

## **Lord's Day 6**

**16. Q.** *Why must He be a true and righteous man?*

**A.** *He must be a true man  
because the justice of God requires  
that the same human nature which has sinned  
should pay for sin.<sup>1</sup>  
He must be a righteous man  
because one who himself is a sinner  
cannot pay for others.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Rom: 5:12, 15; I Cor. 15:21; Heb. 2:14-16.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. 7:26, 27; I Pet. 3:18.

**17. Q.** *Why must He at the same time be true God?*

**A.** *He must be true God  
so that by the power of His divine nature<sup>1</sup>  
He might bear in His human nature  
the burden of God's wrath,<sup>2</sup>  
and might obtain for us  
and restore to us  
righteousness and life.<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Is. 9:5.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. 4:24; Nah. 1:6; Ps. 130:3.

<sup>3</sup> Is. 53:5, 11; John 3:16; II Cor. 5:21.

**18. Q.** *But who is that Mediator  
who at the same time is true God  
and a true and righteous man?*

**A.** *Our Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>1</sup>  
whom God made our wisdom,  
our righteousness and sanctification  
and redemption (I Corinthians 1:30).*

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 1:21-23; Luke 2:11; I Tim. 2:5; 3:16.

**19. Q.** *From where do you know this?*

**A.** *From the holy gospel,  
which God Himself first revealed in Paradise.<sup>1</sup>  
Later, He had it proclaimed  
by the patriarchs<sup>2</sup> and prophets,<sup>3</sup>  
and foreshadowed  
by the sacrifices and other ceremonies  
of the law.<sup>4</sup>  
Finally, He had it fulfilled  
through His only Son.<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 3:15.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 49:10.

<sup>3</sup> Is. 53; Jer. 23:5, 6; Mic. 7:18-20; Acts 10:43; Heb. 1:1.

<sup>4</sup> Lev. 1:7; John 5:46; Heb. 10:1-10.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 10:4; Gal. 4:4, 5; Col. 2:17.

## LORD'S DAY 6

### THE ONLY MEDIATOR

Text: Lord's Day 6

Reading: I Corinthians 1 : 18-31

Psalm 62 : 4, 7

Hymn 4 : 4

Psalm 96 : 1, 2, 8

Hymn 29 : 1

Hymn 24 : 1, 5

Introduction: Beloved congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

When we last dealt with the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 5, we were asking about the *way of salvation*. We wanted to know how we could escape God's righteous wrath and again be received into the favour of the LORD.

We saw that it was not an easy way. God demands full satisfaction from man. The penalty for sin must be borne; the law of God must be fulfilled. Many people may not like this teaching concerning the way of salvation, but it is fully Biblical, and must be maintained.

We realized that *we ourselves* could not go that way. There is simply no possibility that we can ever save ourselves. Our debt is too high; our depravity is too great! And we concluded from the Bible that we can only be saved from our sins if *God Himself* gives us a Saviour, a Mediator Who can stand before His presence and represent us!

God has to give us a Mediator: otherwise we are completely lost. We ourselves cannot find such a person who will mediate between God and us. People have often tried to come up with some mediator of their own, but it was always insufficient. God must give us a Mediator who is acceptable to Him! That is the point at which we arrive in our Catechism.

Now we may joyfully confess that God has given

us a Mediator! That is the new information in Lord's Day 6, the great step forward. The Mediator is clearly and unmistakably identified, He is "Our Lord Jesus Christ" (answer 18). He is identified in jubilant terms, with a text straight out of the Bible. Here we go to the source, so that there is no mistake. Our Mediator is our Lord Jesus Christ!

I summarize it as follows:

**The confession concerning the only Mediator Jesus Christ Who meets all the standards of God.**

**1. the perfect Mediator**

**2. the promised Mediator.**

1. When we speak about our Mediator and our Saviour, we must be clear on the fact that He truly is acceptable in the sight of God. I mean, *we* might easily accept Him as our Mediator, for we are in any case quickly satisfied, but the real question is: does God accept our Mediator and our Saviour as legitimate and capable? Would it not be terrible for us and for our children if we followed the wrong man?

To answer these questions, the first two questions and answers of this Lord's Day dig a little deeper into the divine *standards* which God has set for the Mediator. This topic has already been touched upon in the previous Lord's Day, but the Catechism now elaborates on it so that there is no mistake and so that we

have absolute certainty concerning our Mediator!

What standards has God then set for the *perfect Mediator*? “Perfect” here means: just the one we need, the one who is able to do the job. It means someone who as a *person* is suited for this task and who in his *work* also shows this! The perfect man for the perfect job! We are not looking for just anyone to do this work, but for the *one and only* Mediator, the perfect Mediator Who is fully willing and able to do it!

The Catechism first dwells on *who He is*, on His Person. He has to be a *true and righteous man*. This is the first requirement for the perfect Mediator.

