

DAILY MEDITATIONS ON THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

by Pastors of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America

MICA (P) 231/07/2011



MAY
Lord's Days 19 - 22

The Second Part - Of Man's Deliverance

Of God The Son

Lord's Day 19

Question 50. Why is it added, "and sitteth at the right hand of God"?

Answer. Because Christ is ascended into heaven for this end, that He might [\[a\]](#) appear as head of His church, by whom the Father [\[b\]](#) governs all things.

Question 51. What profit is this glory of Christ, our head, unto us?

Answer. First, that by His Holy Spirit he [\[c\]](#) pours out heavenly graces upon us His members; and then that by His power he defends [\[d\]](#) and preserves us against all enemies.

Question 52. What comfort is it to thee that "Christ shall come again to judge the quick and the dead"?

Answer. That in all my sorrows and persecutions, with uplifted head [\[e\]](#) I look for the very same person, who before offered Himself for my sake, to the tribunal of God, and has removed all curse from me, to come as judge from heaven: who shall cast all His [\[f\]](#) and my enemies into everlasting condemnation, but shall translate [\[g\]](#) me with all His chosen ones to Himself, into heavenly joys and glory.

[a]: [Eph. 1:20,21,22](#); [Col. 1:18](#)

[b]: [Mat 28:18](#); [John 5:22](#)

[c]: [Eph. 4:8](#)

[d]: [Psa. 2:9](#); [John 10:28](#)

[e]: [Luke 21:28](#); [Rom. 8:23,24](#); [1Thes. 4:16](#)

[f]: [2Thes. 1:6,7,8,9](#); [Mat. 25:41](#)

[g]: [Mat. 25:34](#)

May 7 – LD 19, Day 1: Christ Sits at the Right Hand of God
by Rev J. Kortering

Ephesians 1:18-20, *“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know.....what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.”*

We continue with the confession of our faith in the exaltation of Christ. God raised Him from the dead, by that power He ascended into heaven, and now being in heaven, He sits at the right hand of God.

This event was included in prophecy. Psa, 110:1, “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

Jesus used this language when he spoke to Pilate, “...nevertheless, I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” Matt 26:64.

The language is figurative and we immediately think of the days of kings who sat on thrones and had men at their right hand. Each king trusted his right-hand man most and commissioned him to do all his business on his behalf.

Now picture the Lord Jesus in this position in heaven. The throne of God is revealed in glory, Rev 4 and 5. In that vision, God has in His right hand the book which represents all His counsel for things that must take place in history in order to complete the gathering of the church in glory. Christ takes His place at God’s right hand and is qualified to open the book and realize its contents. He is the exalted Lamb that had been slain.

In Eph 1 quoted above, God wants us to understand that Christ is exalted at His right hand in heavenly places.

We express this every time we recite the Articles of Faith. We do this by faith. We cannot see Christ in heaven but we know He is there because the Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that this is true.

What an exaltation that is for Christ. Here on earth He came under the curse of the law for us; now He carries out the will of God for us, for our final deliverance from sins.

May God open the eyes of our understanding.

May 8 – LD 19, Day 2: Christ is the Exalted Head of the Church
by Rev J. Kortering

Colossians 1:18, *“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.”*

The Heidelberg Catechism expresses our understanding of Christ, sitting at the right hand of God, this way, “Christ is ascended into heaven for this end, that He might appear as the Head of His Church, by whom the Father governs all things.”

We want to say something about Christ’s relationship to His church; He is the HEAD of the body and that too, as He sits at God’s right hand.

The Bible uses this figure of speech in describing the church’s relationship to Christ. The text quoted above does this, “And he is the head of the body, the church.” This text joins two ideas together, Christ is the head of the body, He is also the head of the church, the body IS the church. Eph 1:22 speaks the same language, “...and gave him (the exalted Christ) to be the head over all things to the church,”

Do you appreciate what this means to you as a believer?

The head and the body are joined together by God, He did this in His eternal predestination of love. God gave to Christ a people, His body, and made Him to be the head, Eph 1:3-6. The head controls the body, so Christ earned the right to control His church. He loved us unto death and redeemed us from our sins. Now, God, in response to such faithfulness, rewarded Christ, our head, by setting Him at His own right hand. That is honorable and glorious for Christ.

It is blessed for us, for it is also true; the body receives its direction and life from the head. This we do as the church from Christ our Head. Our Head is not weak, wanting to do something He cannot do. He isn’t the kind of Head who wants to save everyone but can’t accomplish that. No, He is at the right hand of God, He has received the pre-eminence, the power and glory, so that the Father governs all things through Him.

His will is to save His entire church, His body.

By faith, we are part of that body. Christ is our Head. In such a position of glory, our relationship to Christ is sure and steadfast.

May 9 – LD 19, Day 3: The Exalted Christ gives us Heavenly Graces
by Rev J. Kortering

John 10:28, *“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”*

Once more we quickly glance at the catechism itself. The question is asked, “What profit is the glory of Christ, our Head, unto us? The answer, “First, that by His Holy Spirit, He pours out heavenly graces upon us His members.”

Because the Head rules the body, the direct benefit we receive from our exalted Head in heaven, is that He gives us HEAVENLY graces as members of His body. Do take note also, that He gives them to us “by His Holy Spirit”.

We are reminded of the beauty of this on the first Pentecost. The disciples were afraid, confused, uncertain of their future, and certainly bewildered about what the purpose of Christ’s ministry on earth really was. This all changed when Christ poured upon them heavenly graces through the presence of His Holy Spirit. They became clear in their understanding of the truth, the gospel message burned in their hearts, they possessed boldness to speak it, they loved one another and reached out to others to draw them into their fellowship. That very day, 5000 souls were added to the church. The heavenly graces abounded.

It is no less different today.

From the text quoted above, the greatest heavenly gift which Christ promised to give to His disciples was “eternal life”. Once they received it, they could not perish because no man could pluck them out of Christ’s hand.

Yes, there are many gifts which Christ bestows upon His body, the church. Eph 4:8 quotes Psa 68:18a, “Wherefore he saith, WHEN HE ASCENDED UP ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE, AND GAVE GIFTS UNTO MEN.” The preceding context mentions, “lowliness and meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” vs2,3. The following verses mention the gifts of office, “apostles...prophets...evangelists...pastors and teachers,” vs.11.

Central to all of them is the gift of faith and salvation.

No man can acquire this for himself, only Christ can give it to him from heaven. “And I give unto them eternal life;” John 10:28.

Christ gives faith in the way of repentance from sin and believing in Him as the only way of salvation.

It is wonderful to confess such faith.

May 10 – LD 19, Day 4: The Exalted Christ Defends and Preserves His Church
by Rev J. Korterling

Matthew 16:18, *“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”*

There is a second profit given to us from Jesus Christ sitting at the right hand of God. It is stated this way in the Catechism, “that by His power He defends and preserves us against all enemies.” Jesus called these enemies, “the gates of hell” in Matt 16:18.

If we look at the church’s place in this world through human eyes, we have every reason to call into question the safety and ultimate victory of the church. There are enemies who are capable of destroying the church, removing it from the face of the earth.

Some of them arise out of hell itself. Think of Satan and the hordes of devils who are at his command - being fallen angels, they are spirits, as such they lie beyond our ability to see them and acknowledge their presence. They surround us on every side.

These same evil spirits have the capacity to influence men to cause them to become monsters of iniquity and bold in their contempt of that which is holy and true. Some of them do more than boast of their evil ways, they even attack and persecute the righteous.

Of greater concern, these same spirits have access to the heart and life of the church, the body of Christ. Satan attempted to tempt Christ, how much more is he able to tempt us? Sometimes he comes into our life with a direct frontal attack by infiltrating our thoughts. Other times he comes through fellow mankind by enticing us with the temptations of the flesh to sin against God. This is true, because our greatest enemy is our own sinful flesh which is easily attracted to sin.

