

# Westminster Larger Catechism

## Question 38

Halifax, 20 April 2008

### **Q. 38 Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be God?**

- A. It was requisite that the Mediator should be God, that He might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God, and the power of death; give worth and efficacy to His sufferings, obedience, and intercession; and to satisfy God's justice, procure His favour, purchase a peculiar people, give His Spirit unto them, conquer all their enemies, and bring them to everlasting salvation.**

#### **Introduction:**

Truly, there is no one like our Mediator, Jesus Christ!

- Over the last two weeks we have looked at the fact that He is the only Mediator between God and man because He alone is God and man!
  - He alone is able to represent us to God and God to us.
  - He alone was constituted with two natures—
    - the divine nature and the human nature.
- Furnishing a Mediator like this is something that no human being could have ever dreamed up!
  - To have God the Son Himself, who cannot change as to His nature,
    - take to Himself, in addition to His divine nature, a human nature...
    - That the eternal Word should become flesh and come to dwell among us.
      - It is unfathomable to suppose that God Almighty would ever do such a thing!
      - Yet, this is exactly what His Word declares to us that He did do.
- Last week I showed you how the Son, who already existed, became flesh.
  - Somehow, He had to be related to the human race...
    - Therefore, He could not be a separate creation—
      - He could not be a man made independently of other men.
      - Somehow, He had to come from our substance—
        - He had to be true relative...
        - He had to truly be one of us if He was going to represent us...
          - plus, it had been prophesied that He would be the seed of the woman as well as a descendent of Abraham and David.

- Yet, as He was a pre-existing person,
  - He could not be a new person as when a man and woman conceive a child...
    - Then it would not be the Son of God coming, but a new person being brought forth of human conception.
    - Moreover, such a person would, as with all of us, acquire the sin of Adam.
  
- And so, to avoid all this, we saw last week that the Son of God became flesh by a special act of the Holy Spirit.
  - The Spirit formed a body and human spirit for Him in the womb and of the substance of the virgin Mary.
  - Perhaps this was something like the way that God made Eve, not from the dust of the ground, but from the rib of Adam...
    - By this means, she was truly of his substance and so related to him rather than a separate creation.
  - A human body and human spirit was created in Mary which body and spirit was animated by none other than the second person of the Trinity...
    - Thus in Mary's child, we have a true man whose personality is that of the Son of God, the Son of God with all the limitations of humanity—not sinful humanity, but humanity.
      - He is truly what we are, yet still, He is the Son of God.
      - He did not give up His divine nature, for He could not do that, but He took to Himself another nature—ours...
        - and so here He is, the Son of God in human flesh.
        - Our perfect mediator—
          - fully God and fully man.

And now this week, we want to look at why it was necessary that the one who was to redeem us should be God.

- Next week, we will look at why it was necessary for Him to be man, but this week, at why it was necessary for Him to be God.
- As the catechism puts it,
  - Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be God?

For our scripture reading, I have selected Hebrews 9:11-15 because this gets at the very heart of our question.

READ> Hebrews 9:11-15.

**I. You can see in this passage that the superiority of Christ is being described!**

- He is being contrasted to the priests who served under the old covenant.
- A. And the thing that is superior about Him is that He has obtained eternal redemption for those who are His people (for those whom He serves as High Priest).
  1. Look at verse 12
    - **Hebrews 9:12: “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”**
    - You see that it says that He has obtained “eternal redemption.”
      - It is not just a temporary redemption, but an eternal one.
  2. Verse 13 acknowledges that the priests under the old covenant were able to purify the worshippers according to the flesh...for fleshly service at the tabernacle.
    - That was a temporary redemption.
    - They were able to fit people for the service of the tabernacle or temple...
      - With the sacrifices appointed by God,
        - there was an expiation made to purify the worshipper so that he could come to worship God in the temple made with human hands...
          - The temple that was a copy of eternal realities.
            - It was a symbolic representation of God and of the sacrifices required to purify sinners.
            - It was a representative or symbolic cleansing for symbolic worship.
            - It was a redemption that fit them for this symbolic service.

TRANS> But **eternal redemption** is something altogether different!

- B. What is this “eternal redemption” that Christ accomplished for us by means of His sacrifice?
- This was the redemption that actually fits you to come into God’s very presence!
    - There are two ways that Christ’s redemption makes us fit.
  - 1. First, this is the redemption that enables you, though sinners, to be assured that you are no longer condemned—that all your sins have been purged!
    - Verse 14 speaks about this.

