

Lesson 17: Questions 30 and 31

In our last lesson we considered how Christ executes the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King for His people. As Prophet, He reveals to us, by His Word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation (Q27). As Priest, He offers Himself once for all and ever lives to intercede (Q28). As King, He subdues us to Himself, rules and defends us, and restrains and conquers all His and our enemies (Q29). Now the catechism turns from the offices to the two estates in which He executes them: His humiliation and His exaltation.

30-31

Question 30: What was Christ's humiliation?

Q. Wherein did Christ's humiliation consist?

A. Christ's humiliation consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time.

This question asks us to consider the depth of Christ's descent. The eternal Son of God did not merely *appear* among us in glory, nor did He come as a heavenly *visitor* untouched by our condition. He humbled Himself. He entered our world, our weakness, our misery, our law-obligation, our suffering, our death, and our grave. His humiliation is the path by which the Lord of glory stooped to save His people.

The catechism begins by saying that Christ's humiliation consisted "in his being born, and that in a low condition". [Luke 2:7](#) says, "*And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger*". That is astonishing. The One through Whom all things were made was laid in a feeding trough. The eternal Son did not enter the world surrounded by earthly splendor. He was born without riches, in obscurity and weakness.

That low condition matters. Christ did not merely become man in some abstract sense. He took the form of a servant. He came down into the ordinary hardships of human life. He was not born in Caesar's palace, but in Bethlehem. He was not laid on a royal bed, but in a manger. From the beginning, His humiliation was visible. The King came humble and lowly.

The catechism then says He was "made under the law". [Galatians 4:4](#) says, "*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law*". That phrase is full of gospel. Christ did not come as One exempt from obedience. He placed Himself under the very Law His people had broken. He was born under its commands, under its obligations, and under its curse-bearing demands as the Surety of His people.

This means Christ's obedience was not decorative. He did not merely show us what righteousness looks like from a distance. He obeyed in our nature, in our place, under God's Law. Where Adam *disobeyed*, Christ *obeyed*. Where Israel *failed*, Christ *succeeded*. Where we *sin* every day, Christ *obeyed perfectly* before the Father. His humiliation includes not only what He suffered, but the entire life of obedience He lived from His birth in Bethlehem to His death on the cross.

The catechism also says that Christ underwent "the miseries of this life". [Hebrews 12:2-3](#) tells us to "*[look] to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.... Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself*". Christ knew the weariness of a fallen world. He knew hunger, sorrow, hatred, loneliness, temptation, opposition, misunderstanding, and grief. He was not insulated from misery.

[Isaiah 53:2-3](#) gives us this portrait plainly: "*he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*" That is not sentimental language. It tells us that the promised Servant would be familiar with sorrow. He would not merely *observe* grief from heaven. He would *know* it by experience.

This should comfort suffering Christians. Our Savior is not distant from our afflictions. He knows what it is to live in this groaning world. He knows what it is to be despised, misunderstood, opposed, and sorrowful. Yet His suffering was never meaningless, never faithless, never sinful. He endured the miseries of this life in perfect trust, love, and obedience.

But the catechism goes deeper still. Christ's humiliation consisted in undergoing "the wrath of God". Here we come to holy ground. **Luke 22:44** says, *"And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground."* In Gethsemane, Christ was not merely nervous about physical pain. He was facing the cup the Father had given Him. He was facing judgment, wrath, and curse in the place of His people. The agony of Gethsemane is the agony of the obedient Son willingly receiving the cup appointed by the Father for the salvation of His elect.

Matthew 27:46 brings us to the cry of the cross: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* We should speak carefully here. Christ is citing **Psalm 22**, a psalm that moves from suffering to vindication, from anguish to victory, from the mockery of enemies to the praise of God among the congregation. This cry is not confusion, unbelief, or a rupture within the Trinity. ***The Father did not turn His face away from the Son.*** The Son did not cease to trust the Father. The Spirit did not cease to uphold the incarnate Christ in His obedience. Yet the Son, as Mediator, truly bore the judgment due to His people. He endured the wrath of God against sin, not as a private person separated from the Father's love, but as the willing Surety of His people, offering Himself in perfect obedience. He stood where guilty sinners deserved to stand, bearing the curse so that we might receive blessing.

