

Westminster Larger Catechism

Question 39

Halifax, 4 May 2008

Q. 39 Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be Man?

- A. It was requisite that the Mediator should be man, that He might advance our nature, perform obedience to the law, suffer and make intercession for us in our nature, have a fellow feeling of our infirmities; that we might receive the adoption of sons and have comfort and access with boldness unto the throne of grace.**

Introduction:

Our sermon series in the Larger Catechism has brought us to consider the person of Jesus Christ, our Mediator.

- I am very pleased at the way the Larger Catechism has so very much to say about Him.

Several weeks ago, we were introduced to Christ as the only Mediator of God's elect.

- And since that time, we have been looking at unique He is...
 - He is the only one who is qualified to redeem us because He alone is both God and man—one person with two entire distinct natures.
 - Last time we saw why our Mediator must be divine...
 - As the catechism says,
 - LC-38: "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 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 to them, conquer all their enemies, and bring them to everlasting salvation."
 - And this time we are going to look at why our Mediator must be human.
 - LC-39: "It was requisite that the Mediator should be man, that He might advance our nature, perform obedience to the law, suffer and make intercession for us in our nature, have a fellow feeling of our infirmities; that we might receive the adoption of sons and have comfort and access with boldness unto the throne of grace."

For our scripture reading, I have selected two portions from the book of Hebrews...

- READ>

- Hebrews 2:1-18;
- Hebrews 4:14 – 5:11.

I. See how Jesus, having become man, advances our nature.

- We are fallen from the glory in which we were at first created, but Jesus, by becoming man, is able to advance our nature to its proper place in two respects:

A. First, He restores the dominion that we lost in the fall (Hebrews 2:5-9)

1. At creation, God gave us dominion over all things...
 - a. We were called to subdue the earth from which we were taken.
 - b. But in the fall, our dominion was taken away.
 - The ground from which we were taken now swallows us up—
 - We toil by the sweat of our brow...
 - Then we return to dust.
2. But look at what it says about the Lord Jesus, coming in our flesh...
 - a. Everything is supposed to be under the dominion of man...
 - **Heb 2:5-8: For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But one testified in a certain place, saying: “What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet.” For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.**
 - Everything is supposed to be under mankind, but everything is not under him.
 - “Now we do not yet see all things put under him...”
 - b. But we see Jesus, the man Jesus, exalted over all things!
 - When He was here, He showed that nature itself was subject to Him...as He went about healing and casting out Satan!
 - And then after He died, He was crowned with glory and honour (v. 9)
 - **Heb 2:9: But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.**
 - He was seated at God’s right hand (as a man) with dominion over all things—all things will be brought under His feet.

- It was only because He tasted death that He was able to do this.
 - This is what is brought out in Philippians 2.
 - Our nature could not be restored to its place of dominion until there was an obedient man who was worthy of such a place...
 - and He could not be worthy of such a place until He had obeyed even to the point of death...
 - Now He is exalted **in our flesh** (that's what's so special about it!) so that dominion is restored to us...
 - That means that the earth will once again be under us instead of over us.
 - There will be no more sickness or death or vain labour.

B. Second, He restores us again as a true worshipping people (Hebrews 2:10-13)

1. In the beginning, Adam and Eve had communion with God...
 - a. They were able to hear His voice and they were able to praise Him with acceptable praise...
 - By acceptable praise, I mean that their praise was worthy of Him—it was the praise that was due to Him...
 - It is a most marvellous thing to be able to praise God as He ought to be praised—
 - to see His glory and to speak of it as we should and to delight in it as we should!
 - Oh brothers and sister, there is no greater bliss than this!
 - It was our glory to be His worshippers and admirers and to hear His voice!
 - b. But you know what happened to us in the fall...
 - We lost all that.
 - We became dull so that His voice was no longer clear to us—
 - it was all muddled and distorted because of our sin so that the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him.
 - The god of this world blinded our minds lest we should see the light of the glory of God.
 - And no longer being able to see the glory of God,
 - We were no longer able to worship Him as we should...

