

# **Heidelberg Catechism 54– The Holy Catholic Church**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: **New Horizon is a Catholic church. This is not an erroneous claim.** “Catholic” does not mean the religion that is centered in the Vatican, the Roman Catholic Church, but 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. **New Horizon is a true church. That is not a boastful claim. That is a factual claim.** We were produced by Jesus Christ, we are preserved by him, and we seek to respond how he demands.

I want you to hear God’s Word today and then evaluate and see if we aren’t a Catholic and true church. If you find that it isn’t true then you need to speak up so we can change and carry the family name with honor.

Our headings are: **How the church was produced, How the church is preserved, and 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 is produced**

1. **The church was produced by Jesus Christ himself. He is the head of his church. (Colossians 1:18).** He restored 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 secured his church. 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 produced in 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 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. God destroyed the wall of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles and merged them into one family.

**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 little sister.

3. **Jesus Christ himself started to spread the news of his shed blood. He spread that promise of his shed blood in the Old Testament and fulfilled it in the New Testament. That good news is called 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;**

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. The New Testament has examples of church building also. Consider one example.

**Mark 1:14** Now after that John was put in prison, **Jesus came into 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 ye, and believe 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**,

But don't make the error of thinking that the church is here by human strength or by a living contract agreement between the 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 into your heart. And continues to give you help you need...hence our next point.

### **How the church is preserved**

1. In short, 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 security or preservation of Christ's church is taught throughout the Bible and by the Lord Jesus himself. He said these things **as comfort to his church which was going to face severe persecutions** 迫害.

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...we 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 a well-preserved**. Death and hell are your greatest enemies. Second, **notice that the basis of the protection is the Gospel of Jesus Christ**: that Jesus is the Son of God. That was not a simple statement. It was an identification statement. Peter was saying that Jesus was the promised Savior sent by God to save his church. And he was in that church. Jesus said that nothing, nothing will destroy his church – not even the most persistent or deadly enemy could destroy his 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;

1Corinthians 11:26 For **as often as you eat this bread** and drink this cup, **you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes**.

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 保全. And the Lord's Supper is nourishment for the souls of believers. The Word of God even wounds the hearts of believers...and causes him to repent and live!

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing 刺穿 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 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.** 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. You must follow his instructions. That what sheep do.

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

**2. What specifically are the main things you are called to do? Let's examine a few passages for things that every blood-bought Christian must do.**

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**.

You must **have fellowship with other believers**. You are part of a family.

You must **participate in the Lord's Supper**. You need to feed for spiritual strength.

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.

This means you must not substitute worship for a television program.

While these are commands to obey, they are all good things for you if you do them you are rewarded further.

**3. Look at another passage that specifically deals with how you are to respond because of your inclusion into the church of Jesus Christ.**

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. (Illustration: CIA people responsible to protect President Obama were seen drunk and fraternizing with women in Colombia. They did not properly represent their boss.) Don't walk like they.

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. 19 And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.

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 in particular and in the church worldwide** – that true Catholic church. No government, no false religion, not even Satan...can stop the church of Jesus Christ 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.

Finally, if you are outside the church of Jesus Christ, you have no hope of salvation. You can only hope for hell and misery. But Jesus Christ calls you in. He wants you to know that he offers salvation for free... Will you accept Jesus Christ's offer today?