

THE WESTMINSTER STANDARDS

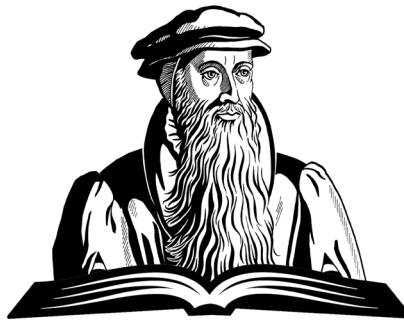
*Shorter*  
**CATECHISM**

VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

*by Rev. Jonathan Mattull*

Lecture #20

**The Humiliation of Christ**  
*Catechism Question 27*



**The John Knox Institute**  
of Higher Education

**John Knox Institute of Higher Education**

*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

© 2023 by John Knox Institute of Higher Education

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means for profit, except in brief quotations for the purposes of review, comment, or scholarship, without written permission from the publisher, John Knox Institute, P.O. Box 19398, Kalamazoo, MI 49019-19398, USA.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

Visit our website: [www.johnknoxinstitute.org](http://www.johnknoxinstitute.org)

Rev. Jonathan Mattull is minister of the gospel at Sovereign Grace Presbyterian Church, in St. Louis, Missouri, a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), Presbytery of the United States of America.

[stlpresbyterian.org](http://stlpresbyterian.org)

# *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—*Question 43*
32. The Ten Commandments: Love for God—*Questions 45 thru 48*
33. The Ten Commandments: Love for God's Worship—*Question 49 thru 52*
34. The Ten Commandments: Love for God's Name—*Questions 53 thru 56*
35. The Ten Commandments: A Day for Holy Love—*Questions 57 thru 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—*QQ 73–75*

# *The Shorter CATECHISM*

## VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

*by Rev. Jonathan Mattull*

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*

## VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

by Rev. Jonathan Mattull

### Lecture #20

## The Humiliation of Christ

**Question 27:** *Wherein did Christ's humiliation consist?*

**Answer:** *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.*

We have seen that our Redeemer is the eternal Son of God. We've seen that he took upon himself a true body and a reasonable soul at his incarnation. We've also seen that he serves as Prophet, Priest, and King, and this is to save his people. The next two Questions summarize his service to us. The Question before us speaks of his *humiliation*, and the next speaks of his *exaltation*.

But one word I want you to think about before we go further into this lesson is the word "humiliation." This word refers to being brought low. If someone humbles himself, he makes himself low in his own eyes, and in the eyes of others. So when we speak of Christ's humiliation, we're referring to Christ making himself low.

It's important to remember that as he humbled himself, he served as Prophet, Priest, and King. He did not become our Prophet, Priest, or King after his humiliation. Instead, he served as our Prophet, Priest, and King throughout his humiliation. Of course, he continues to serve in his threefold office, as we'll see. But remember that he served as Prophet, Priest, and King throughout the time of his humiliation. In the next lesson, we get to think about his exaltation, that is, his rising up in glory.

But now, let's look at Question #27 from the Catechism. Question: "Wherein did Christ's humiliation consist?" And the Answer: "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."

We want to consider this in three ways. The first is Christ Voluntarily Humbled Himself; the second, is Christ Truly Humbled Himself; and the third, Christ Temporarily Humbled Himself.

So first then for our lesson, Christ Voluntarily Humbled Himself. The Bible shows us that Christ willingly, or voluntarily, humbled himself. He was not forced to humble himself against his will. Instead, we read and sing of his delighting to humble himself, when we take up Psalm 40, verses 7 and 8. These are Christ's words, and he says, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Well, Hebrews 10, verses 5 through 7, quotes this Psalm, and it adds to this, in Hebrews 10, and verse

10, explaining this as the voluntary work of Christ.

Notice, “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” This helps us see that it was by his voluntary humiliation—“By the which will.” He willed to do it. He desired to do it. And because of his desire taking this up, it’s then that we who believe in him are saved. If Christ did not willingly suffer, his people would never have been saved. Paul tells us the same truth, in Philippians 2, and verse 7. Speaking of Christ, he says, “But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” We’ll talk more about this, but for now, notice the beginning of this verse, “made himself.” He was not humbled by someone else, or some force outside of him. He was not in the strictest sense a victim to the desire of others. Instead, as the Bible teaches, he humbled himself. This tells us that Christ, our Savior, came willingly, and even that he came gladly. He entered upon the work to save his people because he delighted to do so. All that he endured, he endured willingly. And we see what he was willing to do in this next point coming up. This should strike us as truly amazing.

