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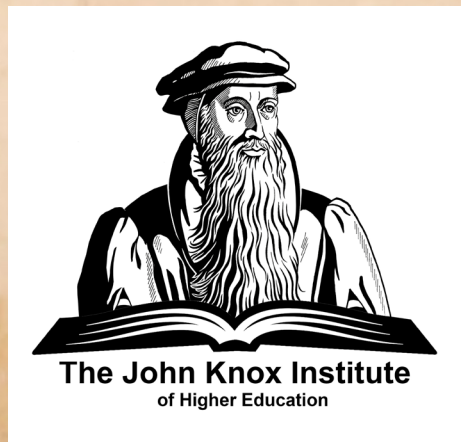
*Shorter*  
**CATECHISM**

VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

*by Rev. Jonathan Mattull*

Lecture #12

**The Fall's Effect on All Mankind**  
*Catechism Questions 16 and 17*



**John Knox Institute of Higher Education**

*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

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# *The Shorter CATECHISM*

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*by Rev. Jonathan Mattull*

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# *The Shorter CATECHISM*

## VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

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### Lecture #12

## The Fall's Effect on All Mankind

**Question 16:** *Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?*

**Answer:** *The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.*

**Question 17:** *Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?*

**Answer:** *The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.*

In an earlier lesson, we noted that Adam fell from the estate wherein he was created. This happened by his sinning against God. Today we learn that the consequences of this sin impacted many more than Adam and Eve themselves. In fact, all mankind has been impacted by this sin. When we look at two questions today, questions #16 and #17, from the *Shorter Catechism*, you should know that questions #16 through #20 all address this truth. For our lesson today then, we will focus on question #16, with some help from question #17.

Question #16 asks, "Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?" The answer: "The covenant, being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression." And just so we are sure that we have some understanding of the basic words, let's notice the following.

First, "covenant" here refers to the covenant mentioned in Question #12, the covenant of life. This is the covenant God made with Adam, promising life to him if he would continue in obedience. This is sometimes called the covenant of works.

The second word is "posterity." This word simply refers to Adam's descendants, his children. However, it does not merely refer to Cain and Abel, his immediate children—it refers to all of his descendants, what we would call his grandchildren, and great grandchildren, and in fact, you and me, for we all descend from Adam.

Third, notice this expression, "ordinary generation." This is an important part of the answer, because it clarifies something that's of great insight. Ordinary generation refers to the normal way children are brought into this world. For a child to be born, there must be both a father and a mother. This is the normal or ordinary way of producing or generating a child. In other ways, it simply refers to the normal way that a child is conceived, a father and a mother are brought together. Every human since Adam and Eve have been formed by this ordinary way, that is, every

human but one. Remember that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin. Though Joseph adopted Jesus and raise him, remember that Jesus was supernaturally conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary. We'll look at this more fully in the future, not long from this lesson. But for now, simply know that these words, "descending from him by ordinary generation" means all of his descendents, except for Jesus Christ.

The rest of the words are fairly clear, so we'll look briefly at the next question, which helps complete the thought of this question.

The word "fall" implies something into which Adam and his posterity fell. This question #17 in the *Shorter Catechism* indicates into what mankind fell. Thus the question, "Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?" The answer: "The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery."

Notice that word "estate." Today this word primarily refers to any land, or finances, or possessions that someone owns. However, the word here refers to our general standing or position. In other words, What is our standing now in this world since the fall? What is our standing now in this world before God? What is our position, as it were, in God's eyes? What is the reality of ourselves now that Adam, and we with him, have fallen. When Adam was made, he was given a privileged standing, that is, he was given a privileged standing in position before God and in this world. He was surrounded by goodness and mercy. His body was full of life, and no death, and he was innocent of sin. He was in favor with God. He enjoyed his wife and all creation. Simply put, he was in a good estate. However, he sinned, and by that sin, he fell from that estate. This question tells us that he fell into a bad estate, one of sin and misery. We'll look at this more fully in the next two questions, questions #18 and #19. But for now, just remember that man fell from a state of honor and goodness into a standing of sin and misery.

For today's lesson, we'll focus on question #16, with some help from question #17. Notice these three points. Firstly, mankind's representative. Secondly, mankind's sin. And thirdly, mankind's fall.

First then, mankind's representative. Notice that the answer says, "The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity." Now this is an important truth—a truth that impacts you and me, and every other human. *The Catechism* is here referring to the covenant of life, the covenant of works, which we considered earlier. The Bible teaches that Adam was not acting only as an individual, as a private person for himself alone. Instead, God had appointed him to be a representative of his posterity. All of his children, grandchildren, and so on, were being represented by his action, by what he did or didn't do. A representative is one who performs a task on behalf of others. As a representative, his work secures benefits or troubles for those whom he represents. And the Bible shows us that Adam was a representative of his descendents. It certainly does so by the fact that when Adam sinned, and fell, the sin spread to everybody, and the misery that Adam knew was instantly brought upon all of his descendents.