The gates of hell come at us from every direction, from the world, from our own flesh, from fellow church members, from society in general, on and on.

This is our comfort; that the gates of hell shall not prevail against us. The exalted Christ shall defend and preserve us as His church. Peter’s confession, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” forms the rock upon which Christ builds His church.

Christ is greater than any mortal enemy. He is able to work in our hearts by His Holy Spirit to keep us faithful, even unto death.

May 11 – LD 19, Day 5: Christ will come to Judge
by Rev J. Korterling

Revelation 20:11,12a *“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened...”*

We come now to the ultimate expression of Christ Jesus’ exaltation - He is judge of all rational and moral creatures. Remember this is the same Jesus that the Father gave to cover the sins of the elect. For Him to do this required the ultimate humiliation, His lowly birth, His suffering as the substitute for sinners, His willingness to die, His burial, and greatest of all, He bore on the cross the hellish wrath that the Righteous God had against all the sins of all His people.

Now, we see this same Jesus, Who arose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, come at the end of the ages to function as the judge of all creatures. Once condemned by the law, He now sits as judge of the very same law.

The catechism expresses it this way, “That in all my sorrows and persecutions, with uplifted head, I look for the very same person who before offered Himself for my sake to the tribunal of God, and has removed all curse from me”

Jesus will be the judge because God rewards Him with that position. He alone has the right and the power given to Him of His Father to call every creature, past, present, and future, whoever lived on the earth, inhabited the heavens or dwelled in the deep under the earth to stand before HIM in judgment. In the above passage, this is described as “the dead, small and great”

This is important for us to understand.

The purpose of this final judgment of Jesus is not to discover who will go to heaven and who will go to hell. This is well-known to Jesus as judge for He is Lord of all. It is even known to those who stand in judgment, for they will appear in their resurrected body and their bodies will indicate their destiny, heaven or hell.

The purpose is for Christ to publicly declare that God is just in saving His own and casting the wicked into hell. That is for somber reflection.

**May 12 – LD 19, Day 6: Christ’s Judgment will be Merciful
by Rev J. Korterling**

Matthew 25:34, *“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”*

The catechism expresses it this way, “in my sorrows...I look for the very same person...to come as judge from heaven, who shall cast all His and my enemies into everlasting condemnation, but shall translate me with all His chosen ones to Himself, into heavenly joys and glory.”

At the end of the ages, Christ will personally come to bring an end to history. There will be an immediate change for the living saints; they will be translated in a moment into their glorified body. In that body they will appear before the great white throne and stand in judgment before Jesus.

If you are a believer, you have no reason to dread this final judgment. Reason being, we have no reason to fear the Judge. He is the same Person who satisfied God’s law for righteousness for all those who believe on Him. This is amazing because our conscience still accuses us because of our sins. We know the righteousness of God manifests itself in His hostility against both sinners and their sins. We struggle with the question, “How I can be sure that GOD will not punish me in the end for all my sins?” I deserve such punishment.” Rather than focusing on yourself standing in judgment, focus on the Judge, He is Jesus, your Savior and my Savior who paid the debt for all our sins. He is the one who delivers us from the dominion of sin and makes us willing and ready to live unto Him. From this point of view, the text quoted above contains the words of Jesus which He spoke while on earth, “Come, YE BLESSED OF MY FATHER”.

When we appear as such, there is no fear of judgment.

Notice, the verdict and final sentence is sure, “inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

That is how great our God is. He chose us from eternity, arranged for our redemption from sin in the giving of His Son, and promised to convert us from sin unto life. This He did.

That is pure mercy, love which delivers us from hellish wrath and draws us into sweet fellowship with Him. The final judgment opens the way for this to take place.

**May 13 – LD 19, Day 7: Christ’s Judgment will be Righteous for the Wicked
by Rev J. Kortering**

Matthew 25:41, *“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:”*

The catechism expressed this judgment for the wicked this way, “shall cast all His and my enemies into everlasting condemnation.” Notice that the catechism was written during a time of great persecution for the church. Much blood was shed by the enemies of the faith and the Christians of that day feared and often struggled with God’s fairness, “How could these people who denied the teaching of the Bible, and exalted man over God, get away with their evil deeds?” The answer of the catechism reminds them that at the end of the world, when Jesus will come again, He will function as their judge at the final judgment. He will say to their enemies, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”.

At that judgment, the details of their lives will be revealed to them. All their past conduct will be evaluated in the light of the presence of Jesus. Every evil word spoken in secret, every deed plotted and executed, will be measured by the law of God, the standard of what is right before God. This exposure of evil will be sufficient to silence any complaint against the righteous sentence of Jesus. The testimony will be exhaustive and compelling. They are cursed of God, guilty and worthy of punishment. All will have to hang their head in shame and admit that they deserve the everlasting fire.

The difference between the people of God and the wicked is not sin or the measure of sin. It is whether sin has been atoned, the debt paid. Jesus paid it all and everyone who embraces Jesus as Savior and Lord will stand in judgment, free from their personal guilt. The judgment will reveal to them all their sins and make it evident they deserve the everlasting fire as well as the wicked. The difference is between mercy and judgment. God in His mercy covers the guilt of believers in Jesus while His judgment exposes the guilt of the wicked who reject the gospel.

Everlasting fire, because God is everlasting, and sin against Him deserves such punishment.

Flee to Jesus as your refuge.

The Second Part - Of Man's Deliverance

Of God The Holy Ghost

Lord's Day 20

Question 53. What dost thou believe concerning the Holy Ghost?

Answer. First, that he is true and co-eternal God with the Father and the [\[a\]](#) Son; secondly, that he is also given [\[b\]](#) me, to [\[c\]](#) make me by a true faith, partaker of Christ and all his benefits, that he may [\[d\]](#) comfort me and [\[e\]](#) abide with me for ever.

[a]: [Gen. 1:2](#); [Isa. 48:16](#); [1Cor. 3:16](#)

[b]: [Mat. 28:19](#); [2Cor. 1:22](#)

[c]: [Gal. 3:14](#); [1Pet. 1:2](#)

[d]: [Acts 9:31](#)

[e]: [John 14:16](#); [1Pet. 4:14](#)

May 14 – LD 20, Day 1: The Divinity of the Holy Spirit
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: Romans 8:1-14

In discussing the Apostles Creed, our teachers in the classroom of the Heidelberg Catechism divide the 12 articles into three groups. The first group is "Of God the Father" (Lord's Days 9 – 10; the second, "Of God the Son" (Lord's Days 11 – 19); and the third "Of God the Holy Ghost" (Lord's Days 20 – 24).

Lord's Day 20 begins a discussion of God the Holy Ghost.

Our teachers are quite insistent on the fact that we understand the truth of the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is one of the three persons of the holy trinity. As one of the three persons, he is equal with the Father, the first person, and the Son, the second person. This means that all three persons are fully and completely divine. The essence of God is not divided into three parts, each person possessing one part. Each person possesses the whole essence as his own.

The one mind of God is not only the mind of the Father and Son, but is also the mind of the Holy Spirit. The one will of God is equally the will of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

God's perfections are equally the possession of all three persons. Each person is omnipresent; each person is omnipotent; each person is eternal. Each person is omniscient. This must be true, for there is only one mind in God, one will and the same perfections belonging equally to all. God's grace, mercy, love, compassion, longsuffering and holiness belong equally to each person, including the Holy Spirit.

God is a covenant God who dwells in fellowship with himself. His fellowship is perfect, infinitely happy, most blessed, and full of the perfect enjoyment each person has in each other person. The Holy Spirit makes such fellowship possible, for the Holy Spirit joins the Father and the Son by his own procession from the Father and the Son.