- How sad—this was our greatest loss in the fall!
 - This was the end of all true happiness...
 - Our nature was fallen into ruin.
2. But then Jesus came, and by His sufferings for us, brings us to glory!
- a. That is what it says in verse 10
 - **Hebrews 2:10: For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.**
 - He restores us to glory.
 - b. He is able to do this because He joined Himself to us by the incarnation—
 - He joined Himself to us in our ruined estate so that He might raise us up to a glorious estate...
 - He is not ashamed to call us brethren because He raises us up to glory... He sanctifies us to God...
 - That's what it says in verse 11:
 - **Hebrews 2:11: For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,**
 - c. So now that we have been restored to God through His sufferings,
 - He declares God's name to us—He reveals the glory of God to us...
 - And having revealed God's glory, He then leads us in offering praise to God!
 - That's what it says in verse 12.
 - **Hebrews 2:12: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You."**
 - d. You see in verse 13 that He calls us the children that God has given Him.
 - We are restored (or being restored) as God's true worshippers through Christ.
 - In our flesh—as a man—He has communion with God and He brings all of His seed into that same communion forever and ever...
 - Now we are able to hear God's voice and to praise Him as we ought...
 - or at least, we being made able to do that!
 - He restores us from our miserable fallen condition to communion with God.

So you see how He, being man, is able to advance our nature that had fallen,

- restoring our dominion over all things and restoring our true communion with God so that we hear His voice and bring acceptable praise to Him!
- How glad you should be that Jesus was not only God, but also man!

TRANS> Now I want you to see further...

II. How Jesus, having become man, is able to appease God's wrath for us.

A. He became what we are so that He might die for us and so destroy death...

1. By our sin, we sold ourselves out to Satan and became captive to him...

- He glories in our sin and the death that it brings upon us...
- He glories in our destruction, and delights in accusing us before the Father night and day, insisting that we must die.
 - This is what is at the root of verses 14-15
 - **Hebrews 2:14-15: Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.**

2. But you see the glorious work of our redeemer for us...

a. He became flesh and blood in order that He Himself might die a human death in our place...

- And that by dying our death, He might destroy death as well as the Devil who glories in our death.
 - He broke the bondage and set us free.
 - He took away all the grounds by which Satan accuses us.

b. As long as there was no Redeemer who could suffer death in our place, Satan could glory that we would never serve God...

- But after our Redeemer died, our Redeemer went up to heaven and cast the accuser of the brethren out of heaven...
 - Satan, whose accusations against us once stood, was now silenced!
 - And so he was cast to earth and all of his angels with him...
 - And we were set free...
 - Death no longer has dominion over us!

TRANS> So Jesus became what we are (flesh and blood under a curse) so that He might destroy death and him that had the power of it—that is, the Devil!

- But this passage goes on to show that the Devil's power over us was not really his own...
 - His power consisted in the fact that he could show us to be transgressors of the law of God and so justly deserving God's wrath...
 - This was all true, and Satan was thrilled that it was true...
 - This is how he could insist that we must die and that we could never serve God.
- But you see,
 - Jesus, by becoming what we are, was able to die *for* us so that we could be accounted to have already died.

B. Jesus became what we are so that He might appease God for us...

1. This is what it speaks about in Heb. 2:16-17.

- **Hebrews 2:16: For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.**
- He became human flesh because He came to save human flesh—
 - He became the seed of Abraham to whom the promise of salvation was made...
 - which seed you are if you believe on the Lord Jesus according to Galatians 3.
 - It says that we are the seed of Abraham through faith in Christ.

2. And you see that the help He gives to us is that He represents us as a priest, and so makes propitiation for us...

- **Hebrews 2:17: Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.**
- Propitiation is that which appeases wrath...
 - And in this case, it is the wrath of God toward sinful human beings—even His elect—that is appeased.
 - This could only be done by one who was Himself human flesh and blood...

And the good news is that He has done it!

- The power of death has been broken by Him!
 - The accuser of the brethren has been cast down!

- Our bondage has been broken!

TRANS> And now, having seen first how Jesus advances our nature and secondly how He appeases God's wrath for us,

- See thirdly...

III. How Jesus, having become man, identifies with us in our weakness.

A. It is a great comfort to know that Jesus, having become man, fully understands our temptations

1. In Hebrews 2:18, it says that because He truly did suffer, He is able to understand our temptations...

- Obedience carried a very high price for Him!
 - Obedience for Him meant that He had to suffer the pains of Hell for us.
 - And of course He recoiled from the very idea of suffering Hell!
 - It meant that He had to bear the shame of our sin and the rejection of His Father!
 - That was the most distasteful, the most horrible thing to Him...
 - His love for the Father was a perfect love—a love that we don't know the thousandth part of...
 - And He had to become an object of displeasure to His Father!
 - He was tempted!
 - He did not want to do it!
 - He pled with the Father that this cup might pass from Him...
 - And all along the way, He had the power to command the angels to take Him off that cross...
 - But He never did!
- He knows all about what it is to obey even when it hurts...
 - But in spite of all the pain, He never sinned.
 - Now this might have made Him arrogant toward us when we give way in our sufferings and temptations...
 - He might say to us:
 - "What's wrong with you?"
 - But not Jesus...