Let us begin with that requirement to be “true man”. If He will stand in our place before God, the Mediator must be essentially one of us, with a true human body and soul! The Catechism speaks here about “the *same* human nature”. The Mediator must be fully *human*, like Adam and all his posterity. The Mediator must partake in the original human nature; there must be a real line from the first Adam to the second Adam. The Mediator must show unity with mankind, and also the progression and continuity of mankind. In short: He must be fully human.

Our Mediator may not be some extra-terrestrial being who does not share our nature and history, and who comes out of the blue to act on our behalf! Why? Because the justice of God will not allow it! The LORD God will never accept any Mediator from another category. This would conflict with the most elementary rule of justice, namely, that the soul who sinned shall die!

Indeed, the Mediator must be a true man. How, for example, could a *divine* being be punished for our sins? Would God punish Himself for the sins that we have committed? Or, would any *heavenly* being be held responsible for sins that are *earthly* in origin? Or, shall *dumb animals* be considered guilty for sins which intelligent man has consciously and purposely committed? You realize that this would conflict with all justice, let alone the justice of God!

He must be one of us, like unto us in all things. But there is one exception to this likeness with us: he must be a *righteous* man, without sin. He must be out of the earth, have a physical being, but also out of the Holy Spirit, without sin or guilt, wholly dedicated to God! This, too, is a matter of God’s justice. A sinner cannot pay for a sinner, nor can a thief atone for a thief.

Well, there is no such man. All men are sinners, equally corrupt. We realize at once that for us this requirement is a total impossibility. Besides, we also learn that the Mediator must *at the same time* be *true God*. Why? Because no man can bear the “burden of God’s wrath” against sin and survive! Every man would perish utterly in the agony of death and hell, and none would return. No man could undergo the penalty of sin, namely death and hell, and then come back to restore to others life and righteousness! To do this, the Mediator must be nothing less than divine!

No mere human being could bear God’s ultimate wrath and survive. What the Catechism teaches is really quite breath-taking. The human nature must bear God’s wrath, but the *divine* nature must pull it through, otherwise it will not survive! The perfect Mediator, Who is fully human, must then *by the power of His divine nature* bear and overcome the penalty of sin! The divine nature must sustain the human nature. The Mediator must therefore have two natures: He must be God and man in one person, fully divine and fully human at the same time! Otherwise He cannot perform the task of saving us from our sins!

This is what the Mediator must be like if He is to be acceptable to God and measure up to His sovereign standards. The Mediator must be “son of man” and “Son of God” at the same time! This means that He must be a unique and very special Person, like us as a man, yet unlike any man.

It is the message of the Bible and the confession of the Reformed Churches that Jesus Christ is such a perfect Mediator, the only one Who is Son of God and son of man! The Catechism asks in question 18, “But

who is that Mediator who at the same time is true God and true and righteous man”? It is a question which has in it a hint of despair. From our side, we must say: there is no such Person. But the joyous answer is: “Our Lord Jesus Christ, Whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption”.

It literally says in I Corinthians 1:30 that Christ was *made unto us*. This expression means that He was *given* to us. We did not “make” Him or find Him or invent Him! But God gave Him and brought Him to us. God Himself gave the Mediator Who would measure up to His own standards! God goes very far in the work of salvation. He gives us the perfect Mediator, just the “man” we need!

It is important that at this point the Catechism gives us a direct quote from Scripture. For this is *the heart* of the Reformed confession. Here we are at the source, the Word of God itself! Here we confess that in giving us Jesus Christ God gives us *everything* necessary for salvation.

For Scripture says that Christ is made “our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption”. He is our knowledge to salvation, our wisdom. He is the Truth, the Way, the Life! He gives us the true understanding of life, of our sins and of our deliverance. He is the Light, and without Him there is darkness!

He is our righteousness and sanctification. In Him we have forgiveness of sins (righteousness) and new life (sanctification). I cannot earn my salvation, and I need not earn it either, for Christ has *paid* in full! All good works that I do are only works of thankfulness through Him! For the *work* of Christ is perfect! It is enough for all my sins! I need look only to Him. This verse says that He is our redemption. It does not say that He gives (a little bit of) redemption, but He *is* redemption. Our full salvation lies in Jesus Christ and His perfect work. There is nothing to add. What I must do is simply believe that Jesus Christ is *my perfect Mediator*.

Perfect means “exactly suited”. It means perfect as a Person. It means perfect in His work. This is how

Jesus Christ is, given to us, so that we will find in Him everything needed for salvation! The result, as Paul writes in I Corinthians 30, is that no one in the Church can brag about himself or herself, for in the Christian Church we boast “only of the Lord”.

Jesus Christ is the perfect Mediator in Whom God’s *entire* counsel of salvation is fulfilled. This is vital and key information for the Church. And it is also important to know that this is the way God has willed it and revealed it. The perfect Mediator is also the *promised* Mediator. We come to the second point.

