

Heidelberg Catechism 54– The Holy Catholic Church

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: **New Horizon Church is a part of the holy catholic church. This is not a false claim.** “Catholic” does not mean the religion that is centered in the Vatican, the Roman Catholic Church. The word “catholic” simply means “universal.” (Catholic from “kata” which means “according to” and “holo” which means “whole” or “all.”) God’s church is everywhere. We were produced by Jesus Christ, we are preserved by him, and as a result, we seek to respond how he demands.

I want you to hear God’s Word today about the Holy Catholic Church.

Our headings are:

How the church came into existence

How the church is preserved

How the church is to respond.

Our goals are: **That you will prize your inclusion into the church of Jesus Christ and then seek the glory of the one who produced and preserved her.**

54 Q. WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE CONCERNING “THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH”?

A. I believe that the Son of God, **through his Spirit and Word**, out of the entire human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, **protects, and preserves for himself** a community chosen for eternal life and united in true faith. And of this community I **am and always will be a living member.**

How the Church came into existence

1. The church was made by Jesus Christ himself and he is the head of his church. (Colossians 1:18).

Because the church had strayed from God, Jesus had to restore the church to a right relationship with God. Of course the church is not yet completed in human time. Later, many will come in. But **when Christ suffered, died, and rose again he fully saved his church and adopted her. You are now joint heirs with him.**

John 10:14 "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. 15 "As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and **I lay down My life for the sheep.** 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.

2. The church was made by plan in eternity and in practice in time.

In eternity: She was chosen before the foundation of the world.

In time: Jesus bought her from sin and misery by shedding his own blood on the cross.

Acts 20:28 "...take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God **which He purchased with His own blood.**

So it wasn't the Jewish ethnicity that saved them. It was God's love. Later, God destroyed the wall of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles and merged them into one family. **He loved and saved both Jew and Gentile.**

Ephesians 2:14 For He Himself is our peace, **who has made both one**, and has **broken down the middle wall of separation**, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to **create in Himself one new man from the two**, thus making peace, 16 and that He might **reconcile them both to God in one body** through the cross... 17 And He came and preached peace to you **who were afar off** and to **those who were near**. 18 For **through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.**

His bride, as he said in Songs of Solomon, was joined by her sister.

3. Jesus Christ himself started to spread the news of his shed blood to save his bride.

He spread that promise of his shed blood in the Old Testament and fulfilled it in the New Testament. This was the Gospel.

Genesis 26:3... and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. 4 "And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in **your seed** **all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;**

Old Testament: There were many examples and pictures of Christ's sacrifice in the Old Testament. The whole system of sacrifices pictured Christ's work. Do you remember how God provided a **substitute ram for Abraham** when he was about to sacrifice Isaac? Do you remember when Abraham was put into a deep sleep and saw **the oven passing through the animals cut in two?** That was a picture of Jesus enduring the cross for his church.

New Testament: The New Testament has examples of Jesus building of the church. Consider one example.

Mark 1:14 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, **preaching the gospel of the kingdom** of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. **Repent, and believe in the gospel.**"

4. As a result of the Gospel, the church spread throughout the world...people from every tribe, country, and language.

Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by **Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,**

Don't make the error of thinking the church is here by human strength or by a living contract agreement between members, like the Rotary Club. This is Christ's work. You are privileged to be part of his church. **He sent people to preach to you.** He **worked faith and the desire to repent in your heart.** And continues to give you help to meet your need-hence our next point.

How the church is preserved

1. The Father elected the church, the Son Jesus, Christ redeemed the church, and the Holy Spirit seals the church for eternity.

Whom God saves, he keeps. God makes no mistakes. The preservation of Christ's church is taught throughout the Bible and by Jesus himself. He said these things **as comfort to his church which was going to face severe persecutions after he left.**

John 10:28 "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; **and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.**

Romans 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; **and whom He justified, these He also glorified.**

Everything...good, bad, or ugly that confronts you...you are assured will be taken care of by the Lord for his Bride. Look at Christ's strong promise of protection and the ground for protection.

