

# Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations.

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## STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 3. What do the Scriptures principally teach?

A. The Scriptures principally teach, what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.

Scripture References: Micah 6:8. John 20:31. John 3:16. 2 Tim. 1:3.

### Questions:

1. Why does our Catechism place such importance on the Scriptures? There could be no Catechism without the Scripture, for the foundation of the Catechism itself is in the acceptance of the full truthfulness of the Bible as the Word of God. It is within the Word of God we find our way to eternal life. "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 3:15)
2. What is meant by the word "principally" in this question? It means that though all things revealed in the Scriptures are equally true, yet everything in it is not equally necessary to salvation.
3. What are the two important teachings of the Word of God? The two important teachings are what we believe and what we should do.
4. What is belief according to the Scriptures? It includes three parts: (1) To be persuaded of the truth. (2) To credit the truth of a person. (3) To trust, to have confidence in a person. We must have faith (belief) in the words of God and in the God who speaks them. This is a personal trust in the living God through the living Christ.
5. Why is belief placed before duty? This is the order of Scripture. The Christian is saved by grace through faith and is created unto good works. The foundation of the faith, "I am the Lord thy God" is presented in the Law before God presents His people with the Commandments. What we believe is important in order that we might do what is well-pleasing in the sight of God. Alexander Whyte says, "An orthodox faith and an obedient life is the whole duty of man."
6. Could there be any significance in the fact that both the Larger and Shorter Catechisms have this same question? Yes. True happiness for man comes only when he recognizes three important teachings of the Bible: First, that he is a lost sinner. Second, that Jesus Christ is his Redeemer from sin. Third, that he is to live a holy life based upon the revealed will of God, the Scriptures.

## DOES IT MATTER WHAT WE BELIEVE?

Our title is rapidly becoming a popular question of this age within the walls of the church. Back some years ago the cry was, "No Creed but Christ!" This slogan was accepted by many and led many away from established systems of belief. As a dangerous trend in the life of the church, this departure prompted some to look for "revelations" outside of the revealed Word of God. Even this trend though can not be compared to the danger that is spreading throughout the church today, the danger of suggesting what we believe is not really important.

It is important to note that Question No. 3 of the Shorter Catechism places the matter of our belief in a prominent place. Our Lord did the same thing. In Matthew 22:37, 38 he says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy MIND." The Bible leaves no doubt in the mind of anyone that what we believe is important.

Today in many Presbyterian churches there is a prejudice against creeds, against doctrine. This is shown in our failure to teach our Standards. It is also seen in the failure always to insist that candidates for the ministry be thoroughly conversant with the Standards. Again it is seen in the growing emphasis within the church today of obedience to the church as an institution without regard to the teaching of the Bible or of the accepted Creed.

Does it matter what we believe? It certainly does, if we are going to be a confessing body. It certainly does, if we want to continue to hear a gospel message in our church. The very heart of the gospel message is that we may receive the gift of salvation by believing (trusting) in Christ as our Saviour. Without this act of faith or belief we are lost, with it we are saved. Thus what we believe does make a difference, namely, where we shall spend eternity — heaven or hell.

It is equally true that it matters what we believe because the duty which God requires of us is based on what we believe. The widely accepted definition of belief is that "it is the assent of the mind to what is told us on competent and credible authority." Our Bible is our competent and credible and infallible authority. Our Standards contain the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures. Therefore any indifference to doctrine, any attempt to bypass or alter it to suit modern man, any movement to permit, as acceptable practice, less than a complete committal to our doctrinal standards should be recognized as contrary to historic Presbyterianism.

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Rev. Leonard T. Van Horn  
Editor

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