- His sufferings made Him sympathetic toward us.
 - He knows the difficulty of bearing the cross, and He comes to help us rather than to chide us.
2. And because He is a sympathetic priest who knows what it is to be tempted,
- you are encouraged to run to Him in your time of need!
 - The idea of Him being a merciful priest in 2:18 is picked up again in 4:14-16...
 - And we are given this encouragement to come to Him for help.
 - **Heb 4:14-16: Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**
 - Do you see what this is saying?
 - It is saying that He is in our flesh and He understands!
 - Don't be afraid to go to Him in your time of need—don't be ashamed in the struggle!
 - He is there for you and He fully understands the struggle.
 - He has been there Himself and He is eager to help you!
 - He is just waiting to do so.
 - He has gone through it all successfully and now He is there to support you in your trials and temptations...
 - Don't ignore this tremendous assistance!
 - Go to Him with your sins!
 - Go to Him with the stubborn sins!
 - Go to Him in the middle of the temptation!
 - Go to Him for forgiveness!
 - Take your children to Him—every time they sin.
3. Hebrews 5:1-6 goes on to emphasise the fact that because Jesus was a man, He was therefore subject to human weakness,
- He does not chide us when we are weak and ignorant and even when we go astray.
 - Oh yes, He will chide you if you go astray and do not repent...
 - But when you come to Him with your sin—no matter what you may have done...

- and you come with humility as one seeking to change and as one seeking pardon,
 - He will not chide you—not at all!
- He will meet you with open arms...
 - He will welcome you and support you and give you every assistance.
 - He does this even though He, unlike other priests, never sinned...
 - He does it because He has been made a priest to us by God...
 - **Hebrews 5:1-6: For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.” As He also says in another place: “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”**

B. Because Jesus, as a man, learned to pray against His own temptations, He is now able to pray for us in ours (Heb 5:7-11)

1. When He was here, in this fallen world, bearing our infirmities in our flesh, He was, as a man, dependent on the Lord to sustain Him.
 - If He had not prayed, He could not have born up under His trials...
 - His prayers were real prayers—
 - He was the real Israel who had to wrestle in prayer and not let go until He was blessed.
 - That is what He did all His life, and especially on the cross, when He kept on crying out for deliverance when He made Himself an offering for our sins until at last He was heard.
 - This is what you are told in Heb 5:7-8:
 - **Heb 5:7-8: who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.**
2. In this way, He learned what obedience is all about...
 - a. He learned what it is to obey when obedience is the hardest thing in the world!

- b. He learned what it is to pray and to keep on praying in temptation until you are heard.
3. And because He did this and because He is priest,
- He is now able to help us—and He is able to bring us through all of our sin and all of our weakness to eternal salvation.
 - **Hebrews 5:9-10: And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,”**
 - You see, He first learned to pray Himself through temptation, so now, as our priest, He prays us through temptation and sin...
 - And you can be certain that His prayer will not fail!
 - If you are in Christ, you will not sin the sin unto death—you will never fall away because He is actively interceding for you!
 - And He will not stop until at last you too are perfected with Him in heaven.
 - His prayers for you as your priest will prevail...
 - He knows how to do it because He did it for Himself when He bore temptations the like of which none of us have ever seen.
 - This is your confidence my brothers and sisters!

Conclusion:

Oh how thankful we should be such a high priest as our dear Jesus!

- He is a perfect example to us because He truly felt all the difficulties of obeying God in a fallen world.
- Because He came down to us, He is able to bring us up to where He is—
 - We have the sure hope that we will, when He completes His work in us as our priest, be just like Him...
 - not like Him as to His divinity which can never be,
 - but just like Him as to His humanity.
 - You will have, in the context of your own unique personality, a love that is just as deep as His and an obedience that is just as strong.
 - What a wonderful priest He is!
 - Cherish Him with all your heart forever!
 - There is none like Him!