

Foundations of Faith (A Catechism for Today)

Lesson 24 – June 11

The Church

Question 68: Why does the Apostles' Creed emphasize belief "in the holy catholic church"?

It does so to emphasize that the church is essential to Christian belief and practice. The church is holy in that it is set apart by God to be a chosen people in the world. The church is catholic in that it is universal, including all people of all time who affirm the Christian faith. To belong to a congregation is to belong to the holy catholic church.

1 Tim 3:15 The household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.

Eph 4:4-5 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

1 Pet 1:15-16 As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct for it is written, "You shall be holy for I am holy."

1 Cor 3:17, 12:12-31

17 God will destroy anyone who destroys this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

12 The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. 13 Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit. 14 Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. 15 If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? 18 But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. 19 How strange a body would be if it had only one part! 20 Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. 21 The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you." 22 In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. 23 And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, 24 while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. 25 This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. 26 If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. 27 All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it. 28 Here are some of the parts God has appointed for the church: first are apostles, second are prophets, third are teachers, then those who do miracles, those who have the gift of healing, those who can help others, those who have the gift of leadership, those who speak in unknown languages. 29 Are we all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are we all teachers? Do we all have the power to do miracles? 30 Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? Of course not! 31 So you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts. But now let me show you a way of life that is best of all.

1 Pet 2:4-10 You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God's temple. He was rejected by people, but he was chosen by God for great honor. 5 And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God. 6 As the Scriptures say, "I am placing a cornerstone in Jerusalem, chosen for great honor, and anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced." 7 Yes, you who trust him recognize the honor God has given him. But for those who reject him, "The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone." 8 And, "He is the stone that makes people stumble, the rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they do not obey God's word, and so they meet the fate that was planned for them. 9 But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. 10 "Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy."

Ex 19:6 And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.' This is the message you must give to the people of Israel."

Lev. 11:44 For I am the LORD your God. You must consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. So do not defile yourselves with any of these small animals that scurry along the ground.

1 Cor 1:2 I am writing to God's church in Corinth, to you who have been called by God to be his own holy people. He made you holy by means of Christ Jesus, just as he did for all people everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.

Rom 1:7 I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be his own holy people. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Eph 1:1 This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I am writing to God's holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus.

Phil 1:1 This letter is from Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus. I am writing to all of God's holy people in Philippi who belong to Christ Jesus, including the elders and deacons.

Question 69: How does the Bible speak of the church?

The New Testament uses many images, including Bride of Christ, flock, the elect, salt, light, yeast, branches of a vine, living stones, people of God, body of Christ, and fellowship of the Holy Spirit. These all emphasize the union of Christ and his church.

Mt 5:14 You are the light of the world.

Lk 12:32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Jn 15:5 I am the vine, you are the branches.

1 Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you of darkness into his marvelous light.

2 Cor 11:2, 13:13

2 For I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God himself. I promised you as a pure bride to one husband—Christ. All of God's people here send you their greetings.

Mt 5:13, 13:33

13 “You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.

33 Jesus also used this illustration: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough.”

Jn 10:1-16 “I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! 2 But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. 5 They won’t follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don’t know his voice.” 6 Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn’t understand what he meant, 7 so he explained it to them: “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. 9 Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. 10 The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life. 11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. 12 A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don’t belong to him and he isn’t their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. 13 The hired hand runs away because he’s working only for the money and doesn’t really care about the sheep. 14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, 15 just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.

Eph 1:4-6 Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. 5 God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. 6 So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son.

1 Pet 2:4 You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God’s temple. He was rejected by people, but he was chosen by God for great honor.

1 Cor 12:13 Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

Question 70: How is the church related to the “people of God” of the Old Testament?

The biblical image of the “people of God” connects the community of the Old Testament with the community of the New Testament. The church continues and renews the ancient covenant people through Christ’s fulfillment of a new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah. All believers are the people of God.

Jer 31:31, 33 The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah...But this is the covenant that I will make...says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

1 Cor 11:25 This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Heb 8:8-13, 10:16

8 But when God found fault with the people, he said: “The day is coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. 9 This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of the land of Egypt. They did not remain faithful to my covenant, so I turned my back on them, says the LORD . 10 But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day, says the LORD : I will put my laws in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 11 And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, ‘You should know the LORD .’ For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already. 12 And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins.” 13 When God speaks of a “new” covenant, it means he has made the first one obsolete. It is now out of date and will soon disappear.

16 “This is the new covenant I will make with my people on that day, says the LORD : I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.”

Lk 22:20 After supper he took another cup of wine and said, “This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.

2 Cor 3:6 He has enabled us to be ministers of his new covenant. This is a covenant not of written laws, but of the Spirit. The old written covenant ends in death; but under the new covenant, the Spirit gives life.

Rom 9:4, 11:27

4 They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God’s adopted children. God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave them his law. He gave them the privilege of worshiping him and receiving his wonderful promises.

27 And this is my covenant with them, that I will take away their sins.”

1 Pet 2:4-10 You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God’s temple. He was rejected by people, but he was chosen by God for great honor. 5 And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What’s more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God. 6 As the Scriptures say, “I am placing a cornerstone in Jerusalem, chosen for great honor, and anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” 7 Yes, you who trust him recognize the honor God has given him. But for those who reject him, “The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.” 8 And, “He is the stone that makes people stumble, the rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they do not obey God’s word, and so they meet the fate that was planned for them. 9 But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. 10 “Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God’s people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God’s mercy.”