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**CATECHISM**

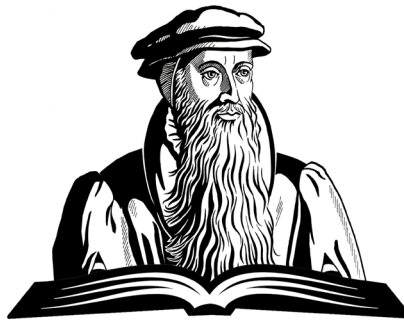
VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

*by Rev. Jonathan Mattull*

Lecture #1

**The Chief End of Man**

*Catechism Question 1*



**The John Knox Institute**  
of Higher Education

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*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

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# *The Shorter CATECHISM*

## VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

*by Rev. Jonathan Mattull*

1. **The Chief End of Man—*Question 1***
2. God's Word and Its Teaching—*Questions 2 & 3*
3. What God Is—*Question 4*
4. One Triune God—*Questions 5 & 6*
5. The Decrees of God—*Questions 7 & 8*
6. God's Work of Creation—*Question 9*
7. God's Creation of Man—*Question 10*
8. God's Works of Providence—*Question 11*
9. God's Special Providence Towards Man—*Question 12*
10. The Fall of Man—*Questions 13 & 15*
11. What Sin Is—*Question 14*
12. The Fall's Effect on All Mankind—*Questions 16 & 17*
13. The Sinfulness & Misery of Man's Fallen State—*Questions 18 & 19*
14. The Covenant of Grace—*Question 20*
15. Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of God's Elect—*Question 21*
16. The Incarnation—*Question 22*
17. Christ's Office of Prophet—*Questions 23 & 24*
18. Christ's Office of Priest—*Question 25*
19. Christ's Office of King—*Question 26*
20. The Humiliation of Christ—*Question 27*

# *The Shorter CATECHISM*

## VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

*by Rev. Jonathan Mattull*

21. Christ's Exaltation—*Question 28*
22. Redemption Applied—*Questions 29 & 30*
23. Effectual Calling—*Questions 31 & 32*
24. Justification—*Question 33*
25. Adoption—*Question 34*
26. Sanctification—*Question 35*
27. Blessings of Salvation in this Life—*Question 36*
28. Blessings of Salvation at Death—*Question 37*
29. Blessings of Salvation at the Resurrection—*Question 38*
30. The Duty Required of Man—*Questions 39 through 42*
31. The Ten Commandments: A Preface of Grace—*Questions 43 & 44*
32. The Ten Commandments: Love for God—*Questions 45–8*
33. The Ten Commandments: Love for God's Worship—*Question 49–52*
34. The Ten Commandments: Love for God's Name—*Questions 53–56*
35. The Ten Commandments: A Day for Holy Love—*Questions 57–59*
36. The Ten Commandments: Love for God's Day—*Questions 60–62*
37. The Ten Commandments: Love within Our Relationships—*Questions 63–66*
38. The Ten Commandments: Love for Life—*Questions 67–69*
39. The Ten Commandments: Love for Purity—*Questions 70–72*
40. The Ten Commandments: Love for the Lord's Allotment—*Questions 73–75*

# *The Shorter CATECHISM*

## VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

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41. The Ten Commandments - Love for the Truth—*Questions 76 thru 78*
42. The Ten Commandments - Love from Within—*Questions 79 thru 81*
43. Understanding Our Sin—*Questions 82 thru 84*
44. Escaping God’s Wrath and Curse: Saving Faith—*Questions 85 and 86*
45. Escaping God’s Wrath and Curse: Repentance unto Life—*Question 87*
46. Escaping God’s Wrath and Curse: Means of Grace—*Question 88*
47. Means of Grace: The Word of God—*Questions 89 and 90*
48. Means of Grace: The Sacraments—*Questions 91 thru 93*
49. Means of Grace: Christian Baptism—*Questions 94 and 95*
50. Means of Grace: The Lord’s Supper—*Question 96*
51. Means of Grace: Receiving the Lord’s Supper—*Question 97*
52. Means of Grace: Prayer—*Questions 98 and 99*
53. The Lord’s Prayer: The Preface—*Question 100*
54. The Lord’s Prayer: The First Petition—*Question 101*
55. The Lord’s Prayer: The Second Petition—*Question 102*
56. The Lord’s Prayer: The Third Petition—*Question 103*
57. The Lord’s Prayer: The Fourth Petition—*Question 104*
58. The Lord’s Prayer: The Fifth Petition—*Question 105*
59. The Lord’s Prayer: The Sixth Petition—*Question 106*
60. The Lord’s Prayer: The Conclusion—*Question 107*

# *The Shorter CATECHISM*

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### Lecture #1

## The Chief End of Man

**Question 1:** *What is the chief end of man?*

**Answer:** *Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.*

Have you ever thought about why you are here? Not the place where you are as you watch this video, but rather, why you are in this world. What is the purpose of your life? These are big questions. And they're big questions because they touch on all that is in our life. They guide us and they direct us, and they help us to make sense of what we're supposed to be doing at any given moment, and with the whole of our life considered.