This is why the cross cannot be reduced to moral example, political martyrdom, or inspiring sacrifice. It is **substitution**. Christ bore **wrath**. He satisfied **divine justice**. He gave Himself for sinners under the **judgment** of God. If we soften this, we lose the heart of the gospel.

The catechism then says He suffered "the cursed death of the cross". **Philippians 2:8** says, *"And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."* The cross was not only **painful**. It was **humiliating** and **cursed**. Christ did not die an honorable death in the eyes of men. He was publicly exposed, mocked, condemned, and crucified.

And yet, in that **cursed** death, our **blessing** was secured. The obedient One went all the way. He did not stop short of the finish line, short of death, or short of the cross. The Son of God humbled Himself to the lowest place so that guilty sinners might be lifted up in Him.

The catechism also includes His burial. **1 Corinthians 15:3-4** says that *"Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures"*. His burial matters because it confirms the reality of His death. Christ did not **faint**. He did not **appear** to die. He **truly** died, and His body was laid in the tomb.

Finally, the catechism says He continued "under the power of death for a time." **Matthew 12:40** says, *"For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."* **Acts 2:24** says, *"God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it."* Peter then cites **Psalm 16**, including the promise, *"For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption"* (**Acts 2:27**), and explains that David *"foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ"* (**Acts 2:31**).

So Christ **truly** came under death's power, but only for a time. Death held Him **truly**, but not **finally**. The grave **received** Him, but **could not keep** Him. His humiliation went all the way down to burial and the state of death, but death could not claim Him as its rightful prisoner. He had no sin of His own. He bore ours by appointment and covenant mercy.

So in His humiliation Christ went down into our need, entered the depths of our misery, and humbled Himself for us and for our salvation.

Note the past tense for all discussions of Christ's humiliation. It happened, but is over.

Question 31: What is Christ's exaltation?

Q. Wherein consisteth Christ's exaltation?

A. Christ's exaltation consisteth in his rising again from the dead on the third day, in ascending up into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day.

Question 30 takes us down into the depths of Christ's humiliation. Question 31 lifts our eyes to the glory of His exaltation. The same Christ Who humbled Himself has been raised, ascended, enthroned, and appointed Judge of all. His humiliation was *not defeat*. His suffering was *not failure*. His death was *not the end*. The Father vindicated the Son; the crucified Redeemer now lives and reigns.

The catechism begins with His resurrection: "in his rising again from the dead on the third day". **1 Corinthians 15:4** says that *"he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures"*. The resurrection is not an appendix to the gospel. It is central to it. The Christ Who died for our sins was raised. The One Who entered death came out of death victorious.

This matters because the resurrection is God's public declaration that Christ's work was accepted. If Christ had remained in the grave, we would have no gospel. *A dead redeemer cannot save*. But Christ is not dead. He has been raised. Death did not conquer Him. Sin did not have the final word. The curse did not consume Him. The grave did not keep Him.

The resurrection also means that Christ's people have a living Savior. We do not merely *remember* a heroic teacher from the past. We *belong to* the risen Lord. He is alive *now*. His prophetic word *still addresses* His church. His priesthood *continues*. His kingship is *active*. The resurrection means that all His saving work is living, effectual, and secure.

The catechism then says that Christ's exaltation consists "in ascending up into heaven". The catechism cites **Mark 16:19**, but I am choosing to cite **Acts 1:9** instead: *"And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight."* We should not pass over the ascension too quickly. It is one of the great events of Christ's exaltation. The risen Christ did not merely come back from the dead and remain on earth. He ascended to the Father.

The ascension tells us that Christ's earthly humiliation is finished. The days of weakness, rejection, suffering, and visible lowliness are over. He has gone into heaven as the victorious God-man. Our nature is now represented in glory. The Son Who took a true body and a reasonable soul (Q25) did not lay aside His humanity when He ascended. He *remains* God and man in one person forever, and as the incarnate Mediator He has entered heaven for us. Our Redeemer is not absent in the sense of being inactive or far away in indifference. He is *ascended* in triumph. He is *present* with His church by His Word and Spirit, and He represents His people in heaven. We have a Man in glory. We have a Brother at the Father's right hand. We have a Redeemer Who has gone ahead of us.