Just as the Father generates the Son and the Son is generated by the Father, so the Holy Spirit proceeds from Father and Son.

The triune God sent Christ, the second person of the trinity into this world to take on our human nature. In that nature, he suffered and died, rose again, ascended into heaven, and was exalted as King of kings and Lord of lords. The triune God gave the exalted Christ the gift of the Spirit, the third person of the trinity (Acts 2:33) so that Christ might give his Spirit to the church.

This article and truth concerning the Holy Spirit we must and do believe.

Some want to make the Holy Spirit a lesser person of lesser importance than the Father and the Son. We must not do that. Some want to deny the divinity of the Holy Spirit altogether. We must not do that. To deny the Holy Spirit as "true and co-eternal God" is to deny the trinity and our salvation. We must say, "I believe in the Holy Spirit."

May 15 – LD 20, Day 2: The Spirit Poured Out on Pentecost
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: Acts 2

When we say with the Apostles Creed, “I believe in the Holy Spirit,” we also say, I believe that the Holy Spirit was given to the church on Pentecost.

When our Lord ascended into heaven and was given the place of highest exaltation at God’s right hand, he was also given the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33). Christ poured out the Spirit given him upon the church.

It was on the first day of the week, fifty days after Christ rose from the dead, and ten days from the ascension of Christ into heaven.

The 120 disciples were gathered in an upper room for worship. While they were together, the Holy Spirit was given them. Because the Holy Spirit is invisible and because his coming could not be seen, he came with three different signs: the sound of a rushing mighty wind, tongues of fire on the heads of each disciple, and the gift of tongues.

These signs were important, not only because they were visible signs that the Holy Spirit had come to the church, but also because the signs showed how the Holy Spirit was to work in the church.

It was a wonderful day for the church, a day to be remembered throughout the whole history of the New Testament church.

The sound of a rushing mighty wind was the means God used to bring a huge crowd together in the street in front of the place where the 120 disciples were gathered. It was the sound of wind only; the day was quiet in Jerusalem. It was a strange sound, for it seemed to be coming from the house where the 120 were worshipping, so that the people who heard it knew where to go.

It was a sign of the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of God’s people. The Spirit is invisible, but unstoppable. He is irresistible in his work and accomplishes Christ’s purpose. Jesus had spoken of this already to Nicodemus (John 3:8).

The tongues as of fire are often pictured as like a flame of a candle burning on the top of the wick. But the text in Acts 2 leaves quite a different picture in our minds. It is the picture of a column of fire that comes down from heaven, shoots out tongues of fire that swirl around the head of each one of the 120 disciples, only to return again to the column of fire. It was a dramatic scene.

The fire signified the work of the Holy Spirit, for fire destroys and purifies (1 Pet 1:7). Fire burns away the dross from ore, the impurities from gold, and the wickedness in us. But in destroying the useless and wicked, it purifies and sanctifies, so that the Spirit, in destroying our old man of sin, creates a new man that is holy and pure.

It was a marvelous sign. It pictures the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

May 16 – LD 20, Day 3: The Sign of Tongues
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: Acts 2:5-21

The sign of speaking in foreign languages was also a sign accompanying the pouring out of the Spirit. It was a most powerful sign and spoke of a particular wonderful work of the Holy Spirit.

We must abandon the interpretation given this sign by the Charismatics, for their interpretation is contrary to Scripture and a distortion of the sign itself. It is clear from Acts 2:8 that the 120 disciples spoke in existing languages. Charismatics believe that the sign of tongue-speaking is in languages that have never been spoken.

The scene in Jerusalem on that glorious day was on this manner. The crowd that was brought together by the sound of a rushing, mighty wind, were gathered in the street outside the place where the disciples had met together for worship. The crowd, quite obviously, wondered what was happening. The 120 moved through the crowd explaining this great event.

They could have talked in Aramaic, because all the people gathered in Jerusalem from all parts of the Mediterranean world understood that language. They were Jews and proselytes (Acts 2:9-11). But the 120 were able to speak the language of the country from which these Jews and proselytes came: Parthia, Media, Elam, etc. When one of these 120 met a Parthian, the disciple was able to speak in the Parthian language. When he or she moved on and met someone from Pamphylia, that disciple was able to speak in the language spoken in Pamphylia. So the people were able to say, "How hear we every one in our own tongue, wherein we were born?"

And the one thing of which they spoke was "the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11).

That was an amazing sign!

What does it mean?

The Holy Spirit, through this sign, was telling the church and all those who heard the 120 speak that in the dispensation that now was beginning with the outpouring of the Spirit, the church would be gathered no longer from the nation of Israel, but would be gathered from all the nations of the earth. The Holy Spirit of the ascended Christ would gather a truly catholic church.

Gentiles were gathered in the Old Testament as well. Consider Rahab, Ruth, the wives of the sons of Jacob, the Gibeonites, etc. But these Gentiles were saved only by being brought into the nation of Israel and becoming Jews by the rite of circumcision.

In the new dispensation, that changed. The Gentiles are saved from every nation, but in such a way that they preserve all their national characteristics. A saved Chinese does not have to become a Frenchman to be saved, but he remains Chinese. The church in that way is truly catholic and is composed of an almost infinite number of different individuals.

Only in this way can the riches of God's grace be fully revealed. As a diamond with its many facets shows the color of light, so does a catholic church show the splendor of God's grace.

May 17 – LD 20, Day 4: The Sign of a Catholic Church
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: Acts 2:22-36

Having instructed us in the truth of what happened on Pentecost, our teacher also wants us to know the significance of Pentecost for the believer. Our teacher becomes very personal and suddenly switches to the first personal pronoun: "He is also given **me**." We are told that we must make this truth concerning the Holy Spirit our own personal confession.

There are those who explain Pentecost to mean little else than a revival in the church. Some, usually with charismatic tendencies and beliefs, find nothing more significant in Pentecost than that a much needed revival took place in the church, the first of many revivals appearing from time to time in the church of the new dispensation.

But, as Peter makes clear in his great Pentecostal sermon, this event in the history of the church is as great and important as Christ's resurrection from the dead. Peter does this by pointing to the fact that the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled (Acts 2:16-21).

Part of that prophecy of Joel was: "...your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:" (Acts 2:17, 18).

The reference of this prophecy of Joel, quoted by Peter, was to the office of prophet in the old dispensation, an office given to only a very few. That office embraced prophets, priests and kings, although the offices of priests and kings were kept strictly separate (I Sam 13:8-14, II Chr 26:16-21).

When Joel the prophet spoke of the gift of prophecy given to all and Peter quoted that passage on Pentecost, Peter pointed out that with the gift of the Holy Spirit, all God's people from the least to the greatest and from the youngest to the oldest are now prophets. And that office of prophet given to them includes the office of priests and kings.

God's people no longer need anyone to teach them (Heb 8:11, I John 2:27), for they all are able to know the Lord. They no longer need a priest, for they are able, by the Spirit, to go directly to God in prayer through their intercessor, Jesus Christ. They no longer need a king to rule over them, for they are kings in their own right and able to do the will of God.

This anointing was more fully spoken of by our teacher in Lord's Day 12. That Lord's Day, you will recall, was speaking of the name given to our Savior, Christ. But then it asks of us the question why we are called Christians. And the answer was given that we partake of Christ's anointing and are, therefore, prophets, priest and kings under Christ.

How great and important an event Pentecost was for us!

May 18 – LD 20, Day 5: United to Christ
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: John 14:1-10

Our teacher now turns to another element of our faith in the Holy Spirit: “Secondly, that He is also given me, to make me, by a true faith, partaker of Christ and all His benefits.”

This statement is cast in the form of a very personal confession: He is given to **me**; He makes **me** partaker of Christ’s benefits. What a confession this is! It seems almost to be too bold on the part of the one making it. And there are those voices that insist that it is too bold a statement to make. Yet, our teacher insists that we make it. I possess the Holy Spirit in my heart. By His work I am partaker of all Christ’s benefits.

