

Paying the Debt



Lord's Day 5

Heidelberg Catechism



Heidelberg, Germany

A Quick Overview

I. Misery

II. Deliverance

God the Father

God the Son

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Sacraments

Holy Baptism

The Holy Supper of Jesus Christ

III. Gratitude

The Ten Commandments

The Lord's Prayer

Blast from the Past:

But isn't God also merciful?

God is certainly merciful, but also just. God's justice demands that sin, committed against his supreme majesty, be punished with the supreme penalty—eternal punishment of body and soul.

End of Day 4, Heidelberg Catechism

The Day 5 Questions:

12. According to God's righteous judgment we deserve punishment both now and in eternity: how then can we escape this punishment and return to God's favor?
13. Can we make this payment ourselves?
14. Can another creature—any at all—pay this debt for us?
15. What kind of mediator and deliverer should we look for then?

#12: How can we escape God's punishment?

God requires that his justice be satisfied. Therefore the claims of this justice must be paid in full, either by ourselves or by another.

Satisfying God's Justice

Exodus 23:7, Have nothing to do with a false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty.

Rom. 2:5-6, But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God "will repay each person according to what they have done."

Satisfied by Another

Isaiah 53:11, After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Rom. 8:3,4, For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Can we make this payment ourselves?

Certainly not. Actually, we increase our debt every day.

Storing up Wrath

Matthew 6:12, And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Romans 2:4-5, Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

Can another creature pay our debt?

No. To begin with, God will not punish any other creature for what a human is guilty of. Furthermore, no mere creature can bear the weight of God's eternal wrath against sin and deliver others from it.

Individual Justice

Ezekiel 18:4,20, For everyone belongs to me, the parent as well as the child—both alike belong to me. The one who sins is the one who will die... The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them.

Who could stand?

Psalm 49:7-8, No one can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for them—the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough—

Psalm 130:3, If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?

Atonement for Others

Hebrews 2:14-17, Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

What kind of Deliverer should we look for?

One who is a true and righteous human, yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is also true God.

A Deliverer foretold

Isaiah 7:14, Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Isaiah 9:6, For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Son of Man, Son of God

John 1:1,14, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Such a High Priest!

I Corinthians 15:21, For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.

II Corinthians 5:21, God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Hebrews 7:26, Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

Wrap-up thus far...

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- Our miserable condition leaves us unable to save ourselves.
- Others' miserable condition leaves them unable to help us. We must look outside the race of fallen creatures for salvation.
- Only Jesus Christ meets the requirements to atone for our sins.

Tonight's Take-home:

“An Engineered Solution”

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As bad, desperate, and horrible our present world sometimes seems to be, we must remind ourselves that the Glorious Creator of this world has himself sent to us the means to save us from this misery...in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ.

Let us pray...