2. It is not without reason that the Catechism asks, “From where do you know this?” From where do we get this knowledge that Jesus Christ is the perfect Mediator? If we were mistaken or misinformed here, it would be utterly devastating. We would then think to see a way out of our misery, but would be disappointed in the end! So the Catechism carefully asks us about our *source*. Here there may be no mistake!

From where? Who told us this? The answer is: *God Himself!* This is not a matter of our own imagination or invention. This is a matter of God’s revelation. The first one Who told us about the perfect Mediator is God Himself, and no one else. As a matter of fact, He is the one Who *promised* this Mediator to us.

In answer to the question, “From where do you know this?” the Catechism puts it this way: “From the Holy Gospel, which God Himself first revealed in Paradise”. Note that the Catechism does not say, “from the Bible”, but rather from the *Holy Gospel*, which means: the message of the Bible, the “good news” and “glad tidings” contained in the Bible. This Gospel is “holy” because it originates with God. God first revealed this Gospel in Paradise. It was God Himself Who made it known. And God caused this Gospel to be recorded infallibly in the Bible, His Word, from cover to cover.

“To reveal” indeed means “to make known”. God already knew *from eternity* that He would save His people in Christ (were we not chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world? Ephesians 1:4), but He

made that known at a specific moment, in Paradise, when Adam and Eve had fallen into sin and into a state of spiritual death. The Gospel is God's answer to the *need* of His children. It is an expression of the Lord's boundless grace. The Belgic Confession puts it beautifully in Article 17: "Our gracious God in His marvellous wisdom and goodness set out to seek man when he trembling fled from Him. He *comforted* Him with the promise that He would give him His Son, to bruise the head of the serpent and to make man blessed".

God comforts man with the promise of a Saviour. It is true that at that time the Lord did not reveal everything in its fullest detail. The first revelation was a simple promise of restoration through the "son of the woman" who would in time be born. The Gospel was then given in a nutshell, so to speak, and it needed elaboration and elucidation. But the basic message was there. The promise functioned from the beginning!

In the course of the centuries the Lord God added more and more information until He fulfilled the promise in His only Son. The God Who gave the promise, and Who made the initial revelation also fulfilled the promise and finalized the completed revelation!

So there was with God's people always an increasing of knowledge and a deepening of understanding. We can speak of the "history of revelation" and we know that we today have more knowledge and greater riches than those who lived under the old dispensation, but we all live out of the *same* promise!

This promise, first revealed by God, was later *proclaimed* by "patriarchs and prophets". The Gospel is something that must be preached. The message concerning the perfect Saviour must be passed on from generation to generation.

When the LORD God first revealed this Gospel concerning the perfect Mediator, He caused Adam and Eve to believe it. He also demanded that it be passed on. By word of mouth or by written word, the Gospel was to be passed on in faith. To this proclamation, God even added the "ceremonies of the law" so that all God's children would live *out of the promise*! He saw

to it that the preaching of this Gospel was entrusted specifically to certain officebearers so that every generation anew would hear it. The people of God have been and are still very busy with the proclamation of the Gospel!

The result was that Israel lived and longed for the day of the *promised* Mediator, the Messiah, the great Servant of God! The patriarchs and the prophets *longed* for the fulfilment of the promise. The faithful in Israel knew: our Saviour is coming!

And, in the fullness of time, at God's appointed moment, according to His Word He did come. In accordance with God's sovereign will, He fulfilled His earthly ministry and was taken up gloriously into heaven. We know of this today through the work of Christ, the testimony of the apostles, and by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit!

We know that Jesus Christ is a perfect Mediator. We know this *from the Holy Gospel*. We know this *by faith*. For we can accept this Gospel only by faith. Most people consider the Gospel to be foolishness. They feel that it is ridiculous to believe that a crucified man is the promised Mediator of God. The Jews could not accept it, and many today cannot accept it. The world despises such a Gospel or else perverts it to suit human tastes. Paul writes about this attitude in the portion of Scripture which we read.

Men seek to save themselves by their efforts and works. If they need Christ, it is often not as He has been revealed. They do not live out of the promise or the fulfilment of the promise. They let their imagination rule over the revelation of God! But the Church says: we know that Jesus Christ is the perfect Mediator, given of God. For He has been promised by God, and that promise has been wondrously fulfilled. Let us always go back to the source, to the Gospel which God Himself revealed and fulfilled! Let us be guided by the Holy Gospel, His blessed Word. For then also in our lives there will be more and more the longing for the fulfilment of the last promise, the promise of the return of the Lord in glory.

The promised Mediator did come. And He shall come again to judge the living and the dead. For it is now clear that the Word of God is sure and that all the promises of the Gospel will be fulfilled, after much longing, at God's time!

From where do you know this? Well, it is no secret. It is not surprising that many people know; but it

is amazing that so many people do not yet know or do not want to know! For it is known from the beginning of the world and it has become perfectly clear in the latter days that Jesus Christ is the only Mediator Who meets God's standards. And one day the earth will be filled with His Name and His glory. AMEN.