The wonder of making this confession as one’s own comes from the fact that we make it “by a true faith.” According to the definition of faith that our teacher has taught us in Lord’s Day 7, faith believes all that God reveals in his word. That faith therefore, believes that Christ suffered and died, rose again as the eternal Son of God, ascended into heaven and is exalted at God’s right hand, and pours out the Holy Spirit on his church.

But then, Lord’s Day 7 makes this faith a personal faith: It is “an assured confidence, which the Holy Ghost works by the gospel in my heart, that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin . . .”

Did you notice the personal element that is included in faith? The true faith of the believer always makes it possible for him to make all the truth of Scripture his own personal possession.

First of all, that faith, so personal, is a gift of God worked in us by the Holy Spirit (Eph 2:8).

Secondly, that faith is given as a gracious gift. I do not exercise it by my own power. I do not accept Christ as my personal Savior. I do not make my choice to be one with Christ. Faith is given.

Thirdly, that faith unites us to Christ as a branch is united to a tree by grafting. We are, says our teacher in Lord’s Day 7, engrafted into Christ by a true and living faith. That means that we are now one with Christ, a member of his body. We become one flesh just as man and woman become one flesh in marriage (Eph 5:30-32).

And finally, that means that all the blessings of salvation Christ earned on the cross become my possession – as they become the possession of every believer.

That faith, a gift of God and worked by the Holy Spirit, becomes active in my life through the preaching of the gospel. The believer reaches out to Christ. He abandons his works as hopeless and useless. He sees himself as the sinner he truly is. Faith drives him to the cross to cling to Christ.

That faith is worked by the Holy Spirit.

May 19 – LD 20, Day 6: The Holy Spirit as Comforter
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: John 14:16, 17, 26; John 15:26; John 16:13, 14

Our teacher in Lord's Day 20 speaks also of the Holy Spirit as our Comforter. He is reminding us of what Jesus said to his disciples, words of our Lord recorded for us in the passages given you to read.

John 14-16 record the words of our Saviour to his disciples on the eve of his suffering and death on the cross. It was while they were still together at the table where the Lord had celebrated the last Passover with them that he had told them in unmistakable words that he was going away from them. This thought filled the hearts of the disciples with a great sorrow, for they had come to love the Lord very much.

Jesus explains to them in the words of these three chapters in John's gospel that he had to go away from them; and that, in fact, it was better that he go away from them, for if he would go away on a journey that led to the cross of Calvary and the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, he would rise again and go to heaven. From heaven he would be with them (John 14:1-3) in a way far, far better than when he walked with them on the dusty roads of Palestine.

What was that way in which he would be with them? He would not be with them **bodily** for he would be in heaven and they would be on earth. But he would be with them by his Holy Spirit, whom he would send to them. This is quite startling! Christ would be with them by his Spirit in a better way than he would be with them bodily. But so it is. When we have the Spirit of Christ, whom he poured out on Pentecost, we have Christ himself with us, and Christ's promise is fulfilled: "...and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt 28:20b).

These passages in John 14-16 all speak of the Holy Spirit as our Comforter. He comforts us in this world of sin and sorrow. He comforts us while our Savior is absent from us. It is like a bridegroom who, immediately after he and the bride spoke their vows that united them in marriage, went away to be gone for ever so long a time. How sad the bride would be. But the bridegroom assures his weeping bride that he will actually be with her in a very wonderful way, and that this will be her comfort.

That comfort that comes through the Holy Spirit to the church in her Lord's absence is a comfort that also has with it a very long letter that the Holy Spirit gives the bride of Christ. That letter is the Holy Scriptures. It is a letter from Christ to his bride in which he tells her how much he loves her and how he will come again to take his bride to the place where he is. That is why the Comforter is also called The Spirit of Truth.

It is through the truth in Scripture that we hear our bridegroom's words and are comforted.

May 20 – LD 20, Day 7: The Holy Spirit, the Author of Assurance
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: Romans 8:1-17

The teacher who leads us to learn all these lessons we have to learn to know our only comfort wants to be sure that they are lessons in the truth that lead us to make the truth of Scripture our very own; for if they did not lead us to make these truths our very own, we still would not have comfort.

It is possible to read the Scriptures that tell us about the suffering and death of Christ and to conclude: Yes, there was once a man who was also God, who died on the cross in order to pay for the sins of some people whom God gave to him. But I have no idea whether or not I am one of those people.

That kind of speech may sound strange to you, but there are many people in the church, even in so-called Reformed Churches, who believe this very thing. They claim to believe in everything Scripture teaches as being factual, but they claim also that they do not know whether that truth of Scripture is true for them. In fact, they rather doubt that it is meant for them. They are born with this doubt; they live all their lives with this doubt; and they die without ever knowing whether they are or are not a true child of God.

This is a terrible way to live; and, as a matter of fact, it is sinful to live this way. God's people may not doubt. They would be like an orphan, made a part of the family, showered with all the love all the children receive, given the same food, drink, place to study and sleep and gifts that all the children receive. They are even mentioned in the father's will as one of the heirs. But all the time they say to themselves and to others, "I do not know whether I really belong to this family or not. Maybe I don't." The parents of such a child would have reason to be angry with that child.

The Holy Spirit works assurance in the hearts of the people of God. He works such assurance by the Scriptures themselves when he works faith in our hearts to believe the Scriptures. He works that assurance that we are the children of God when we are surrounded by the tokens of God's love, and his love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We are assured of our membership in the family of God when the Spirit testifies with our spirits that we are the children of God. And if we are children, then we are also heirs of salvation and the blessedness of heaven in Father's house when we die.

And so we say with our teacher: "He is also given **me**, to make **me** partaker of Christ. He comforts **me** and he abides with **me** forever." Even in heaven we will still have the Holy Spirit in us.

The Second Part - Of Man's Deliverance

Of God The Holy Ghost

Lord's Day 21

Question 54. What believest thou concerning the "holy catholic church" of Christ?

Answer. That the Son of God [a] from the [b] beginning to the end of the world, gathers, [c] defends, and [d] preserves to himself by his [e] Spirit and word, out of the [f] whole human race, a [g] church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am and for ever shall remain, a [h] living member thereof.

Question 55. What do you understand by "the communion of saints"?

Answer. First, that all and every one, who believes, being members of Christ, are in common, [i] partakers of him, and of all his riches and gifts; secondly, that every one must know it to be his duty, readily and [ii] cheerfully to employ his gifts, for the advantage and salvation of other members.

Question 56. What believest thou concerning "the forgiveness of sins"?

Answer. That God, for the sake of [k] Christ's satisfaction will no more [l] remember my sins, neither my corrupt nature, against which I have to struggle all my life long; but will graciously impute to me the righteousness of Christ; that I may never be [m] condemned before the tribunal of God.

[a]: [John 10:11](#)

[b]: [Gen. 26:4](#)

[c]: [Rom. 9:24](#); [Eph. 1:10](#)

[d]: [John 10:16](#)

[e]: [Isa. 59:12](#)

[f]: [Deut 10:14,15](#)

[g]: [Acts 13:48](#)

[h]: [1Cor. 1:8,9](#); [Rom. 8:35ff](#)

[i]: [John 1:3,4](#); [Rom. 8:32](#); [1Cor. 12:13](#)

[j]: [1Cor. 12:13](#)

[k]: [1Cor. 13:5](#); [Phil. 2:4,5,6](#)

[l]: [1John 2:2](#); [2Cor. 5:19,21](#)

[m]: [Jer. 31:34](#); [Psa. 103:3,4,10,11](#); [Rom. 8:1,2,3](#)

[n]: [John 3:18](#)

May 21 – LD 21, Day 1: The Election of the Church
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: Ephesians 1

Question and answer 54 of the Heidelberg Catechism is one of the most beautiful lessons in the entire Catechism, which our teacher wants us to learn. It is beautiful, partly because of its terse, yet complete, summary of the teaching of Scripture on the doctrine of the church. But it is also beautiful, because it teaches us to make the personal confession: Of that church “I am, and forever shall remain, a living member thereof.”