The Bible also explicitly tells us that Adam was a representative. One such place is 1 Corinthians 15, verses 21 to 22. Now, in context, Paul is showing the believer that all those whom Jesus represents will enjoy the benefit of the resurrection, that though they die, they shall rise again. However, notice that the relationship is also acknowledged between man and Adam. So the believer is Christ is before us, but also man and Adam. Paul writes, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

"In Adam all die." The language places all who die in Adam, that is, as represented by him. Adam was no mere private person. Instead, we were represented in him and by him. He acted

as a representative of his descendents. And so his actions brought consequences upon all his descendents, including you and including me.

We may have many questions about this truth. For instance, why would God do this? Why would he not let all men stand or fall by their own actions. We don't have a clear answer as to why God made this arrangement, nor is God under any burden to tell us why. But we do have the clear teaching that he has made this arrangement. We'll see this arrangement confirmed in the next point when we treat of mankind's sin. But it's clear in the passage before us. We die as those who were represented by Adam.

But we also see in this passage that Adam is not the only representative. God has also appointed another representative, namely, Jesus Christ. Remember those words, "Even so in Christ shall all be made alive." In other words, salvation of sinners is by a representative, a truth most wonderful to us, and which we'll consider in the future. So Adam is a representative for man, for all mankind.

Now second, notice mankind's sin. We see that Adam represented all mankind, but what is the consequence, and what does this mean? Well since our representative sinned and was made guilty by his sin, those he represented are made guilty as well. In other words, his descendents are guilty of this Adam's first sin. This is what the *Catechism* means when it states, "All mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him...in his first transgression."

This doesn't deny that you and I have personal sins we have committed. We do, we ourselves have actual sins, but it affirms that we also have the guilt of Adam's first sin. Now this is the teaching of the Bible. There are several places that explicitly treat this idea, but notice in particular, Romans 5, verses 12 through 19. It's here that Paul gives another comparison of two representatives, as we saw in 1 Corinthians. There's Adam, and there's Jesus Christ, and both of what they've done has impact upon those whom they represent. These two, Adam and Jesus Christ, are representatives that bring real consequences upon those who are represented by them. Now we won't read the whole portion of Romans 5, but I encourage you to look at it carefully and see, as perhaps you chart it out, what is it that Adam has done, and what are the consequences? And what is it Christ has done, and what are the consequences? You'll find that Paul is comparing the work of our first representative, Adam, with the work of Jesus Christ, the representative of all who are saved.

Now more to our point, notice what is said of what Adam did. Verses 12 and 14 are clear in identifying Adam as the one who sinned. We read there that "By one man sin entered into the world." We also read of "Adam's transgression." Now this focus is continued throughout this section. Verse 15 mentions "the offense of one." Verse 16 mentions "by one that sinned." Verse 17, "by one man's offence." Verse 18, "the offence of one." Verse 19, "by one man's disobedience." But notice, there is one man in focus, and there is one action of his—it's Adam and his first sin that Paul focuses on in this part of his comparison. Now, this one man Adam, and his one act of disobedience is then shown to have consequences upon all mankind.

Notice what happened because of Adam's sin. Verse 12 says, "sin entered into the world." Now this is bad enough, however, something happened additionally to his descendents. It's not just that sin gained, as it were, entrance into the world. Rather, notice what's mentioned in verses 18 and 19. We read there that "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation," and "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." The offence of Adam and the disobedience of Adam made his descendents sinners, and brought judgment and condemnation upon them. In other words, Adam's sin was credited to us. He was representing us, and when he sinned, now we are those counted guilty. Now we don't want to lose sight that Romans 5 is directing us to the greater representative, Jesus Christ, and the blessings that come to those who are united to him.



However, we must see that all mankind stood represented by Adam. Because Adam sinned, they are accounted sinners, and thus stand guilty because of his first sin.

Well third, notice mankind's fall. Since Adam sinned and fell as our representative, we who are represented by him also fell with him. The comparisons are not perfect, but they can help us in understanding. Think for a moment of how our nations function. If the leaders of a nation declare war against another, it may be said that the whole nation is now at war. That is, the citizens now encounter the consequences of the leaders' decision. This is because the government represents the citizens of the nation. Now some nations have officials that the citizens elect. Others have officials that are appointed over them. But however their government is established, the officials represent the citizens. If the representative officials declare war, now the whole nation has to endure the consequences of that war. They'll either face the benefits or the miseries of the war their leaders have declared. Now again, this isn't a perfect comparison, because obviously there can be wrongly-appointed officials, and there can be sinful officials, and so on. God, however, appointed, remember, a sinless representative. When Adam was first formed in the government, he had no sin. He was not one corrupt like you and I are right now, but he entered the world innocent. Never was there one more able to do what God had said than Adam did. So God did not cheat us by giving us such a representative. He gave us a representative that was innocent of sin, and not yet corrupted by sin. Had Adam obeyed God, which was in his power to do, we would have enjoyed the benefits of his obedience. However, the Bible is clear that he disobeyed, and because of this, we have fallen with him.

