

Catechetical Sermon, May 5th, 2024

Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 4, "God's Justice, Mercy and Grace"

Scripture Lessons: Genesis 6:9-9:17

Lesson Aim	To understand that because of our original sin and our actual sin, God is just to punish people body and soul in hell. Yet through punishment, God demonstrates His mercy and grace.
Steps to Learning	Read the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 4 and Genesis 6:9-9:17 . Discuss the sermon and the particulars of the lesson below. It may be best to work through the material over several days or sessions.
Discuss	<p>In the sermon we discussed that God, according to the early chapters of Genesis put mankind on trial. What is the offense, verdict/sentence and punishment? The offense is that mankind has sinned. The verdict and sentence are that mankind is guilty and must die. The punishment is that mankind dies and goes to hell.</p> <p>What chapters make it evident that mankind is sinful? Genesis chapters 4 and 6. We read about the actual sins of mankind, which issue forth from original sin (Adam's sin imputed to all people).</p> <p>Mankind, then, is sinful because he breaks the law he cannot keep. Is that fair? Yes, for, according to the Heidelberg catechism question and answer 9, God made man that he could obey it but man, through the instigation of the devil, by willful disobedience deprived himself and all his descendants of this power.</p> <p>According to Genesis chapter 6, God sentences all people to die. What principle does this prove according to the Heidelberg Catechism question and answer 10? God will not allow disobedience and apostasy to go unpunished but will punish people in just judgment in time and eternity.</p> <p>But don't the Scriptures make it clear that God is merciful? According to the Heidelberg Catechism question and answer 11, God is indeed merciful but is likewise just and will punish people body and soul in hell.</p> <p>How is God merciful and gracious to his people according to Genesis chapters 6-9? God has mercy on Noah and his family not drowning them and sending them to hell as they deserve (and we deserve!) but instead gives them grace to be saved through the flood waters in the ark. The ark symbolizes the church that is saved through the waters of baptism, that is, through the Red Sea of Christ's blood. The ark, with its three levels, also symbolizes a cosmic house; the new heavens and earth, New Jerusalem, the glorified people of God who will exist with God forever. This hope and future reality is secured by Jesus Christ, true Noah, who obeyed God perfectly in our place and died in our place only to be raised from the dead for our justification.</p>
Bible Reading	Acts 5-8 [The story of the early church] (covering the great Bible stories)