The Lord’s Day gives us what amounts to a definition of the church in the words: “. . . a church chosen unto everlasting life. . . .” Thus, the church is the number of the elect who are chosen by God unto everlasting life.

This is a beautiful confession in its own right. God chose his church in his eternal counsel before he created the world (Eph 1:4). He did not choose an indefinite mass of people; he chose definite people, individuals, whose names are written on the pages of the book of life and whom God knows by name.

God chose them in Christ. There is no Christ without the church, just as there is no church without Christ. Christ and His church belong together and form one body (I Cor 12:27).

God gave his church to Christ so that Christ might die for that church to pay for the sins of its members, and thus make his church his own bride (Eph 5:32).

All those who are elect are saved (John 6:37) and come to Christ. All who come to Christ are those who are elect. No one else comes.

Election is the cause of the salvation of the church in the history of the world. This is clearly stated in our Canons of Dort 1.7, The Conclusion to the Canons: “. . . Election is the fountain and cause of faith . . .” by which faith we are united to Christ as members of his body.

These elect are chosen “unto everlasting life.” God’s purpose in choosing them is to give them everlasting life in heaven with him. The whole church will be there in a host that is beyond counting. They are more in number, Scripture tells us, than the sand on the seashore and the stars in heaven. They shall be there without sin in all the glory of Christ himself, who saved them. They shall be there as the bride of Christ, married to him who is their Savior. They shall enjoy the blessedness of covenant fellowship with God forever and ever.

Of that church, I believe I am now and forever shall remain a living member.

May 22 – LD 21, Day 2: The Gathering of the Church
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: Matthew 28:16-20, Matthew 16:13-19, Acts 13:1-4

Our teacher wants us to study this lesson very carefully, because many deny its truth in our day. Especially all those who have adopted Arminianism as a correct interpretation of the Bible, tell us that the church is gathered by individual people accepting Christ as their personal Savior and letting Jesus come into their hearts. They try to tell us that Jesus wants to save everyone and died for everyone, but only those who accept him will actually be saved. This is a dreadful lie which has affected the church.

There are several truths we have to learn if we are to master this lesson.

The first truth we must learn is that “the Son of God . . . gathers unto Himself . . . a church . . .,” The gathering of the church is the work of the Son of God. In other words, God himself gathers his church, which he has chosen, but does so through his Son, Jesus Christ.

But the Son of God not only gathers his church; he also defends and preserves it. The church has many enemies and they are much stronger than the people of God. It is a miracle, performed by Christ, that the church is not destroyed (Luke 12:32). It is a miracle, performed by Christ, that the church is preserved (John 10:28-30).

The Son of God gathers his church “by His Spirit and Word.” Christ uses means to gather His church. He uses the means of the preaching of the gospel (Rom 10:13-15). But the preaching of the gospel is effective and saves only those in whom the Spirit works, for only those come to Christ whom the Father draws (John 6:44, 45).

The Son of God gathers his church “from the whole human race.” He does not gather them from the nation of Israel alone, as in the old dispensation, but he gathers them from every nation, tribe and tongue (Rev 5:9, 7:9, 14:6). It is truly a catholic church that Christ gathers.

Christ gathers his church “from the beginning to the end of time.” Already God began gathering his church immediately after Adam and Eve fell. My pastor of years ago, Herman Hoeksema, would say, “Adam fell into the arms of Christ.” From that moment, on the church was being gathered, even in the darkest days of the history of the church, the Son of God was gathering, defending and preserving his church. Seven thousands were preserved through the dark and evil days of Ahab and Jezebel.

The gathering of the church will end with the conversion of the last elect. Christ cannot come again until the last elect is born and saved. But Christ is so eager to come to the rescue of his church that when the last elect is brought to faith and the church is complete, Christ returns.

I am and forever shall remain a living member of that church.

May 23 – LD 21, Day 3: The Attributes of the Church
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: I Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:1-14

Question and answer 54 of the Heidelberg Catechism is explaining the article in the Apostolic Confession: “I believe an holy, catholic church”. And so our teacher points us to the attributes of the church. They are three in number.

One attribute is the unity of the church. Our teacher points out that this means that the church agrees “in one faith.” There are many churches in the world and many denominations. But this does not mean that all churches are part of the church of Christ and that all denominations belong to Christ’s church.

Nor does it mean that every member in a given denomination, even if that denomination holds to the truth of Scripture, is a member of the church of Christ. Even in the church that faithfully bears the marks of the true church (the pure preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments according to the rule of Christ, and the exercise of Christian discipline according to the command of Christ) –even such churches have in them hypocrites, who, while outwardly professing faith in Christ, prove not to be members of Christ’s body.

We are to learn, however, that the true church of Christ, wherever it is found, is one in faith. Christ is the Head of the church, and thus the mind of the church, for the mind is in the head. The mind of Christ is the mind of God himself. And the mind of God is the truth as it is in God and revealed in the sacred Scriptures.

Although the teacher at whose feet we sit does not mention this here, the one great truth upon which all the church agrees is the truth that God is the sovereign Lord who saves his church by his own work, and does so through the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. One who does not believe this truth with all his heart is not saved.

The unity of the church as an attribute of the church is a fact both now and in heaven. Yet we are admonished by Scripture to seek the unity of the church. This is Paul’s earnest exhortation in Eph 4:1-3. And we are taught to pray this prayer for the unity of the church in Psa 122: “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions’ sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.” (verses 6-9).

The peace of the unity of one faith is a priceless gift. It is our calling to do all in our power to preserve it.

To that one church, united in a true faith, I am and forever shall remain a living member.

May 24 – LD 21, Day 4: The Holiness of the Church
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: Revelation 21

The Apostles Creed puts in our mouths the confession, “I believe an holy, catholic church.” It also speaks of the church as “catholic.” Our teacher in the Heidelberg Catechism explains this to mean that the Son of God gathers his church “out of the whole human race.”

The human race was divided into nations, tribes, and languages at Babel (Gen 11:1-9). While God changed the languages of all the people at Babel to prevent the premature coming of the Antichrist, God also had a positive purpose in Babel: to gather a church which is truly catholic. It is a church in which there are no two members alike, for all the many differences between the saints are used by God to reveal the infinite riches of his grace in saving each individual.

But, the Apostolic Confession and our Heidelberg Catechism also speak of the holiness of the church. This comes as something of a surprise, for if we look about us **in** the church, we see something quite different from a holy church. The individual members of the church are all very sinful as yet, and are far from attaining holiness, that is, freedom from all sin. Thus it is not surprising that denominations or individual congregations are not holy either, for they are composed of sinful people. We want to question our teacher: Are you sure the church is holy? I do not see much evidence of that when I look at the church.

The truth of Scripture, we must remember, is the object of our **faith**. I **believe** an holy catholic church. We walk by faith, not by sight, Paul says in II Cor 5:7. The fact is that God sees his church in Christ; and he sees them, therefore, as without sin and clothed in Christ’s righteousness. He also deals with them as a holy people and promises them that, in fact, he will make them holy so that they are able to dwell with him in glory forever.

Scripture is not hesitant to call the church holy. It does so in many places, In I Pet 2:9 Peter writes: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an **holy nation**, a peculiar people (not an odd people, but a specially chosen people); that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:”

Yet, at the same time, Scripture calls God’s people to be holy. In I Pet 1:15, 16, Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes: “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” We must struggle through prayer and faith to become what one day we shall be.

