



New City Catechism

STUDY NOTES

QUESTIONS 14 & 15

BOBBIN HEAD
ANGLICAN CHURCH



ST JAMES
TURRAMURRA

NEW CITY CATECHISM Q 14

Q. Did God create us unable to keep his law?

A. No, but because of the disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, all of creation is fallen; we are all born in sin and guilt, corrupt in our nature and unable to keep God's law.

Passage: Romans 5:12

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

Commentary (from NCC)

Abraham Booth

I believe, that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, with all their numerous inhabitants. Last of all, and nobly conspicuous amongst the amazingly diversified productions of his almighty power and infinite skill . . . he created man, and constituted him lord of this lower world. Male and female created he them, after his own image and in his own likeness: upright, innocent, and holy; capable of serving and glorifying their bountiful Creator.

On the same warrant, I believe, that man did not long continue in these holy and happy circumstances; but, being left to the freedom of his own will, he transgressed the law which his Maker and Sovereign had given him; in consequence of which he fell into a state of guilt, depravity, and ruin. And as he was not only the natural but federal head and representative of his unborn posterity, he sinning, all his offspring sinned in him and fell with him, the guilt of his first sin being imputed, and a corrupt nature derived, to all who descend from him by natural generation. Hence it is that all men are by nature the children of wrath; averse to all that is spiritually good, and prone to evil; dead in sin, under the curse of the righteous law and obnoxious to eternal vengeance. From which state of complicated misery there is no deliverance but by Jesus Christ, the second Adam.

David Bisgrove

Being a parent is a wide-open window into the human condition. For example, I'm constantly having to remind and encourage and cajole my young children to say "please" and "thank you" and to share. But I never have to encourage them to say "mine!" or to grab things that don't belong to them or to hoard toys from one another.

Now where does this self-centred impulse come from? The Bible is helpful here because it gives us a vocabulary to talk about why we seem to be born with this self-centred disposition. You see, we're told that when God created Adam and Eve, he created them in his image. That means, among other things, that they reflected his goodness. God affirmed their goodness when he looked at his creation, including Adam and Eve, and said, "It is very good." So Adam and Eve had a perfect relationship with God. They were able to love and obey him perfectly. But then we're told that Satan tempted them with a lie that God isn't good, that he can't be trusted, that real freedom is found apart from God and his law. And so when Adam believed and acted on that lie, Paul tells us in Romans 5, sin entered the world the way a virus enters the body, infecting all mankind from that time on. This is why from my earliest days, and my children's earliest days, and, in the future, their children's earliest days, we all say, "Mine."

Now this doesn't mean that people are devoid of all goodness. We're made in God's image and therefore we're still capable of doing good and beautiful things. But sin has corrupted our ability to love and obey God with our whole hearts, strength, and minds. Sin has infected every part of us, so that we're all born in sin and guilt, corrupt in our nature, and unable to keep God's law.

Consider one example. Imagine a hungry lion, and imagine putting two plates of food in front of him—one a plate of raw red meat, the other a plate of perfectly cooked string beans. The lion can choose either one, but because of his nature he's always going to choose the red meat.

See, when Adam sinned as our representative, our nature became enslaved to sin so that we no longer want or seek God. But when Christ came, he was the second Adam, and where the first Adam failed, the second Adam succeeded. Where the first Adam brought death through his disobedience and selfishness, the second Adam, Jesus Christ, brought life through his obedience and sacrifice on the cross.

GETTING STARTED

1. “Humans are intrinsically good people who do a few bad things”, or “Humans are intrinsically bad people who do a few good things.”

Discuss.

INTO THE TEXT

Read Romans 5:12-21

2. Paul wants us to understand the comparison between two persons in the passage. Who is the comparison between, and why have they been called ‘The first and second Adam’?
3. Outline the career of the first Adam in vv 12-14.
4. Outline the career of the second Adam in vv 14-17.
5. How are Adam and Jesus different?
6. How are Adam and Jesus the same?
7. What is the difference between unity with Adam and unity with Christ (v 17)?

TAKEAWAY

8. How would your friends respond to the idea that we are tied in sin to the first Adam?
9. There is a suggestion that each successive generation of humanity, having developed a higher (accumulated) intelligence and wisdom than the previous, will be better and superior version of those who have gone before.
How do you think the bible supports or denies this claim?