Matthew 16:17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock **I will build My church,** and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

First, if the power (gates) of hell and death cannot destroy this church, it is well-preserved. Death and hell are your greatest enemies. So nothing else could destroy it! Doesn't this give you hope? No state, no false religions, no humanism!

Second, the basis of protection is the Gospel of Jesus. That was not a simple statement. It was an identification statement. Peter was saying **Jesus was the promised Savior sent by God to save his church.** And he was in that church.

2. Specifically, Jesus Christ preserves his church through his Holy Spirit, and through his Word and Sacraments.

This is the same message from the Old and New Testaments.

Isaiah 59:21 "As for Me," says the LORD, "this is My covenant with them: **My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants,** nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants," says the LORD, "from this time and forevermore."

Ephesians 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the **sword of the Spirit,** which is the word of God;

The good soldier is only able to fight if he is fed...and if he has the right weapons. There are no shortcuts to your preservation. **So you need the Word of God.** The Word of God even wounds the hearts of believers ...and causes him to repent and live!

And you need the Lord's Supper and baptism to nourish your souls.

Hebrews 4:12 For the **word of God** is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, **piercing even to the division of soul and spirit,** and of joints and marrow, and is a **discerner of the thoughts** and intents of the heart.

3. Your preservation by the Word of God and Spirit is forever.

It includes an incorruptible body when this one has passed away which will be joined together with your soul again – in heaven.

1Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 **who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation** ready to be revealed in the last time.

How the church is to respond

1. You follow Jesus Christ's voice as he is the Good Shepherd.

He is the one who purchased your freedom and brought you into the church, he is the one who had a vested interest in protecting you, and he has made the promise to preserve you. Follow his instructions. That's what sheep do.

John 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they **follow Me.**

This means you must join the church. Outside his church is unsafe. God is Father. Church is mother.

2. What specifically are the main things you are called to do in “following” the Lord’s voice?

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the **apostles’ doctrine** and **fellowship**, in the **breaking of bread**, and in **prayers**. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. **46** So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people...

You are to study and believe true doctrine. This means regular church attendance and personal study. Worship is not watching a TV program.

You must have fellowship with other believers. You are part of a family. Be together on Sunday and other days of the week as well.

You must participate in the Lord’s Supper. You need to eat for spiritual strength. You miss, you lose.

You must pray. You need to ask for things that are good for yourself and others. Get on your knees.

You must endure correction when you err. Conviction of sin leads to repentance.

These are commands and are good for you, but doing them also brings eternal rewards.

3. Look at another passage that deals with how you are to respond because of your inclusion in the church.

Ephesians 4:1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to **walk worthy** of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another **in love**, 3 endeavoring to **keep the unity** of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

a. You are to walk like a Christian....show who your Lord is. Every principal stand you take must be grounded in God’s Word...so where you **work**, how you **work**, what you **watch on TV**, who you **marry**, what you **study**...what kind of **jokes** you make...how you **eat...and even who your friends are**.

b. You love each other. Apostle John emphasized this.

1John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. **He who does not love his brother abides in death.** **18** My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

c. You are not a demolition expert; you are a builder. You build up the church of Jesus Christ. Visit the sick. Pray for the weak. Correct the erring. Submit to the leaders. Support worship.

Conclusion:

Jesus bought his church with his own blood and he preserves his church for all eternity by his Spirit through his Word and Sacraments. You must respond. It is the only reasonable thing.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Rejoice that you are privileged to be part of New Horizon church (or another good one) in particular and in the universal church— that true Catholic church. No government, no false religion, not even Satan...can stop the church of Jesus from existing and progressing! He brought you in. He will keep you.

2. Remain faithful to the ideals of your Lord: learn of him, worship him, trust him, love him, and don’t let him down by bad living.

3. Rest on your brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, and let them rest on you when they need help. Live up to the family name.

4. Repeat this message to the world. Let them come in to Christ’s church and live. Apart from Christ is death.

Finally, if you are outside the church of Jesus, you have no hope of salvation. Your only hope is hell and misery. But Jesus calls you in. He offers salvation for free... Will you accept Jesus Christ's offer today?