

# BIBLE CHALLENGE 2019

Week 5: January 27-February 2

## What Must Christians Believe?

Read: Numbers 14:11; 2 Samuel 23:1-2; 2 Kings 17:13; 2 Chronicles 34:21; Psalm 19:9; 93:5; 119:142; Proverbs 1:7; Isaiah 25:1; 40:8 Jeremiah 1:9; 23:16-22; 36:1-2; Zechariah 7:12; Matthew 28:18-20; **Mark 16:15**; Luke 1:70; John 1:12; 3:36; 20:30-31; Acts 1:16; 3:18; 28:25; Romans 4:3-11; 10:9-10; **1 Corinthians 2:12-13**; Galatians 1:11-12; **1 Thessalonians 2:13**; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 11:16; 2 Peter 1:18-21; 1 John 2:23; 2 John 9. Read Isaiah 30 in its entirety.

Question 22 of the Heidelberg Catechism reads, "What then must a Christian believe?" In other words, there are things that all Christians must agree upon to be considered "Christian" in any meaningful sense of the word. This does not take away from the language of Rupertus Meldenius of whom we spoke in week 1 — there are essentials of the faith and non-essentials. We must be in uniform agreement with the first group but there is room for Bible-instructed debate when it comes to the latter group. Our reflections this week focus on the first category — essentials of the faith. The answer to Question 22 in the Heidelberg Catechism is as follows:

*"All that is promised to us in the Gospel which are taught in summary in the articles of the universal Christian faith."*

What is the Catechism saying here? First of all, the "articles of the universal Christian faith" to which it is speaking is the Apostles' Creed. Yet, the catechism is not saying that the Apostles' Creed exhausts the essentials — if it were, there would be no need for the rest of the Catechism. What it is saying is that the Creed *summarizes* the essentials...hence, the catechism not only continues, but also spends the next 38 questions then unpacks what the Apostles' Creed summarizes. Further, Question 22 of the catechism also states that we are to believe "All that is promised to us in the Gospel." Since the Creed, which is meant to summarize this Gospel, touches on doctrines that are taught from Genesis through Revelation — this "Gospel" that is being spoken of is the Scriptures as a whole (remember, the word "Gospel" simply means "Good News").

So, what is the Heidelberg Catechism saying? What it is saying is that if you are a Christian, you must believe that what the Bible teaches is true and that it is able to equip you for every good work. The bottom line is that without the Bible, we have nothing upon which we can stand or hope. Without the Bible we don't know our sin or how great our sin is in the eyes of God. Without the Bible we would not know that the world around us was not always chaotic and ruthless. Without the Bible, we would not know of the grace of God found in the sending of Christ or that the only hope for reconciliation with a holy God is through that Christ, who is God's only begotten Son. Without the Bible, we would not know of the character of God, how we are to honor him in life, or how we can honor him in worship. Without the Bible, we would not know about how to remain in fellowship with Him in death. Without the Bible, the best we can do is to speculate, but when we speculate, we create idols in our own image, we are not conformed into God's image.

As "evangelical" Christians, we might be inclined to think that everyone agrees with us on this point. Everyone does not. In fact, many very freely pick and choose from the Bible the things they like and ignore or flatly deny the rest. Sadly, if the people who do this are likable enough, we usually ignore their rejection of the Bible and never challenge their Christianity even though they do not believe what a Christian should and must believe.

So, dare we ask, what are some of these "essentials"? Well, let's look at a few that are directly summarized by the Apostles' Creed itself:

1. "I Believe in..." — a reminder that Christianity is a faith, but it is a faith in certain truths, principles, and definite ideas and facts that take place in time and space. Christianity is also a dogmatic faith in the sense that we boldly profess that there are things we believe and which we will not compromise even "for the sake of argument."
2. The Triune Nature of God — That God is three Persons (Father, Son, and Spirit) yet one in being is emphasized by the very structure of this Creed. Connected to this is the idea that God is not a general force, but he is three persons — which is why we call him a "personal God."
3. God Created all that there is — any form of evolution, naturalism,

or mythic creation is inconsistent with the Christian faith. Inferred from this is the idea that as the maker of creation, God is also the owner and master of the created order.