So the second thing, Christ Truly Humbled Himself. The Catechism emphasizes the steps of his humiliation, and each of these demonstrates the reality that Christ truly humbled himself. It’s not that he just pretended to do it. It’s not just that he said he would humble himself, or that others thought he did. But each step shows that he was truly brought low. You maybe ask why we should take any time to consider each of these steps. Well, there are many reasons, two of which we can at least note. The first is that by considering these steps, we better see and know the love of Christ, because we’re seeing the steps he took for us. The second is that we learn that Christ spared no aspect of our misery in saving us. He did not flinch from any of what our sin brought us to face. We can think of each of these steps as steps downward in his humiliation.

The first step of his humiliation is that he was born. Now, this is true of all humanity. Every one of us has been born. The only two humans who were not born were the first two—Adam and Eve. The greatest kings began as a child. The richest and most influential began in the same way. So why then is this a part of Christ’s humiliation? Well, it’s a part of his humiliation because it was the Son of God who was conceived and born as a human. This is part of what we considered in our earlier question, “How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?” Well, we should never forget this amazing truth. The eternal Son of God, who made all things, who upholds all things, who is worshipped together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, as the one true eternal God, he humbled himself to be born as a man.

That’s not all. The second step—his birth was in the low condition. Perhaps we would think that he, being the Son of God, should be born in a palace, or to a wealthy family. Of course, even this would be infinitely beneath what he, as the eternal Son of God, deserves. Yet it would somehow make a little bit more sense in our mind how to think of the circumstances of his birth as the Scriptures record them. His first bed was a manger, or a feeding trough for farm animals. He was born to a rather poor family. He did not have a privileged upbringing of wealth and outward comforts. He humbled himself, not only in being born, but being born in a low condition.

Well, the third step—he was born under the law. This is explicitly stated in Galatians 4, and verse 4. Paul writes, “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” Now this is an amazing truth. The eternal Son of God who gave the law to men, that they would obey him, now became a subject to that law to obey it. When those who ought to have obeyed it rebelled against it, he himself became man to obey it in their place. Notice how Paul continues this thought, in Galatians 4, and verse 5, “To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” He humbled himself under the law to

obey the law so that his people would then be saved.

Well, the fourth step—he underwent the miseries of this life. When he entered the world, he did not hide from any trouble or avoid any misery. If he was to save his people who had fallen into an estate of sin and misery, he must enter that world. He did so in love. You see this as you read of his life as recorded throughout the Gospels. And notice this prophetic summary in Isaiah 53, verses 3 and 4: “He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” On one occasion, he spoke of part of that misery. He said, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Luke 9:58). He was sustained by the kindness and hospitality of others. His whole life was one of enduring misery. Why? In order to save his people, who had entered this misery by their sin. Think of this: they entered this misery by their sin; he entered this misery because of his love to them.

Well, the fifth step—he endured the wrath of God. The wrath of God is God’s just anger against those who sin. How could Christ, the Son of God, take up the wrath of God? He had never sinned. He had never done what was wrong. In fact, he had only done what was right. This is true, but in his humiliation, he became the substitute for his sinful people. Notice how Paul expresses this in 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, and verse 21. It says, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Christ was charged, credited with the sins of his people. Moreover, he willingly accepted this exchange. This is why he suffered God’s wrath. The anguish he endured is beyond our ability fully to understand. You can see him in agony, bearing God’s wrath in Gethsemane. He sweat, in grief, as it were, blood. And you can see it most fully on the cross, his cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). The wrath of God was truly, and justly, and fully poured out upon him. And he, with knowledge, willingly took this upon himself. He humbled himself to endure this. And why?—so that his beloved people would be forgiven and accepted, so that they would be saved.

And the sixth step—he was made a curse. The Catechism says he endured “the cursed death of the cross.” Indeed, we’ve already seen something of this, but notice how Paul states it in Galatians 3, and verse 13: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.” Christ was nailed to the cross, not for sentimental or emotional lessons. Rather, he was nailed there as a curse. We sinned and deserve to be cursed ourselves, but Christ became a curse for his people. He took on himself the judgment of God against his people. This then is that Savior who willingly humbled himself. Were he not to have been made a curse, his people must face that curse of God forever.

Well, the seventh step—he was buried. This is an important part of his humiliation. “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), which includes, not only temporal, and spiritual, but even eternal death. We ought not overlook the temporal, the bodily death. Christ truly died. His body was truly buried. He did not merely faint, or pass out. He did not enter into a coma. The Scriptures indicate that he truly died, and his burial is a testimony of that fact. In doing so, as some have said, he has sanctified the tomb for the believer. The grave is now, as it were, a resting place for the bodies of those who died in faith in Christ. This burial was part of the misery that we deserve. He entered that misery and took it upon himself. He did so that his believing people would need not fear the grave, for our Savior has been there. And as we will see, he has conquered the grave by his resurrection.