- **Hebrews 9:14: “how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”**
- “A conscience cleansed from dead works to serve the living God” is a conscience that can freely come to God because its sins have all been taken care of...
  - You can come boldly because you know Jesus’ blood has been shed to atone for all of your sins and that His blood is sufficient to pay the price that God demands.
- a. You know, redemption refers to the payment of a price.
  - For example, if someone sold their land to pay a debt, and later came into some money, that person could go and redeem his land...
    - He could redeem it by paying the price of it—
      - In this way, he would buy it back.
    - He could do the same thing if he were a slave...
      - If a rich relative came along and he was willing to pay the price,
        - he could buy them out of slavery—
        - That was called redeeming them.
    - So redemption refers to the payment of a price...
  - b. And in our text, redemption refers to payment of Christ’s blood to atone for our sin.
    - And what is being said here is that this atonement, this redemption by the blood of Christ,
      - is surely adequate to cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.
      - When you know that it is the blood of Christ that has been shed for you,
        - you know that there is no more condemnation for you.
        - He has redeemed you—not just for service at the temple—
          - but forever before God...
          - And that leads to the next point about eternal redemption...
- 2. Secondly, eternal redemption is the redemption that actually secures to you an everlasting inheritance in God’s own house.
  - a. This is brought out in verse 15...

- **Hebrews 9:15:** “And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”
- b. You see how this verse speaks of an eternal inheritance...
- Eternal redemption for an eternal inheritance.
  - Jesus, by the offering of His blood—by eternal redemption—has secured to us this eternal inheritance.
    - This is eternal life—an inheritance in heaven in God’s house.
    - It is, as Peter describes it, an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that will never fade away reserved for you in heaven.
- c. This verse points out that this eternal inheritance was not only secured for us who live after the sacrifice of Christ,
- but also for those who lived under the old covenant.
  - They did not have the privilege, while on earth, of serving God with the cleansed conscience with which we now serve Him...
    - They had the promises,
      - but as Christ had not yet been offered, it was not possible for them to look upon the sacrifice that had been made and enjoy the comfort that comes from knowing that Christ has offered His own blood for our redemption.
    - They will obtain the benefit of the eternal inheritance, just as we will,
      - but they did not have the benefit of seeing what was done to secure it.

TRANS> So you see that this eternal redemption is far superior to the ceremonial purifications of the priests under the old covenant.

- It is the redemption that actually reconciles us to God and that actually secures to us everlasting life in God’s household.

## II. What is it that makes Christ’s offering so superior to the OT offerings?

A. It is because He offered His own blood, and it was by this that He entered into heaven to intercede for us, and He is the Son of God!

1. Verse 12 makes this comparison:

- **Hebrews 9:12:** “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”

- This is none other than the blood of Christ who is the Son of God.
2. What makes Jesus' blood so significant is that it is the blood of the One who is the Son of God.
    - a. Hebrews is a book that you very much have to read in context.
      - You can't just take little bits and pieces of it.
      - All the way from chapter 1, the author has been showing the superiority of Christ as our redeemer.
    - b. In fact, take a look at chapter 1, for it is here—right from the outset—that he shows that Christ is none other than God!
      - 1) In verse 1 & 2,
        - he explains how God has now spoken by His Son through whom also He made the worlds.
        - Clearly, this is no ordinary man—for He was around when God made the world and was Himself the one who made it.
        - In verse 3, He is said to be the one who also upholds all things by the word of His power.
          - Only God could do that.
      - 2) Then when you come to verse 5-6, we see that He is called God's Son and that the angels are commanded to worship Him.
        - God would never have commanded them to worship the Son unless He also is God.
3. The reason the blood of Christ is so powerful, therefore, is because of who Christ is!
  - a. He is the Son of God who has come in human flesh.
    - In verse 13-14, it is compared to the blood of bulls and goats that can only purify the flesh...
      - and it is said that this blood of Christ can cleanse us before God because it is the blood of Christ offered through the eternal spirit...
        - From the translation here, it sounds like it speaks of the Holy Spirit,
        - but more likely it refers to the spirit of Christ,
          - through **His** eternal spirit...
          - This offering of Christ is compared to fleshly offerings of this creation...