What a blessing that I am and forever shall remain a member of that church!

May 25 – LD 21, Day 5: The Communion of the Saints
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: Psalm 133

We are once again summoned into the classroom in order to learn more about the church of which we are members. The lesson for today is this: In that church in which we live, there is a communion or fellowship of members. This blessing is particularly great and one for which we cannot be thankful enough.

It is a miracle that surprises us, if we stop to think about it, for the very essence of sin is that the sinner is totally absorbed in himself; so much so that his own well-being, wealth, comfort, honor and ease are the only things that concern him. He is even willing to step on the heads of his fellow men to climb the ladder of his own ambition. He will sacrifice unborn children and children of the family, wife and friends, fellow employees and neighbors, if some advantage can be gained by doing this. The sinner is totally self-centered and takes the attitude: "Me first and the devil take the hindmost."

Suddenly, we are told, we come upon a group of people, each one of which never gives one thought to himself or herself, never for a moment worries about "what's in it for me," never is concerned for his own comfort and pleasure; but is completely wrapped up and concerned about others. At whatever price has to be paid, everyone else is important, while I am not.

We may very well ask our teacher: "How is such a great wonder possible?"

He is quick with his answer: "All and every one who believes, being members of Christ, are, in common, partakers of Him and of all His riches and gifts."

Remember, the Heidelberg Catechism is talking about the work of the Holy Spirit.

By the Holy Spirit in our hearts we are united to Christ. The tie that connects us to Christ is faith, for we are grafted into his body by the graft of faith.

Through faith every one grafted into Christ receives the blessings that He merited on the cross for His beloved church.

Those blessings destroy the selfishness and sin in every member and make him holy and righteous, as Christ Himself is.

In a sense, everyone receives the same gifts and blessings. Jude mentioned in his epistle about "the common salvation;" (vs 3) that is, the salvation all God's people have in common. All have the forgiveness of their sins, the righteousness of Christ, the hope of glory, the resurrection of the body, etc.

But there is a sense in which each saint has his own unique gifts. Jesus teaches that in the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30 – "to every man according to his several ability" receives talents). Psa 68 speaks of Christ at his ascension giving gifts to men (vs 18, 19).

God gives to each member of the church gifts that are uniquely his own, for they are given that each may serve his or her own purpose in the body of the church.

This gift of God's grace makes the communion of saints possible.

May 26 – LD 21, Day 6: The Use of Our Gifts
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: I Corinthians 12

We have learned that the communion of saints means that within the church each member receives the blessings of Christ, but each member also receives gifts and responsibilities unique to him, which make him able to occupy his own unique place.

This same truth applies to a congregation. All share in a common salvation, but all also have unique gifts and abilities. There are no two people alike in a congregation, any more than there are two people alike in the whole church.

Each saint lives his own life in the world. Each has his own sins. Each is saved by grace, but in different ways that give him grace for his walk and calling. Each has his or her own responsibilities. Each is important in the church, whether high or low, young or old, brilliant of mind or mediocre, with bodily and mental handicaps, or normal in all respects, male or female, employer or employee, etc.

Now, then, says our teacher, "Every one [of you] must know it to be [your] duty, readily and cheerfully to employ [your] gifts, for the advantage and salvation of other members."

Away goes all self-seeking and self-centeredness. With a wave of the hand, our teacher tells us, "You and what happens to you are not important; what use you are to the congregation of which you are a member – that is the one and only important thing!"

The responsibility for the advantage and salvation of your fellow members is and must be your only concern. Are you tired after a day in school? Never mind. It is not important. There is a fellow classmate that is troubled and needs you.

Has Christ given you a gift of music? Are you asked to use your gift for worldly entertainment in special programs? That is a waste of your gift. Is it your idea that the church is too small and that you would be wasting your gift if you used it to play the piano on the Lord's Day? The teacher says, "If you belong to the church, stop thinking about yourself and start thinking about the church and how you are called to serve it.

Are you so busy earning your daily bread that Bible Study tonight is too great a burden? O selfish person! Why did Christ put you in the church? For your own pleasure? Did Christ seek his own pleasure when he went to the cross for you? For you, a worthless sinner?

There is only one reason why you have, with an unmerited favor of a gracious God, been given a place in that noble and exalted company of saints. That place is to serve others. Maybe that is as a mother in the home, bringing up your children, the children of the covenant, in the ways of God's covenant. Maybe your place is to teach in a school for covenant children. Maybe your place is to be an elder, a deacon, a minister. Maybe your place is to keep the church clean for worship. Maybe your place is to speak a word of good cheer to that lonely fellow saint whose burdens are so great they almost crush her.

The welfare of the church, whatever the cost – that is what it means to believe in the communion of the saints.

May 27 – LD 21, Day 7: The Forgiveness of Sins
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read Psalm 51, Psalm 32

There is no greater blessing that we can receive than the forgiveness of sins. If we have this blessing, all is well, no matter what the circumstances of our life may be. If we have not this blessing, we have nothing, neither in this life nor in the life to come.

The Apostles Creed makes this confession purely objective: I believe there is such a blessing as the forgiveness of sins. But our teacher makes this confession very personal: "That God...will no more remember **my** sins, neither **my** corrupt nature, against which I have to struggle..., but will...impute to **me** the righteousness of Christ, that I may never be condemned."

It is necessary and important to make this confession our own.

The teacher calls attention to many aspects of this confession. Let us enumerate them.

First, all this blessedness of forgiveness is "for the sake of Christ's satisfaction." We did not earn it, nor even desire it. It is freely given because Christ earned it for us.

Second, we need forgiveness of our sins, but also of "our corrupt nature, against which [we] have to struggle all [our] life long."

This may come as something of a surprise to us. We are not only to ask for God to forgive our sins, but we are also to ask for forgiveness of our sinful natures, which are the fountain and cause of our sin. In other words, we are responsible and can go to hell for our sinful natures.

You ask how this can be when we are born with corrupt natures. The answer is that we are guilty for Adam's sin and therefore, deserve the punishment of corrupt and depraved natures. They need to be forgiven also.

Third, when we confess our faith in the forgiveness of our sins and our corrupt nature, we ask God to **forget** them. This is a bold request. We ask God to put them so completely out of his mind that he does not remember a single one.

Fourth, we ask God that he will impute to us Christ's righteousness. That is, we ask God to declare legally before the heavenly bar of justice that Christ's righteousness is actually our righteousness, and that therefore, God sees us as without sin not only, but as righteous as he is.

Finally, we confess that we believe we shall never be condemned for any sin: not now in our consciences, not in the judgment day at the end of time, and not ever in heaven.

That is a wonderful confession to make. Even if the world condemns us, or even the devil, or even our own consciences, we say against them all: "I believe in the forgiveness of sins."

The Second Part - Of Man's Deliverance

Of God The Holy Ghost

Lord's Day 22

Question 57. What comfort doth the "resurrection of the body" afford thee?

Answer. That not only my soul after this life shall be immediately taken [\[a\]](#) up to Christ its head; but also, that this my body, being raised by the power of Christ, shall be reunited with my soul, and [\[b\]](#) made like unto the glorious body of Christ.

Question 58. What comfort takest thou from the article of "life everlasting"?

Answer. That [\[c\]](#) since I now feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy, after this life, [\[d\]](#) I shall inherit perfect salvation, which [\[e\]](#) "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man" to conceive, and that, to praise God therein for ever.

[a]: [Luke 23:43](#); [Phil. 1:23](#)

[b]: [1Cor. 15:53](#); [Job 19:25,26](#)

[c]: [2Cor. 5:2,3,6](#); [Rom. 14:17](#)

[d]: [Psa. 10:11](#)

[e]: [1Cor. 2:9](#)

May 28 – LD 22, Day 1: Introduction
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: Psalm 16, Acts 2:29-33

There are one or two comments that ought to be made about this lesson from our Heidelberg Catechism. The first is that this Lord's Day is remarkably short; especially when we consider how important it is for the Christian faith and how much time Scripture devotes to this subject.