Well, the eighth step—he remained under death for a time. This is an amazing thought as well. The human body of the Lord and the giver of life remained lifeless for a season. This reminds us



that though some of his people have been buried for a very long time, they are not lost or forgotten. Just as he remained under the power of death, but ultimately conquered it in his resurrection, so his people, who remain under the power of death, will be raised by his power.

So before moving to our third point, notice that there is great benefit in meditating on each of these steps. And as you do, asking, “What does it mean? What did he do?” But also asking, “Why did he do it?” And you’ll find in that question of “Why” two things: because his people deserved to have misery by their sin; and the second is, because he would save his people from their misery by his grace.

Well, third, Christ Temporarily Humbled Himself. We don’t need to be long with this point. We get to think of it more fully in the next lesson when we take up his exaltation. But for now we want to make this simple clarification. Christ’s humiliation turned into his exaltation. He went as low as we saw, and indeed, in the brief time that we’ve considered it, we’ve only touched upon the depths of his agony and misery. However, his humiliation is not the end of the story. We get to learn more about this in the Question regarding his exaltation. But for now, simply notice this, as our Catechism says, “he remained under the power of death for a time.” He’s not dead still. He’s not any long under the power of death. He was brought under the power of death, but that’s not the end of the story. Rather, the story continues with his conquering death, as he conquered sin and Satan. His humiliation ended with his resurrection, when he arose from the dead in power and glory. And the one who humbled himself did so for a purpose to save his people. And he did save them, victoriously. His humiliation, we can think of it as a thing of the past, because he’s now exalted in heaven above, and what’s more is, he’s awaiting the full manifestation of that exaltation when he returns in glory.

So it’s right for us to read through the Bible and to consider these truths as we are in the Catechism, and to be struck by the wonder of such great love that would cause him willingly to endure such agony and misery in his humiliation. But we shouldn’t close the book where it is that he dies, or close the book where it is that he’s buried. Even as the Gospels cause us to see. If you read through the Gospels you’ll see this point. The end of this good news, as it were, is with the resurrection, and the testimony of his exaltation. And so, let us ever remember that he who humbled himself is now, and ever shall be, exalted.

Well, let me close with some points of application. First, thinking upon Christ’s humiliation provides us great comfort, because we’ve sinned, and we live in a world of misery. Your miseries may be many. They may be more than mine. They may be deeper than mine. But whatever the case, each of us has some experience of misery. Christ’s miseries were full. For the believer, this gives great comfort. Notice Hebrews 4, verses 14 through 16, “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Because Christ faced the same miseries we do, we have a High Priest who knows our sorrows. Yet, because Christ overcame those temptations and miseries, he’s able to provide us help that by him, we may face them with hope and the assurance of ultimate victory by his grace.

Well, second, this also reminds us of the great love of Christ Jesus. What a great display of the love of Christ his humiliation is. He knew all the miseries he must face. He knew the shame, and the reproach that he would endure. He knew the misery he would experience, every aspect of it—every lash upon his back; every thorn upon his head; every word of reproach that pierced his

ear and, through it, his soul; the darkness of the clouds above him; the agony of the cross; even the turning away of his disciples; and ultimately, his being made a curse, his death on the cross, and his burial. And yet, he willingly entered upon each and every one of them with love to his people.

Well, third, let me challenge anyone who may not yet have trusted in Jesus Christ. Because when you consider what Christ endured, the shame, the misery, the agony, the wrath placed upon him in his humiliation, what you witness is what sinners deserve. It's true, Christ did not deserve any of this personally, but his people did, and he endured it because his people deserved that misery, that he would save them. If he had not suffered, they must suffer. So when you see the agony of Christ, you get a picture of what a sinner deserves. You get a picture of what hell is. This is what sinner's deserve. This is what you and I deserve because of our sins, and it is what everyone who refuses to trust in Christ will experience for all eternity upon their death. We see then the necessity of fleeing to Christ. He alone is our hope.

Well, fourth, let me encourage all who have trusted in Christ. Christ has gone before you. He has faced every misery in this world there is to face, and he then is able to sustain you when you face trials and afflictions. He is your great High Priest. He is on the throne of grace for you. Remember this. He who humbled himself is now exalted. We get to look at that more in the next lesson, but one thing we should say is this—if you have trusted in Christ, you will share in his exaltation, because he humbled himself for you. This world of misery is not your end. You have a world of glory to come, all because Christ humbled himself for us. Surely then, believer, here is cause for you and for me to praise our God for Christ Jesus, and to look to Christ, who humbled himself for us, in faith, knowing that he who has overcome is able to make us overcome, and to share with him in his glory by his grace as well.