- His offering is eternal.
  - b. The person who offered Himself for our sins is none other than the eternal Son of God.
    - This being so, His sacrifice takes on an infinite value!
      - It is able to do what no other sacrifice can do!
- B. Such a sacrifice was demanded because of the greatness of our offence which had to be atoned for.
1. Remember what we have seen in previous catechism studies?
    - a. The apostasy of the human race not only brought God's wrath and curse upon us in this life—
      - it also made us subject to eternal condemnation—to Hell.
    - b. We have a hard time with this I know...
      - We think we don't deserve such a great punishment...
      - But we are not able to judge rightly about this because we are so familiar with our sin...
        - As sinful human beings...
          - who continually come short of God's glory...
          - and who live in the midst of a people who continually come short of God's glory,
            - we just don't see the magnitude of our sin.
      - We even have a problem seeing our sin against each other at times...
        - A group of children can be happily in rebellion together until their mother comes into the room and sees them.
          - In their own minds, they have justified the fact that they have opened all the paint cans in the closet and are happily spreading colours on their mother's new carpet.
            - In fact, they are having great fun!
            - It's not until she walks in that it suddenly dawns on them that they were not authorised to do this!
              - They knew it when they first went at it, but after everything got underway and they were all in it together, it seemed okay.
    - That's much the way every human being is...

- Abortion used to be looked at as an unspeakable thing that anyone would be terribly ashamed of...now it is acceptable...
  - A couple living together outside of marriage was also looked at with shame—now that is fully acceptable...
  - In a cannibalistic society, eating your enemies is perfectly acceptable.
- But how much more is it the case that we have a hard time seeing the demerit of our apostasy from God.
    - It is hard for us to see clearly because we are all involved in it.
    - We are so used to it that the enormity of it is lost on us.
  - But on the day of judgement when we are called to stand before our Creator,
    - Then we will clearly see the depth of our sin...
    - Then we will see that we have sinned against a God of infinite glory and that our sin is deserving of nothing less than eternal punishment.
2. This is the reason that our Mediator had to be God if He was going to redeem us!
- a. His sacrifice had to deal with sin of infinite demerit, and the only one who could provide an atonement of such worth was God Himself.
    - If our sins were to be borne, He Himself had to bear them.
    - And that is precisely what the Son of God did.
    - No one else could do it.
    - No one else could obtain eternal redemption.
      - No one else was worthy.
        - Is this not what the inhabitants of heaven celebrate in Revelation when the Lamb of God appears?
        - **Rev 5:12: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!”**
  - b. What makes His sacrifice of such value is the fact that the one who was rejected was the Son of God—a person of such dignity and excellence.
    - 1) For Him, bearing the shame and penalty of sin was far more despicable than it would be for any of us.
      - His love for and attachment to His Father is far greater than that of even the most holy of men...



- and so for Him to be charged with all our offences and to have His Father turn away was equal to an eternity in Hell for us.
  - It was a sacrifice of eternal value which He was willing to make for the glory of His Father...
    - that the justice of the Father might be declared...
    - and for the good of His people—that they might be fully forgiven.
- 2) Besides this, for Him to bear our iniquities, it also meant that He, who was deserving of all honour and glory,
- willingly set aside His glory in order to take to Himself our flesh and go to the cross.
  - For One of such royal majesty and dignity to stoop so low in obedience to the Father also makes that obedience and that sacrifice of infinite worth.
    - It is truly an expression of unfathomable love such as the Son of God has for His Father.
    - His love for the Father has no limits or boundaries.
- c. So you see than that if He had not been God, His sacrifice would have been inadequate to atone for our sins.
- Only the sacrifice of the infinite Son of God was sufficient to cover our sins and accomplish eternal redemption for us.
  - The sacrifice of any lesser one could not have done the job.
    - God is too holy to accept anything less, and our sin is too great for anything less to be acceptable.
    - None but the Son of God could have borne up under these punishments...
      - None but the Son of God would have had sufficient love to endure them...
      - None but the Son of God could have satisfied God's wrath and curse.
  - Be sure that you are resting in Him, for you do not want to bear your own sin on the day of judgement that required the blood of the Son of God...
    - and if you are resting in Him, see that you grow more and more in gratitude as you go on in the Christian life!
    - When you get to heaven and you fully understand the magnitude of what He has done,
      - your gratitude will go off the chart!

