread.

The Word Applied: *How have you been a faithful brother or sister to your brethren this week?*

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, as Your children help us to love our brothers and sisters.*