4. That Jesus Christ, the second member of the Trinity, took on flesh and entered this world.
5. That Jesus was born of a virgin woman, again in time and space.
6. That God expresses his wrath toward sin — something that Jesus took upon himself (in time and in space) on behalf of believers.
7. That Jesus died on the cross as a sacrifice and then again physically rose from the dead.
8. Jesus will return again, but this time as the judge over all mankind.
9. That until the time he returns, he currently rules as King over creation.
10. That as a righteous judge, Jesus judges according to a set standard and rule (that standard being his own perfection).
11. That Christ's church is set apart to be holy and united throughout time and space.
12. That there is one true Christian church (not many) and those who are outside of this church are condemned to eternal judgment.
13. True believers enjoy communion (faithful and loving fellowship) with one another.
14. That there is forgiveness of sins in the completed work of Christ alone (Jesus has satisfied the demands of the law).
15. That there is a physical resurrection to come (not just some kind of spiritual afterlife).
16. After eternal judgment, there is everlasting life for the believer (and by inference, everlasting dying and torment for the unbeliever).

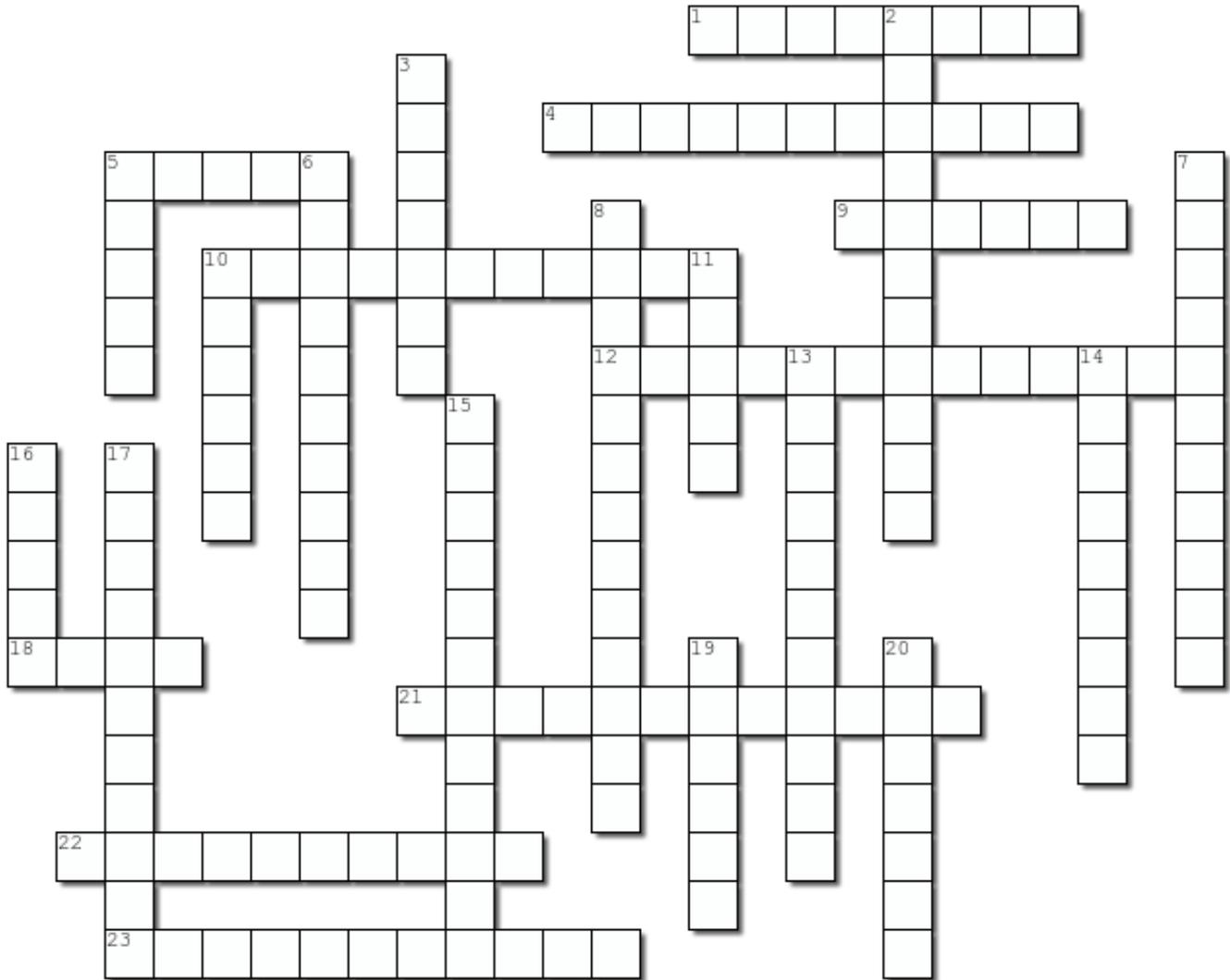
When you add to this the language of the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures (clearly taught by Heidelberg, but also clearly taught by the Apostles' Creed given that the Bible is the only way by which we know these truths), you start to set some clear dividing lines between views. Some are Christian and some are not.