People have been asking this question for centuries. Some have written books on it. Some have governed their life by many well-thought-out answers to this question, and it's a question that is before us today. Our Catechism asks this question, and does so with the following words. The first question of our Catechism asks, "What is the chief end of man?" And the words may sound a bit strange at first, so let's make sure that we understand what's being asked. The key words are, first, "chief end." The word "chief" means "primary" or "main" or "most important". And the word "end" means "goal" or "purpose". When we use the word here, "man", it's not referring to men as different from women. Instead it's speaking of humanity, mankind, that is, humanity in general. So the question is asking, "What is the most important purpose for all mankind?" The question is important, and it gives focus for all other questions in our lives, and all things that we're to do. The Catechism gives us an excellent summary of what the Bible teaches on this topic: "What is the chief end of man?...Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever."

It's important for us to understand these words. The word "glorify," to glorify God, means to do all things to honor him. To enjoy him means that we experience an inward delight in God, as God, and as our God. The world seems to think the most important purpose is to seek earthly, and personal, and selfish happiness. This isn't something entirely beyond what the Bible acknowledges, for the Bible, in Isaiah 22, and verse 13, characterizes some as saying, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die." So the world has adopted this in many ways as its purpose—to eat and to drink, to find pleasure so long as we have life, because eventually our lives are going to end. And the Bible gives us a far better and a more noble purpose.

And we can see this in the Bible, just serving quickly a few verses to help us see, first, that we're to glorify God. We see this in 1 Corinthians 10, and verse 31—Paul writes, "Whether there-

fore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” Paul also writes in Colossians 3, and verse 17, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” So whether we eat or drink, whether we speak or do things, all is to be done to honor the Lord.

We also see, as the Bible teaches, that we are to enjoy him. So, Psalm 73, verses 25 and 26, we find the psalmist saying, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.” The psalmist has come to see that his delight, his joy, is God himself. We can see this as Peter writes, in 1 Peter 1:8, speaking of Jesus Christ, he says, “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Well, as you read the Bible, you’ll see these ideas come up again and again. But we wish to focus our lesson on three points to help us understand this teaching of the Bible. First, notice that man’s purpose is focused on God. Second, notice that man’s purpose joins glorifying and enjoying God together. And third, notice that man’s purpose, his ultimate purpose, is an everlasting purpose—a purpose that will never end.

So first, man’s purpose is focused on God. And a focus on something is to give all of our attention to it. It’s the opposite of being distracted. Most people in the world focus on the wrong thing. Preeminently, they focus on themselves, and this will lead them to wrong answers about their purpose. If you focus on a wrong target, you’re not going to hit the right target, and when men focus on themselves as their main attention, they’ll miss out on the right thing that should have their attention. When it is that men focus on themselves, they fail to start with God.

Now, if we’re going to answer the question before us correctly about man—man, by the way, is a creature which God has made—we must be sure to consider what God, who is the Creator, thinks. In the very beginning of the Bible, we’re told that God created man. Genesis 1 and 2 give us this amazing record, which we’ll think about in later lessons.

And notice particularly the account that’s given to us regarding God’s creation of man, in Genesis 1, and verses 26 and 27, where we read these words: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them having dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” What you’ll notice is that mankind is made in God’s image. He reflects him. He is like him. Now, certainly man is not like God in every way. God is infinite and eternal, while mankind is limited and bound to time. We need to sleep, but God never rests. We need to eat in order to get strong and healthy, but God is nothing but strength and life. And yet, God made man very special. Mankind was made to reflect God, to honor God. This is what he was made to be and to do. We’ll learn more about this in future questions, but for now, notice that God made man his special reflection in this world. And if we are to reflect God, if we are to honor God, we must then focus on God. You can think of a mirror. A mirror reflects what it is pointed at. If we are to reflect God, we must be pointed at him, we must know him, we must understand what he’s told us about himself. The question before us then helps us remember this important truth. We are to glorify and enjoy God, and the only way that we can do that is if we give our attention to him as he has made himself known to us in the Bible.