NEW CITY CATECHISM Q 15

Q. Since no one can keep the law, what is its purpose?

A. That we may know the holy nature and will of God, and the sinful nature and disobedience of our hearts; and thus our need of a Saviour. The law also teaches and exhorts us to live a life worthy of our Saviour.

Passage: Romans 3:20

For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Commentary

Charles Simeon

These poor men think they can preach the Gospel without preaching the Law. I say, they must preach the Law, unless they do not mean to preach the Gospel. The Law entered that the offence might abound: proclaim it, I say, for this purpose among your ungodly congregations; lift up your voices like trumpets, and tell the people their transgressions, that you may glorify the more your honoured Master, in proclaiming the infinite riches and fulness of His great salvation. Preach the Law to those who believe, as finished, cancelled, dead for their salvation: point them to Immanuel as holding it in His bleeding hand, and saying to them, "If ye love me, keep my Commandments."

Ligon Duncan

The law of God helps us to know God, know ourselves, know our need, and know the life of peace and blessedness. It helps us to know God because it specifically reveals his character and his attributes, his holy will, what he's like.

Paul tells us in Romans 1 that everyone knows right and wrong. But the law of God very specifically reveals to us God's character and his own moral qualities. Morality is not arbitrary. God doesn't tell us to do arbitrary things. God does not require us to do things that he is not prepared to do himself. So all morality is rooted in God's character. And when we study the law, we see a display of God's character.

God's law also reveals to us ourselves, especially our sinful nature and our disobedience, our inclination to sin. For instance, when Jesus is talking to the rich

young ruler, he says, "Go, sell what you possess, and give to the poor" (Matt. 19:21). And the rich young ruler essentially says to Jesus, "I can't." And he walks away sadly. Now what's going on in that story? Is Jesus saying that we all have to give away all of our possessions? No. But in the case of the rich young ruler, Jesus is revealing to him by the law of God the specific nature of his own sin. What's the first commandment? To have no other gods before me. And there, God in the flesh is saying to the rich young ruler, "What's it going to be? Your money, your possessions, or me, God?" And the rich young ruler chooses something over God, before God. That leads to the third thing that the law helps us with. It helps us to understand our need. When we know who God is, and we know that we don't measure up to his morality and character, when we know who we are, and we know the sinful inclinations of our hearts, it presses us to Jesus, because we know that we have need of a Savior. And the Savior has fulfilled that law. He's obeyed it perfectly, and he's paid the penalty that is due to us for it. The law presses us to the Savior. It points us to the Savior. It takes us to the Savior.

Of course, the law also shows us the life of peace and blessedness. When we think about obedience, many of us immediately think, "Oh, do I have to? Do I have to do good works? Do I have to obey?" That wasn't Jesus's attitude toward God's commands and God's will. In fact, he frequently said to his disciples, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me" (John 4:34). In other words, he was saying that it was like spreading a seven-course banquet in front of him to be able to obey the law of God, the will of God. And once we're redeemed, once we've trusted in Jesus Christ alone for salvation as he has offered in the gospel, the law not only is something that points us to Christ, but it also shows us how to live the life of peace and blessedness.

When God originally gave his commands to Adam and Eve in the garden, he gave those commands to them as blessings. They weren't things upon which his love was contingent. He loved them and blessed them in the garden. And their obedience to the commands was the very sphere in which they enjoyed that blessedness. And when we are saved by Christ, when we are united to Christ, we are able to walk in a manner that is worthy of the gospel. We are to live in a manner that is like the Lord Jesus Christ. And he delighted in obeying God. And so the law of God shows us what that life of peace and blessedness is like. It shows us what it's like to live a life worthy of the gospel once we've trusted in Jesus Christ.

GETTING STARTED

1. It has sometimes been suggested that God's initial plan was salvation through the law. When this did not work, he had to send Jesus.
Would you agree with this assessment?

INTO THE TEXT

Read Galatians 3:16-22

2. What 'law' is being referred to in this passage?
3. How is the law described in relation to the promise to Abraham? Why is this distinction important?
4. Who is at the heart of the promise to Abraham, and how is the promise inheritance received (v 22)?
5. What do you think the phrase 'Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin' means? What is the purpose of this locking up (v 22)?
6. If the law is 'absolutely not' opposed to the promises of God (v 21), what is its place in the Christian life?
7. From Galatians 2:21, what are the implications if we believe that the law can achieve our salvation?

TAKEAWAY

8. Revisit question #1 and see if your answer has changed.
9. How could the law be bad for us? How could the law be good for us?