Now, into what have we fallen? Remember the question and answer, "into an estate of sin and misery." This is the standing into which we have fallen. It is a guilty standing. It is a corrupt standing. It is a condemned standing. Additionally, as we'll see, it is a miserable standing. We stand estranged from God, and we stand in a standing of spiritual, temporal, and even everlasting death. So indeed it is an estate of sin—we see it in ourselves, we see it in the world; and misery—which again we see it in ourselves, and we see in the world. We'll consider this all more fully in the next few lessons.

But clearly this standing into which Adam, and we with Adam, have fallen, is a deplorable position. When we consider Adam's first standing, the garden with beauty and life, and fellowship with God, and many other blessings, our souls are delighted, and we wonder at the privileges that Adam knew. However, when we consider what our standing now is, we're left inwardly pained at the misery that is ours. What a grief belongs to us now in this fallen estate. This is a sad truth, but it's a truth. And all truth has its purpose in our lives and benefits that can be brought to us. So while we consider the truth of this lesson, let's focus now, as we close, on how this should impact us, how it is we may benefit from such a difficult truth as this.

If we're ever going to benefit from this truth, we must acknowledge this truth personally. All mankind sinned in him and fell with him. This means I need to realize that I stand guilty in Adam, and I fell in Adam. This means that you must recognize that you stand guilty in Adam, and you fell with Adam. And this is true of the whole world. It's a solemn and a heavy truth, but it's a truth that we do not want to accept naturally, but must accept if ever we are to benefit from it. We've seen that it is the teaching of God's Word. God has appointed Adam to be our representative. Our representative sinned. His sin is counted unto us. Our representative fell, and we fell with him. None of that can we change. We may wish to deny it, but we cannot deny that it is the teaching of God's Word, our only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him. If ever we are to glorify and to enjoy God, we must come to see this truth and its application to us. This truth tells us that

we have no hope in ourselves. We are guilty from the very beginning of our existence. This is because our first father, Adam, was our representative, and when he sinned, the whole of humanity descending from him by ordinary generation sinned in him. In other words, we are guilty, even from Adam. The whole human race stands guilty and condemned by the law of God.

We have no resources from which we may build our way back to God. If we think of the estate into which we fell, it's an estate of sin and misery. There's nothing around us that we can pull from. There's nothing in us that we can improve and do. We stand guilty and condemned. We stand without power or resources to redeem ourselves. What a vain effort men perform, when they seek by their own works to climb out of this fallen estate. We see the truth of this lesson, the truth as the Bible presents it to us. We see the sad truth that all hope of restoration is cut off. We fell, and we fell into a deep and a dark pit, out of which none of us is able to escape by his own strength. This is something that we ought to mourn and lament. It is a sad truth indeed. It impacts everyone in the world, for all are the descendents of Adam. While there is more that we should do in light of this truth, surely we should lament the impact of Adam's fall.

But we ought not only to mourn. We must accept the truth that no works of our own can ever recover us from this state. If ever we are to be recovered, one who is not fallen must recover us. We could think of it in this way. We could think of all of us with Adam at the bottom of a great pit, out of which none can escape. The only hope of being brought out of that pit is that one who is still outside of it would come and rescue us. Well, praise God, as we've seen, there is one who is not fallen. There is a descendent of Adam who is not descended in an ordinary way. There is thus one who is not guilty of Adam's first sin. There is one who is not without righteousness, and that's Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is a descendent of Adam who came not by means of the ordinary way. He was conceived supernaturally. He was conceived miraculously of a virgin. He is the only descendent of Adam who is not guilty of Adam's first sin. He is the only one who is able to save those who are guilty of Adam's sin, and their own sins. Jesus Christ is the only hope of all mankind. Just as we are condemned on account of our representative, Adam's first sin, if ever we shall be saved, it will be by the work of a second representative, Jesus Christ.

Well, we're grateful that the Bible tells us much about this great Savior. We're also grateful that in future lessons, we'll learn more about this Jesus Christ, of who he is, that he is the Son of the living God, and that he was born of a woman, and not naturally, but supernaturally, and that he was sinless and perfect. And to think of our previous lesson, never did he transgress God's holy law, and never did he fail to do what God's holy law requires. This is that descendent of Adam, who descended not by ordinary ways, but by extraordinary way, and as such, he is the only one able to rescue us, who with Adam, have fallen into this dreadful estate of sin and misery.

For our next lessons, we'll look more particularly at this estate, that we may better understand just how dreadful a thing it is to have fallen with Adam into this estate of sin and misery. It will help us to understand our own circumstances better, and ourselves better, of our need for Christ more fully. It will also help explain why there's so much in this world that is broken, and wicked, and depraved. And it will show us how great the need is for mankind, that a Savior, who is able to save to the uttermost, should come and rescue us by his work. Well, we praise God for these things to come. May he bless all of these thoughts to us.