Now, second, notice that man’s purpose joins glorifying God and enjoying God together. This is the main focus of the answer before us—glorifying and enjoying God. What does it mean when

it says that “man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him”? Well, let’s start with what it means to glorify God. Something that is glorious is full of great honor and beauty and perfection. Now, none is as glorious as God. He is only good—most holy. He excels all other things, and infinitely so. We know that God has all glory of himself, and this is a great truth. He’s not dependent on anything else. All creation shows forth his glory, and the whole Bible testifies of his truth. We read, for instance, in Psalm 145, Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness.”

Now the Bible tells us that God is perfectly glorious. Well, if he is, how then we glorify him? Well, it’s not that we add to his glory, or make him more glorious than he already is. Instead, we glorify him when we purposely honor him in our thoughts and in our speech, and when we direct all praise to him. We glorify him when we live for him, and we don’t live for ourselves. In other words, to glorify him, is to do all for, and by, and in Christ Jesus. Remember, one of our key verses we that mentioned, Colossians 3, and verse 17, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” Christ teaches this to his disciples in Matthew 6, verse 33, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Notice the first thing, the primary thing, or in the words of our Catechism, the chief thing that we’re to do is to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. When we place the honor of God first in all that we do, it’s then that we’re glorifying him. The Bible tells us we glorify God by obeying him and leading others to praise him. We see this in Matthew 5, and verse 16. Jesus says, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” We can glorify God in our thoughts and desires and actions. We do so, when what we think, and what we desire, and what we do are all for God’s honor, and in accordance to what he has taught. The Catechism tells us that this is our first goal in all that we do. We have many secondary purposes—we must care for others, we must care for our own body, we must honor our parents, students must learn their lessons and study, when we grow up, we’ll have a job with a particular purpose. But all of these purposes are supposed to be done to our greatest purpose, to glorify and enjoy God.

Let me give you one example from the Bible. Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus. Among other relationships, he addressed the relationship that existed between servants and masters. It was a difficult thing to be a servant in Paul’s day. They were supposed to do anything their earthly master commanded them. They were to clean, and cook, and take care of business. Well, how was a Christian servant supposed to do all of these things and glorify God? They couldn’t be a missionary and go and cross the ocean to a different land, and tell others about the gospel. They couldn’t be an apostle and go forth and plant churches to God’s praise. But you’ll notice, while a servant didn’t get to choose what he was going to do on a daily basis, he was told how he was to do the things that were demanded of him. Paul writes of this in Ephesians 6, verses 5 and 6. He says, “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.” You see? Yes, they were to honor their earthly masters. They were to do so sincerely. But notice, they were to do all of their difficult job unto Christ. When they were told to clean up a mess, they were to clean up that mess as if they were doing so for Christ. If they were told to prepare a meal, they were to be preparing that meal as if they were preparing it for Christ. Everything they did, they were to do it as to Christ. And this is how we can glorify



God in all of our life, regardless of our circumstances—when we speak, when we think, when we act, when we go to school, when we learn, when we eat our food, when we play with our friends, when we gather on the Lord’s Day to worship God at church, we should always be able to say, “I am doing this to honor and glorify God.”

Well, unfortunately, mankind has sinned against God. Instead of glorifying God, we have dishonored him. We cannot repair this ourselves. If we are to glorify God, to honor him, what we’ve done to dishonor him must be addressed, it must be forgiven. And it only comes by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We’ll consider what he’s done and how we receive that forgiveness more fully in future lessons, but for now, realize this—there is no way of fulfilling our chief end of glorifying or enjoying God without first trusting in Jesus Christ. We must first be restored to God in peace before we can glorify God in our lives.

We should also remember that if we are to glorify God, we must do so by loving him. We outwardly do certain things, but without love, nothing will be done sincerely. For instance, if a child is asked to clean his room, he may pick up and put away everything that’s disordered, however, his mind and heart may be angry while he’s doing it. He may be complaining in his thoughts, though he never utters a word of it. And though his action outwardly is doing what he was told, inwardly, he’s not doing the action lovingly. If we go to church and sing God’s praise, if we read the Bible and join in prayer, but we’re doing those things without love, though the right thing is being done outwardly, we are not glorifying God because we’re not loving him. This helps us see that glorifying God is joined with enjoying him. While we are glorifying God, we’re called to enjoy God. In other words, our purpose is not merely to obey—rather, we’re to obey cheerfully. We’re not only to read God’s Word, we’re to read it and find it to be sweet to our soul. We’re not just to sing God’s praise, we’re to sing with joy, and express our sincere delight to God, and in God. We’re to enjoy him.