TRANS> This is the main reason our Mediator had to be God.

- But there are also...

### III. A few other reasons that our Mediator had to be God.

- These other reasons are essential in more of a secondary way...
  - What I mean is,
    - when we speak of the atonement that Christ made, it was absolutely necessary for Him to be God...
    - but in these other matters that we look at now,
      - it was essential if He was to have the ability to do the work that He had been called to do...

A. First, that He might bring His word to us with divine power.

1. In order to be saved, as God has arranged things, we must hear the voice of the Son of God.
  - **John 10:16: “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.”**
  - We must hear His call to us that breaks through all our sin and deception and brings the light of His truth to bear upon us.
  - It is a divine act every bit as much as His act of creation that caused light to shine in the darkness was a divine act.
    - If He were not God, His call would not be able to bring life to all His elect.
2. Now it is true that He uses the ministers that He has sent out to preach His word...
  - And it is also true that His Spirit works to work faith in all those who believe that they may hear and believe the Word and so be united to Christ...
    - That is all true, but none of this is done without the personal agency of the Son of God.
    - He, by divine power, is active in the calling of every one of His sheep so that they hear His voice and are saved.
      - Preachers work, and the Spirit works, but the work itself is the work of the Son of God.

B. Second, He must be God that He might intercede for us with omniscient understanding...

1. His intercession is not vague, general intercession such as a mere man is capable of.
    - His is a personal intercession that is deeply and personally acquainted with all of His peoples' trials and temptations...
    - He knows when we are in danger, as Peter was when He denied Him,
      - and He prays for us in our time of need—that our faith will not fail...
      - And He also intercedes for us when we cry out to Him in our time of need.
        - He is a priest who is always available to help us.
  
  2. But of course, such intimate knowledge of millions of people all in need of His help at the same time would be impossible if He were not God.
    - You can be assured and deeply comforted that your Mediator is praying for you personally on the merit of His sacrifice.
      - and that He also hears all of your prayers.
      - The human nature is not capable of this, but the divine nature makes it possible for Him to be personally active for us all.
- C. Third, our Mediator must be God in order that He might judge the world with equity at the last day...
1. All judgement has been given to the Son.
    - In John 5 He says that the Father judges no one but has committed all judgement to the Son, that all should honour the Son just as they honour the Father.
      - Then in John 5:28-29, He says:
        - **John 5:28-29: “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”**
  
  2. Now we know that none but God is able to judge...
    - If Jesus were not the Son of God, He would not be able to judge.
    - It would be impossible for Him to even know who all had believed in Him,
      - much less to know the secrets of every person's heart.
      - But as God, He is able to fulfill this aspect of His work as our mediator.
  
  3. As judge, it is He who comes at the last day in glory to separate the sheep from the goats,

- and it is by His command and power that those who are His are given rest and are perfected,
- and that those who are not His are cast into the Lake of Fire forever and ever so that heaven will not be polluted with anything that defiles.

TRANS> You see these three additional reasons that our mediator had to be God.

- It is true that if He had not been God, this work might have been done by another...
  - unlike the work of the cross which could not have been done by any but Him who was both God and man...
  - But as Mediator who was God and man,
    - the work of calling, intercession, and judgement were given to Him that we might know Him as our own dear Saviour.
- But be it known of a certainty that there would be no cross with power to save if our Mediator were not divine.
  - Let us bow humbly before Him with the deepest gratitude and rest with confidence in the efficacy of His blessed sacrifice.
  - Surely if the blood of bulls and goats can sanctify to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through His eternal spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
    - Surely through Him, we who are called receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

### **Conclusion...**

This is what sets the truth apart from every other religion...

- We have the Son of God crucified to atone for our sins...
  - Every other religion denies that we need so great a sacrifice to reconcile us to God and so also denies that such a sacrifice has been provided...
  - Even within the pale of the visible church,
    - the modernists and the liberals deny the eternity of Hell and along with the divinity of the Son...
    - And it will soon be that those so-called evangelicals who deny the eternity of Hell will also deny the divinity of the Son...
      - A divine Saviour is not needed to save us from mere temporal punishment, and if He is not needed, He will soon be denied as He has been by the modernists and liberals.

See to it, then that you hold fast to the true faith with humble gratitude,

- recognising that it was necessary for none other than God's Son to die if you were to be saved.
- Take this gospel to the ends of the earth!