The catechism then says that Christ's exaltation consists "in sitting at the right hand of God the Father". **Ephesians 1:20** says that God *"raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places"*. This is royal language. Christ is not *waiting* to *become* King. He is *enthroned*. He *sits* at the right hand of the Father, the place of highest honor, authority, and rule.

This does not mean the Son was ever less than divine. According to His divine nature, He always possessed all glory, majesty, and authority. But as the incarnate Mediator, having accomplished redemption, He is exalted. The One Who humbled Himself is now openly enthroned. The One men mocked as king now reigns as King indeed.

This is why Christians should not speak as though history is out of control. We do not yet see every enemy finally subdued, but we do see Jesus crowned with glory and honor. He rules *now*. His kingdom is not fragile. His enemies are not equal rivals. The nations will rage, the church will suffer, and believers will feel weak, but Christ sits at the right hand of God.

His rule also comforts us because the seated Christ is our Priest-King. He reigns and intercedes. He now lives in glory. His sitting does not mean *idleness*. It means His sacrificial work is *complete*, His authority is *established*, and His saving ministry *continues* from heaven.

Finally, the catechism says that Christ's exaltation consists "in coming to judge the world at the last day". **Acts 1:11** says, "*This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.*" The ascended Christ will return. His exaltation is not only past and present; it also has a future public display. The One Who went up will come again.

Acts 17:31 says that God "*has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.*" The risen Christ is the appointed Judge. The Man Who was judged by men will judge all men. The One condemned unjustly will judge righteously.

This is both sobering and comforting.

It is sobering because no one will escape His judgment. History is moving toward a fixed day. Nothing will successfully oppose Christ. Every person will answer to Him.

But it is also comforting because the Judge is righteous. The world is full of injustice, confusion, cruelty, and hidden evil. Many wrongs are never made right in this life. Many faithful saints suffer quietly. Many wicked men appear to prosper. But Christ will judge the world in righteousness.

Nothing will be hidden. Nothing will be crooked. Nothing will be overlooked. No sin goes unpunished.

For believers, the coming judgment should not produce terror as it does for those outside Christ. Our Judge is our Redeemer. The One Who will come to judge the living and the dead is the same One Who bore wrath for His people, rose for their justification, ascended for their good, and reigns for their preservation. We do not await a stranger. We await Christ.

Christ was not merely humble, but is also exalted. He descended for our salvation, and He has been raised in glory. He lives, reigns, intercedes, and will come again.

Conclusion

Questions 30 and 31 belong together. If we separate them, we will distort the work of Christ. Question 30 teaches us the depth of His humiliation. Question 31 teaches us the height of His exaltation.

He went down into lowliness, obedience, misery, wrath, the cross, burial, and death.

He rose, ascended, sat down at the Father's right hand, and will come again to judge the world.

Taken together, these questions show us the whole movement of Christ's saving work. He humbled Himself because He was merciful. He is exalted because His suffering work was finished, accepted, and victorious.

So take this lesson with you this week in two ways:

- **FIRST**, let it shape what you believe: Christ's humiliation was real, necessary, and saving. He truly entered our condition. He obeyed under the law, suffered the miseries of this life, bore the wrath of God, died the cursed death of the cross, was buried, and remained under death for a time. Do not think lightly of what your salvation cost.

And believe that Christ's exaltation is real, present, and certain. He has risen from the dead. He has ascended into heaven. He sits at the right hand of God the Father. He will come again to judge the world in righteousness. Do not live as though Christ were still in the grave or absent from the throne.

- **SECOND**, let that corrected belief change what you do.

In your guilt, look to the crucified Christ for atonement.

In your weakness, look to the risen Christ for strength.

In your doubt, look to the ascended Christ for certainty.

In your fear, look to the reigning Christ for stability.

In the face of injustice, suffering, and death, look to the returning Christ for justice.

Humble yourself under the One Who humbled Himself for you.

Lift up your head because the humbled Christ is now exalted.

And live in obedience to God's Law this week as one whose Savior has gone down into death, come up in victory, and now reigns until every enemy is placed beneath His feet.