

# THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

## WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

### QUESTION # 35.

*(Larger Catechism)*

Q #35. *How is the covenant of grace administered under the New Testament?*

A. Under the New Testament, when Christ the substance was exhibited, the same covenant of grace was and still is to be administered in the preaching of the word,<sup>1</sup> and the administration of the sacraments of baptism<sup>2</sup> and the Lord's supper;<sup>3</sup> in which grace and salvation are held forth in more fulness, evidence, and efficacy, to all nations.<sup>4</sup>

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Question 1—*How is Christ said to be the substance of the covenant of grace?*

*Answer*—Christ is called the substance of the covenant of grace, without any particular limitation of the word, Acts 10:43. We may understand that he was the substance of the ceremonial law, as all the promises and types of it had a peculiar reference to him, Col. 2:17. Additionally, he may be considered as the substance of the New Testament dispensation, the great topic of the gospel ministry, John 1:45. Thus, the apostle speaks of “Christ crucified,” as the principal thing which “he determined to know,” or insist on, in the exercise of his ministry, 1 Cor. 2:2. It was this same grace whereby the saints of old were saved, even as those now, Acts 15:11. All the gospel doctrines were designed to lead us to Christ, and set forth his glory, as the fountain and author of our salvation, 1 Cor. 1:23. Thus, the law, or legal dispensation of the covenant of grace, was sent to lead us to Christ, Gal. 3:24. And, Christ is the end, or the result, of that previous promulgation, Rom. 10:4.

Jesus Christ is the fountain of our salvation because: 1.) There are plenty of waters in him, being an abundant source of the necessary grace, so that the people of God are partakers of this fullness, John 1:14, 16. Because of this abounding sufficiency, there is nothing lacking to those who fear him, Ps. 34:9; whereby they receive the abundance of grace poured out in him, Rom. 5:17. 2.) The quality of the waters in him are such that they are life giving, Song 4:15; Rev. 7:17. So that those who trust in him receive and partake of the communication of life which is in him, John 4:10. Moreover, they are clear and pure waters able to purge from all uncleanness, Rev. 22:1. 3.) They are waters spread out wherever the effects of the curse of sin are to be found, over the face of the whole earth, Ezek. 47:1, 5. 4.) They are waters that will never dry up, but give continual supply to the thirsty and weary, Isa. 55:1. Such are bidden to enlarge their vessels to receive of this supply, Ps. 81:10; for this supply shall never be diminished, Isa. 45:19.

Under the New Testament, Christ is said to be exhibited, Acts 13:38, 39. This may have particular respect to his public appearing, John 1:14; or, it may be said of him entering into his public ministry, and when he went about doing good, confirming his mission by uncontested miracles, Matt. 3:17; Acts 10:38. However, this cannot be said with full propriety of speaking until Christ's resurrection, Dan. 9:26, 27.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 16:15.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 28:19, 20.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. 11:23-25.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. 3:6-9; Heb. 8:6, 10, 11; Matt. 28:19.

Question 2—*Is this same covenant of grace still to be administered in the preaching of the word and the administration of sacraments?*

*Answer*—The same covenant of grace, and its salvation in Christ, is still held forth and administered in the preaching of the word of God, Mark 16:15. The announcement of grace and mercy through the Redeemer, Christ, forms the core of the message proclaimed, Jer. 31:34; Isa. 53:11.

The word of God is that primary means of recording the promises of God to those called to be his people, 2 Tim. 1:9. It does so holding forth the threatenings against all those who despise and neglect this covenant, John 3:19; Heb. 2:3. Nevertheless, the dispensation of this covenant of grace under the gospel is superior to the previous administration, John 1:17. Under this New Testament, the covenant of grace is proclaimed with a light and working of the Spirit that is able to accomplish far more than the Old Testament administration, Rom. 8:3. Thus, though this preaching be accounted foolish and unprofitable by many, 1 Cor. 1:23; yet, this is that demonstration of the Spirit whereby God saves men through faith, 1 Cor. 1:21, 27. Herein are God's excellence and wisdom displayed to those who believe, 2 Cor. 4:7; 10:4, 5, 10.

Additionally, the sacraments of the New Testament are to be accounted signs and seals of this same covenant of grace, Rom. 4:11. So, Christ has appointed that the sacrament of baptism accompany the preaching of this word wherever it may be, Matt. 28:19, 20. In baptism there is both an exhibition of Christ crucified and a declaration that there is one and the same covenant of grace being proclaimed, Acts 2:38, 39. In baptism, as there was in circumcision, there is a putting on of Christ for righteousness and redemption, Rom. 6:3; Col. 2:11, 12. Likewise, the Lord's supper is administered to exhibit Christ and his atoning death as well as signifying and sealing the covenant of grace to those who, by faith, receive and walk in Christ, 1 Cor. 11:23-25.

Question 3—*Is this administration in more fullness, evidence and efficacy, to all nations, than that which went before?*

*Answer*—This New Testament administration is said to be made with more fullness and evidence because it is given in the plenitude of that grace that is exhibited in its substance, Christ, is a better surety, Heb. 7:22. His death placed into full effect all the promises of that covenant, Heb. 9:15-17.

The efficacy of this administration, because of this exhibition, stands in the spiritual administration which surpasses that of the letter, 2 Cor. 3:6-9. What was formerly administered typically and in a shadowy fashion is now administered in the power and fullness of the Spirit and the truth, John 4:24. This New Testament is an administration of the covenant, the keeping of which stands not in the hands of sinful men but in the power of that endless life which is Christ, Heb. 7:16. Therefore, it is new and better not able to be broken or dissolved through the sinfulness of men, Jer. 31:31, 32. It stands in the ministry of Jesus who, as the Mediator of the covenant of grace, makes application by the Spirit, Heb. 8:6, 10, 11.

Finally, it is an exhibition of Jesus Christ, the substance of this covenant of grace, to all nations, Matt. 28:19. Whatever restrictions and limits placed upon this proclamation previously are now removed and its sound is to be given through the whole earth, Luke 24:47, 48. With the coming of Christ and, particularly, his death and resurrection, the covenant of grace is now exhibited to Gentiles as well as Jews, Acts 28:28.