

Heidelberg Catechism (Question 26 to 50)

Q26. What do you believe when you say, “I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth”?

A. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and everything in them, who still upholds and rules them by His eternal counsel and providence, is my God and Father because of Christ the Son. I trust God so much that I do not doubt He will provide whatever I need for body and soul, and will turn to my good whatever adversity He sends upon me in this sad world. God is able to do this because He is almighty God and desires to do this because He is a faithful Father.

Q27. What do you understand by the providence of God?

A. The almighty and ever present power of God by which God upholds, as with His hand, heaven and earth and all creatures, and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty — all things, in fact, come to us not by chance but by His fatherly hand.

Q28. How does the knowledge of God’s creation and providence help us?

A. We can be patient when things go against us, thankful when things go well, and for the future we can have good confidence in our faithful God and Father that nothing in creation will separate us from His love. For all creatures are so completely in God’s hand that without His will they can neither move nor be moved.

Q29. Why is the Son of God called “Jesus,” meaning “saviour”?

A. Because He saves us from our sins, and because salvation should not be sought and cannot be found in anyone else.

Q30. Do those who look for their salvation in saints, in themselves, or elsewhere really believe in the only saviour Jesus?

A. No. Although they boast of being His, by their actions they deny the only saviour, Jesus. Either Jesus is not a perfect saviour, or those who in true faith accept this saviour have in Him all they need for their salvation.

Q31. Why is He called “Christ,” meaning “anointed”?

A. Because He has been ordained by God the Father and has been anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our chief prophet and teacher who fully reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our deliverance; our only high priest who has delivered us by the one sacrifice of His body, and who continually pleads our cause with the Father; and our eternal king who governs us by His Word and Spirit, and who guards us and keeps us in the freedom He has won for us.

Q32. But why are you called a Christian?

A. Because by faith I am a member of Christ and so I share in His anointing. I am anointed to confess His name, to present myself to Him as a living sacrifice of thanks, to strive with a free conscience against sin and the devil in this life, and afterward to reign with Christ over all creation for eternity.

Q33. Why is He called God’s “only begotten Son” when we also are God’s children?

A. Because Christ alone is the eternal, natural Son of God. We, however, are adopted children of God — adopted by grace through Christ.

Q34. Why do you call Him “our Lord”?

A. Because — not with gold or silver, but with His precious blood — He has set us free from sin and from the tyranny of the devil, and has bought us, body and soul, to be His very own.

Q35. What does it mean that He “was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary”?

A. That the eternal Son of God, who is and remains true and eternal God, took to Himself, through the working of the Holy Spirit, from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary, a truly human nature so that He might also become David’s true descendant, like His brothers and sisters in every way except for sin.

Q36. How does the holy conception and birth of Christ benefit you?

A. He is our mediator and, in God’s sight, He covers with His innocence and perfect holiness my sinfulness in which I was conceived.

Q37. What do you understand by the word “suffered”?

A. That during His whole life on earth, but especially at the end, Christ sustained in body and soul the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race. This He did in order that, by His suffering as the only atoning sacrifice, He might deliver us, body and soul, from eternal condemnation, and gain for us God’s grace, righteousness, and eternal life.

Q38. Why did He suffer “under Pontius Pilate” as judge?

A. So that He, though innocent, might be condemned by an earthly judge, and so free us from the severe judgment of God that was to fall on us.

Q39. Is it significant that He was “crucified” instead of dying some other way?

A. Yes. By this I am convinced that He shouldered the curse which lay on me, since death by crucifixion was cursed by God.

Q40. Why did Christ have to suffer death?

A. Because God’s justice and truth require it: nothing else could pay for our sins except the death of the Son of God.

Q41. Why was He “buried”?

A. His burial testifies that He really died.

Q42. Since Christ has died for us, why do we still have to die?

A. Our death does not pay the debt of our sins. Rather, it puts an end to our sinning and is our entrance into eternal life.

Q43. What further benefit do we receive from Christ’s sacrifice and death on the cross?

A. By Christ’s power our old selves are crucified, put to death, and buried with Him, so that the evil desires of the flesh may no longer rule us, but that instead we may offer ourselves as a sacrifice of gratitude to Him.

Q44. Why does the creed add, “He descended to hell”?

A. To assure me during attacks of deepest dread and temptation that Christ my Lord, by suffering unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul, on the cross but also earlier, has delivered me from hellish anguish and torment.

Q45. How does Christ's resurrection benefit us?

A. First, by His resurrection He has overcome death, so that He might make us share in the righteousness He obtained for us by His death. Second, by His power we too are already raised to a new life. Third, Christ's resurrection is a sure pledge to us of our blessed resurrection.

Q46. What do you mean by saying, "He ascended to heaven"?

A. That Christ, while His disciples watched, was taken up from the earth into heaven and remains there on our behalf until He comes again to judge the living and the dead.

Q47. But isn't Christ with us until the end of the world as He promised us?

A. Christ is true human and true God. In His human nature Christ is not now on earth; but in His divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit He is never absent from us.

Q48. If His humanity is not present wherever His divinity is, then aren't the two natures of Christ separated from each other?

A. Certainly not. Since divinity is not limited and is present everywhere, it is evident that Christ's divinity is surely beyond the bounds of the humanity that has been taken on, but at the same time His divinity is in and remains personally united to His humanity.

Q49. How does Christ's ascension to heaven benefit us?

A. First, He is our advocate in heaven in the presence of His Father. Second, we have our own flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that Christ our head will also take us, His members, up to Himself. Third, He sends His Spirit to us on earth as a corresponding pledge. By the Spirit's power we seek not earthly things but the things above, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand.

Q50. Why the next words: "and is seated at the right hand of God"?

A. Because Christ ascended to heaven to show there that He is head of His church, the one through whom the Father rules all things.