Perhaps you wonder at times why you like the things you do. Or if someone asks you, “Why do you like these things?” You can ask a child, “Why do you like that?” The child may like candy, and you ask them why they like candy. “I like it because it’s sweet,” the child says. You could ask, “Why do you like sweet things?” And perhaps you get the answer, “I like sweet things because they make me smile, they make me happy.” We can keep asking the question, “Why?” “Why do you like?” “Why do you like?” And eventually it becomes clear that we like the things that we find to be good and pleasant, the things that make us happy. Well, this is how we’re to think of God. He is good, he is pleasant, and we ought to be happy in him. It’s true that he is the Most High. He inhabits eternity. He is most glorious. However, he has called us to enjoy him. This should raise a question in our minds right away, “How can we, who have sinned against him, ever hope to enjoy him?”

We see a picture of this struggle in the story of Adam and Eve. When they were first made, God gave them everything that they needed, everything for their provision, everything for their happiness. But they foolishly listened to the serpent, and sinned against God by eating the forbidden fruit. After this, we read an important part of the story. In Genesis 3, and verse 8, we read, “And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.” Now think of that for a moment. God comes near to them, and they run and hide from him. Why did they do that? God came near to be with his special creation that was to reflect him, and instead of turning to him, they turned away from him. His creation fled from him. That’s because they couldn’t enjoy him, because they had sinned against him. They stood guilty before God, and their

consciences would not let them enjoy God. They could not enjoy him, because by sin they had become his enemies. Now this is our problem too. How could we ever hope to enjoy God when we've sinned against him. His law condemns us. Our consciences testify against us. We've sinned. We cannot enjoy God like we should. What hope is there then?

Well, the hope is not in us. We don't have the power to reestablish what we've lost. But the wonder is this—God has established a way of peace by his Son Jesus Christ. Notice how Paul teaches this in Romans 5, verse 1 and 2. He writes, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” The only way of enjoying God in our lives is first by receiving peace with him by Christ Jesus. If we have Jesus Christ and peace with God by him, we may then go about all of our lives with great joy in God. If we do not have Jesus Christ and peace with God by him, we can do many things outwardly, even religious things outwardly, but we'll never enjoy God, and we will never truly enjoy him. So be sure, as you think of this question and answer, that you start with this need. And if ever you're to glorify and enjoy him, you must first have Jesus Christ as the Savior of sinners, that brings us again into restored fellowship with God. And when it is that we have Jesus as our Savior, then we will be led to a life of glorifying and enjoying God by him.

Well, thirdly, man's purpose is an everlasting purpose. We've seen that all that we do is to be done to glorify God and enjoy him. And some of the things that we do in this life, however, come to an end. For example, our days as a child will come to an end. Our days as a student in school will come to an end. A mother has a purpose to feed and nurse her baby, but when the baby grows older, she no longer has that particular purpose. These secondary purposes change and come to an end. And our primary purpose, our chief end, never ends. This is our purpose through all of life—as a young child, to an older child, from childhood to adulthood, till the day that we die. Whether single or married, with children, or without children, we're always to be glorifying God and enjoying him.

However, it goes further, and it reaches beyond this life, even into heaven. What are the saints doing in heaven? Well, right now, they are glorifying and enjoying God. We see something of a glimpse of this in Revelation, chapter 7, verses 9 through 12. Notice, all of the nations are gathered in heaven, and what are they doing?—they're worshipping, and glorifying, and delighting in God. And John writes, “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.” So it is that all who are in heaven will ever be fulfilling their highest end—glorifying God and enjoying him forever.

Well, let me close with a few thoughts to consider. We ought to think seriously upon this question and answer, and in order to do so, let's try to bring it to ourselves. The question in the Catechism reads, “What is the chief end of man?” I hope you'll have the answer memorized soon, if you don't already: “Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” Now let me make it a bit more direct to you. What is your chief end? Can you answer that? You should be able to say, “My chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.” You have this purpose. You have, not only a purpose in life, but the greatest purpose in life. It's far more than just making a living, or

receiving wages or an income. It's far more than learning or playing. It's even more than having a family or going to church, as important as these things are. You exist with this purpose—to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. You can use this truth every day and in every moment. We can ask the question, “Is what I am about to do glorifying to God?” We can ask, “When I read or listen to God's Word, am I finding this to be a joy to my soul?”

Well, I hope that as we continue through our lessons, you will learn more about this great God whom we are to glorify and enjoy. And I hope that as you do, you will see why he is to be glorified and enjoyed. And I hope that you will learn how to glorify and enjoy him better. But most of all, I hope that you will glorify and enjoy him forever, as you trust him and live by faith in Jesus Christ the Savior.