There is, however, a good reason for this.

God has so determined that the truth of the Scriptures is developed in the church along the lines of the six main topics in dogmatics: theology (the doctrine of God), anthropology (the doctrine of man), Christology (the doctrine of Christ), soteriology (the doctrine of salvation), ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church) and eschatology (the doctrine of the last things).

In the early church, at the time the three creeds were formulated (The Nicene Creed, The Chalcedonian Creed, and the Athanasian Creed [all three can be found in the back of the Psalter]), the doctrine of God was first developed and then the doctrine of Christ. At the time of Augustine who died in 430 AD, the doctrine of man and the doctrine of salvation were developed.

Then followed a long period of a millennium in which the Roman Catholic Church ruled the world, and no doctrine was developed.

At the time of the Reformation the doctrine of the church was especially developed, but almost nothing was said about the doctrine of the last things.

And so, you see, the development of the truth followed the six main topics in dogmatics. The Heidelberg Catechism was written in 1563 when the doctrine of the last things was not yet developed. And the resurrection of the body belongs to the doctrine of the last things.

It was especially in the last century that the doctrine of the last things is being developed.

Nevertheless, the essential ideas that belong to the doctrine of the resurrection of our bodies are all mentioned here.

The second point that needs to be made is the claim of some commentaries that the doctrine of the resurrection of the body was not an object of faith in the Old Testament. This is a flat-out denial of clear Scriptural evidence that the Old Testament saints did indeed believe in the resurrection of the body.

Job, who was a contemporary of Abraham, spoke of the resurrection of the body in Job 19:26, 27: "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another;..."

Heb 11:19 tells us that when God spared Isaac at the moment Abraham was ready to plunge his knife into Isaac's heart, that Abraham received his son back as a figure of the resurrection of Christ and of our bodies.

Psa 16:10 tells us that David believed in the resurrection of the body: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." This was quoted, in fact, by Peter in his great Pentecostal sermon (Acts 2:31) as fulfilled in Christ.

The resurrection of the body has always been the faith of the church.

May 29 – LD 22, Day 2: The Intermediate State
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: II Corinthians 5:1-10

Our teacher who instructs us in the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, wants us to understand not only what this confession means to us, but also that, preceding the resurrection of our bodies is what has been called “the intermediate state.”

This doctrine teaches that at the moment of our death, while our bodies go to the grave, our souls go immediately to heaven. These souls live in heaven until Christ comes again at the end of time. This doctrine is taught in this Lord’s Day in the words, “That not only my soul after this life shall be immediately taken up to Christ its Head . . .”

This doctrine has been a great blessing to God’s people, not only as they look ahead to the time when they must die, but also when they must carry one they love dearly to the cemetery.

There are many who deny this truth, however. These teach a sort of soul sleep; that is, that when we die, our souls go to sleep, and sleep until Christ comes again when they are wakened to be joined with their bodies.

But Scripture is clear that this is not the case.

Solomon describes old age in Ecc 12:1 - 7 and ends his picturesque description of old age with the words: “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

Christ tells the thief on the cross when he repented of his sin and asked the Lord to remember him when the Lord came to his kingdom: “**To day** shalt thou be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). Christ promised the repentant thief that he would be in heaven with the Lord. Christ’s spirit went to God as he says in his last word on the cross: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46).

In Rev 6:9 - 11, we are told that when the fifth seal is opened, John “saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”

Finally, in II Cor 5:1 we read this: “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Paul does not say, “We will have” some day a house not made with hands; he says, at that moment when our earthly house is dissolved, we do have a house not made with hands.

We look forward to heaven at the end of our pathway here in the world.

May 30 – LD 22, Day 3: The Resurrection of the Body
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: I Corinthians 15:1-11

Many things will happen when our Lord Jesus Christ comes again at the end of time. Christ is seen in the heavens coming on the clouds, which he makes his chariot, and coming with the host of angels. He will, at the moment of his coming, be seen by all men.

This will indeed be a miracle, for we cannot imagine how, if the Lord is seen in the sky above Singapore, he can also be seen on the other side of the world in the States. But nevertheless, so it will be.

Further, when he comes not only will the bodies of God's people be raised, but the people of God still on the earth will be changed (I Cor 15:51, 52). The bodies of all the wicked shall also be raised and those living will also be changed, but their bodies will be united with their souls that have been in hell and their bodies will be changed to exist in hell.

The last judgment will take place at that time. All men who ever lived will be gathered before the great white throne on which Christ sits, and all men will be judged. The righteous will be taken into heaven and the wicked cast into hell. New heavens and a new earth will be created, and we shall inherit this new creation.

What a day that will be!

But here, in Lord's Day 22, our teacher wants us to think especially about the resurrection of our bodies.

Our bodies are important to us, but they are also important to God. When God created man, God formed him body and soul, and so, if for no other reason, our bodies are important because God created them. We are to take care of our bodies and the mutilation or endangering of our bodies is always a sin.

In the Old Testament times, respect for the bodies of those that died was characteristic of all the saints. Abraham bought a parcel of ground in Canaan for a burial place for Sarah; and in that grave, Abraham himself was buried, Isaac and Rebekah his wife were buried, and Jacob and his true wife, Leah, were buried. Burial is the way in which we show respect for our bodies.

But believers put the bodies of loved ones in the ground because they bury them in the hope of the resurrection. Paul talks, in I Cor 15:36-38 of a seed that cannot grow into a new plant until it is put into the ground. And so our bodies become new only by being planted in the earth.

And so God considers our bodies so important that he saves our bodies as well as our souls. Only the salvation of our bodies does not come about until the resurrection, for it must first be planted in the earth. But God will raise up our bodies at the coming of Christ.

Thus we are taught that our only comfort in life and in **death**, for **body** and **soul**, is that we belong to Jesus (See Lord's Day 1).

May 31 – LD 22, Day 4: The Miracle of the Resurrection of the Body
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: I Corinthians 15:12-23

There are several considerations that make the resurrection of the body an amazing miracle. Let us mention a few of them. They will help us realize what a great wonder God performs for us when he raises our bodies.

Think, first of all, of the fact that the bodies of every child of God that ever lived will be raised. This includes not only all the saints who lived in both the old and new dispensations, but also all those saints who lived before the flood: Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah and all the rest. The flood was a great catastrophe and tore the earth to pieces. Yet the bodies of the people of God were somehow preserved.

Think of all the things that can happen to a human body: it can be and has been burned with fire. The ashes of the pre-Reformer John Wycliffe, for example, were strewn on the waters of a river and were carried out to the oceans. Some were drowned; some were eaten by fish; some were eaten by lions in the arenas of Rome; and so became a part of the bodies of fish and animals. Some were buried, turned to dust, and became a part of grass which cows ate and turned into milk, milk that was drunk by others.

How impossible it all seems to us.

But we must remember also that the resurrection of our bodies is a truth we believe by faith. No wonder the unbeliever scoffs. With all his science he cannot believe something so “scientifically” impossible. But we walk by faith, not by sight. We believe in a great God who created all things, is present in every particle of the creation with his whole being, and upholds all things by his word. He can and does preserve every particle of every child of God so that he can raise it at the end of time.

This miracle is necessary, because **our own** bodies are raised. We are taught: “this **my** body, being raised.” The very same body conceived in my mother’s womb, grown to adulthood, dead and buried, rotted in the ground, is going to be raised. God does not abandon our earthly bodies and create for us entirely new bodies. No, he preserves our bodies and raises them.

They are greatly changed, but they are the same bodies in which we lived on earth.

This is the way it was with the body of Jesus. When our Lord died, he was buried in Joseph’s tomb. From that tomb his body arose. After he arose, the body was there no longer.