Does that mean that any professing Christian who denies one of these views is not really a Christian? Maybe not. It may mean that this professing Christian is a baby in his or her faith and has not yet been taught the truth. Yet, if the person clings to the rejection of one of these essentials even when his error has been demonstrated from the Scriptures and the Creeds, then he or she may not be a Christian. For to reject one of these aforementioned principles is to reject the promises connected to them. And so-called "churches" who insist on their rejection of one or more of these essential documents are not churches, but cults and "Synagogues of Satan" to borrow from Jesus' words to the churches in Revelation. And, as the Belgic Confession states, Christians have an obligation to remove themselves from such false places of worship.

Now, if you have already begun reading through the scriptures listed above, you will probably have noticed a good bit of overlap from the previous weeks and note that some of that is intentional. The bottom line is that we cannot emphasize strongly enough the principle that the Bible is the starting point for everything we hold true as Christians. It is our guide and rule for both our faith and our practice in all areas of life. As the Puritan pastor, Henry Smith, once wrote:

*"We should set the Word of God always before us like a rule, and believe nothing but that which it teaches, love nothing but that which it prescribes, hate nothing but that which it forbids, and do nothing but that which it commands — and then we try all things by the Word."*

# Week 5: What Must Christians Believe?



Created using [TheTeachersCorner.net](http://TheTeachersCorner.net) [Crossword Puzzle Maker](#)

## Across

1. Christianity is a \_\_\_\_\_ religion.
4. 'He who believes in the Son has \_\_\_\_\_' (2 words).
5. All authority in heaven and in earth belongs to him.
9. This is holy and united throughout the ages.
10. The Bible promises this for sins in Christ.
12. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as \_\_\_\_\_.
18. God warned the people to turn away from this and obey his commandments.
21. The grass withers and the flower fades, but this lasts forever (4 words).
22. If the people had stood in the Council of God, they would have \_\_\_\_\_ his words.
23. Paul is grateful that the church does not take his words as coming from \_\_\_\_\_ (2 words).

## Down

2. We are to proclaim the Gospel to \_\_\_\_\_ (3 words).
3. This is the term we use to describe our God: 3 in person, 1 in being.
5. Jesus will come again as a righteous \_\_\_\_\_ over all creation.
6. This is breathed out by God.
7. You must confess this with your mouth and believe he was raised from the dead to be saved. (3 words)
8. This is clean (4 words).
10. 'No one who denies the Son has the \_\_\_\_\_.'
11. God works these ( miracles or \_\_\_\_\_) to authenticate his Word.
13. 'Your decrees are \_\_\_\_\_; holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore.'
14. The Christian faith rejects any kind of \_\_\_\_\_ (a theory of existence that is popular today)
15. God spoke through the mouths of these men of old. (2 words)
16. Jesus was in the tomb for this many days.
17. Liberals like to deny this, but Jesus entered into the world by a \_\_\_\_\_ (2 words).
19. The Holy Spirit spoke through David's \_\_\_\_\_.
20. 'For who among them has stood in the \_\_\_\_\_ Lord?'