And yet it was changed. It was so changed that our Lord could not be seen unless he took on some form that was visible to the human eye. He could, in his body, enter rooms that were locked and sealed. It was his body that ascended into heaven, is now glorified and in which body Christ rules over all.

What an astounding wonder. But what blessedness!

June 1 – LD 22, Day 5: The Nature of our Resurrection Bodies
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: I Corinthians 15:35-49

Our teacher who is instructing us in the meaning of our faith in the resurrection of our bodies does not have very much to say about the nature of our resurrection bodies. Nor is this so surprising. After all, the Bible does not say very much about heaven. And this too is to be expected, because heaven is the realm of spiritual creatures, while we here on earth are earthly creatures. Even if the Bible would want to tell us about heaven, there is no language that could be used to describe what heaven is like. And even if a language could be found, we would not be able to understand it. (See Paul's comments in II Cor 12:1-4).

A few things are told us in the Bible and our teacher points us to the most important of them: We shall be "fashioned like unto his [Christ's] glorious body." (Phil 3:21). Christ's body was raised and glorified at the time of our Lord's ascension and exaltation. In his glorified body, he is now in heaven and sits at his Father's right hand, where he is Lord of lords and King of kings.

His glorified body is so beautiful, so powerful, so shining with the brightness of his exaltation that God himself in all his glory is revealed through Christ. When we see Christ, we see God himself (John 14:7-11).

Our bodies, raised to be like the body of Christ, shall be just as beautiful, just as glorious and just as wonderful. The glory of God shining through Christ will also shine through our bodies.

If this is the nature of our resurrection bodies, we shall be more glorious than Adam was in Paradise. Before he fell, he was a very glorious man. Our bodies now are nothing like Adam's and Eve's bodies. They were beautiful, strong, revealing God's glory. But sin and the curse has filled us with death, made our bodies ugly, and eroded all the powers that Adam and Eve had.

But in heaven we will have more beautiful bodies than Adam and Eve had. We cannot even imagine what that will be like. We cannot imagine the beauty of an angel, but we shall be more glorious even than the angels.

Somehow, by some great miracle, the beautiful bodies of a newborn baby will be preserved in heaven; the unique glory of a man and woman at the peak of their strength will be preserved; the beauty of the grey-haired veteran of the battle of faith will also be preserved. But all traces of sin, the curse and death will be erased, and every body will be perfect and fully able to serve God in the new creation.

All that will be a miracle; an astounding miracle. We shall be changed. We believe this, for Christ arose; and his resurrection guarantees our resurrection. It is wonderful to contemplate!

June 2 – LD 22, Day 6: Our New Spiritual Bodies
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: I Corinthians 15:50-58

Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, tells us a little bit about our resurrection bodies.

He tells us, first of all, that they will not be flesh and blood such as we have now. He writes: “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption” (I Cor 15:50). Then again in verses 53, 54 of the same chapter: “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

Yet, secondly, the apostle tells us a little bit about that resurrection body by contrasting it with our present bodies.

“It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption” (I Cor 15:42b). That is, the body that dies is corrupt. It is corrupt because of sin; it is corrupt because of death that rots it away and finally pulls it down into the grave. But the resurrection body is incorruptible.

“It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory” (I Cor 15:43a). No matter how today’s depraved culture worships the human body, our bodies are dishonourable. We hide our bodies beneath clothing. There is nothing beautiful about them. But our resurrection bodies are gloriously beautiful, because they will be without sin and without the rotting power of death.

“It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power” (I Cor. 15:43b). We are now so weak that at the time of our greatest strength, a bacterium, microscopically small, can kill us. Our life hangs by a thread every day. But in heaven we shall be strong.

“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body” (I Cor 15:44a). Our natural bodies can only live in this world. They are subject to all the limitations of our creation. They are bound by the limitations of time and space. If we want to travel by car to Kuala Lumpur, we must travel so many miles, and it will take us so many hours. We are dependent on food grown in this present creation. We are dependent on water for drinking, and if we do not drink any fluids, we will die. All this belongs to our natural life in the world.

But our resurrection bodies will be spiritual. They will be like the angels. They will be so changed that they can live in a heavenly and spiritual creation. What that creation will be like, we do not know. Sometimes we can become very eager to find out, for, above all, we will be without sin. We will see Christ “face to face” (I Cor 13:12). And we will be able to see God himself revealed in Christ, in all God’s love for us.

That will be glory indeed!

June 3 – LD 22, Day 7: Eternal Life
by Prof Herman Hanko

Read: Revelation 22:1-9

The final article in the Apostolic Confession reads: “I believe in...the life everlasting.” And so the teacher who is showing us what glorious things the Bible says about our future, now teaches us a few things concerning “life everlasting.”

We must learn, first of all that we cannot know very much about what everlasting life is like. To drive this home to us, our teacher quotes I Cor 2:9. That shall have to be enough for us.

We will, however, I am sure, when finally we open our eyes in glory, say the same thing that the Queen of Sheba said when she saw the glory of Solomon’s kingdom: “The one half . . . was not told me” (2 Chr 9:6).

Our teacher tells us one surprising thing: we do have the beginnings of heaven in our hearts already while we are here in this earth, struggling along on our pilgrim’s journey. “I feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy.”

Our happiness is a true happiness, for we know that we belong to Christ, are cared for by him, and will in a very short time see him face to face. There are moments of great joy when in a flash, the greatness of God’s perfections is seen by us, when the blessedness of the forgiveness of sins makes us sing; when our musings on our everlasting destination suddenly bursts upon us in all its splendour.

Our teacher also points us to the fact that we shall inherit perfect salvation. This is a delightful prospect. Here on earth we still sin so much. We confess our sins and find forgiveness with God, but the next day it is the same old story: sin, sin, sin. We weary of sin, of the battle against it, of the times we are overcome by it. But in heaven we will never sin again, but will be perfect in loving our God and our neighbor.

This is the real blessedness of heaven. Not sunny skies, meadows filled with flowers, cooling breezes, beautiful landscapes, singing birds; but think of it: we will never sin again!

We shall be in heaven with all the saints. We shall meet Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Peter, Athanasius, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and all the saints. We shall be with the angels who will be our servants. We shall be with Christ; to live with him and see the adoring look in his eyes for us, his bride.

And we shall praise God forever. Each will have his own story to tell. It will be a story of a foul sinner saved by grace: Ra hab, Ruth, the Philippian jailer, you, me. But the story will be about God’s grace in us.

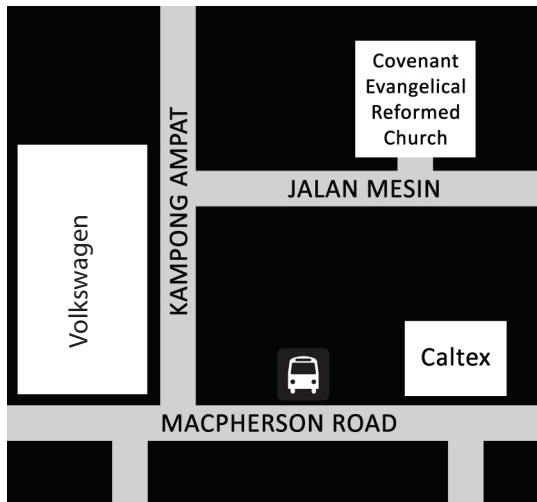
Forever and ever. One minister once described everlasting as being like a bird which takes one tiny bit of stone from a huge cliff, carries it a thousand miles, comes back for another, and does this a billion years. Everlasting life is longer than that.

Our home is everlasting.



COVENANT EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH

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TIME OF WORSHIP

Every Sunday

9.30 – 11.00 am

2.00 – 3.00 pm

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Published by Christian Literature Ministry, CERC

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