

Preface to Old Testament Catechesis

Old and New Testament Catechesis are the first and oldest works in *The Lutheran Catechesis Series*. Their early development and use dates back to my first parish, St. Paul's and Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Boone and Dayton, Iowa. As a young pastor first starting in the parish, I soon realized how little my confirmation-aged youth knew of basic Bible stories. Without the familiarity, understanding, and vocabulary of the most important Bible stories of the Old and New Testaments, they were ill equipped to go on in confirmation instruction. I had no material other than the Bible. I had no money to purchase material, even if I had found material that I liked. Most of the material available at that time led students away from the stories and language of the Bible into modern-day life applications. Jesus became a teacher of morality more than the Savior of sinners. I wanted my catechumens to learn the Bible and the Bible's own language, convinced that the text of God's Word would bear fruit in their lives, especially if the discussion of Bible stories always centered on Christ.

So I plotted out a set of 32 Old Testament readings and 32 New Testament readings that could be covered over the course of an academic year. The courses were for fifth- and sixth-graders to help them learn the Bible, memorize the Catechism, and prepare them for in-depth catechism instruction in preparation for confirmation. The *Old Testament Catechesis* course would alternate years with *New Testament Catechesis*. Each member of the class had a New King James Bible (a reliable translation that preserved much of the language and familiar expressions of the Bible that their parents and grandparents knew). We sat down each week for one hour, taking turns reading out of our Bibles the appointed verses for the day. I interrupted the reading throughout the session, asking questions, engaging catechumens in discussion, and making comments. As we came upon important words, names, places, or concepts, I would write them on the board with simple definitions. Catechumens would take notes on these terms and make flash cards to study at home. This is how *Old and New Testament Catechesis* began.

In addition, I set the goal of learning, word for word, the text of two of the six chief parts each year. In Old Testament catechesis, the goal would be to learn the texts of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar. In New Testament catechesis, the goal would be to learn the texts of the Lord's Prayer and Confession and the Office of the Keys. I didn't spend a lot of time teaching the text of the catechism during Old and New Testament catechesis classes; my main goal was to have the catechumens simply learn those parts by heart. (I did, however, make "catechism connections" with the lesson for the day whenever it was appropriate to do so.) I knew, if the goal was to memorize just one small section from the catechism each week, that everyone could learn it by heart and learn it well. Our Sunday School program focused upon learning the texts of the remaining two parts of the catechism: the Ten Commandments and the Creed. In this way, the catechesis program of the congregation in the elementary years made it possible to learn by heart all six chief parts of the catechism before "confirmation class" began. My reasoning was simple: if the kids learn the catechism by heart along with the important Bible stories of the Old and New Testaments *before* more extensive study of the catechism begins, they will be equipped with a solid foundation for studying the catechism in greater depth in "confirmation class." This basic pattern has continued ever since for both the public and parochial school students of my parish. Old and New Testament catechesis and learning by heart (memorizing) word for word the six chief parts of the Small Catechism is the prerequisite and foundation for further catechesis that culminates in confirmation.

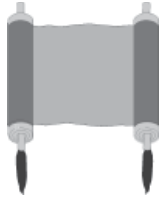
My catechumens still remember their Old and New Testament catechesis class sessions and how their pastor often created voices for Biblical characters or acted out some portion of the story. The point of such antics was not simply to entertain or keep them interested, but to make the story and its characters come alive for them. It is very important that catechumens come to understand that the Biblical characters and events were real and to see themselves as part of the story of God's saving activity in the world. After I left Iowa, one of my former catechumens who heard from his mother of my continued work in catechesis remarked, "Does he still stand on top of the table and use those voices?" Yes, he does!

Old and New Testament Catechesis, Catechumen Editions, were first published in 1998. They have been revised and updated for this second edition in 2004. The second editions of these volumes include minor adjustments or corrections to a few of the Bible Story references and term definitions. The following "study helps" have also been added to the second edition: listing of the Old and New Testament books of the Bible according to their arrangement in the canon of Scripture, Old and New Testament timelines, and Old and New Testament term groups. The pagination of the Term Glossary and Small Catechism in both the catechumen and catechist editions is the same.

Originally, *Old and New Testament Catechesis* did not include discussion questions or catechetical helps for the pastor or the catechumens. Pastors need to develop the habit of catechizing by working with the actual text of Holy Scripture. All too often, Christians study a curriculum *about* the Bible rather than the Bible itself, or they study a textbook *about* the Small Catechism, rather than the text of the catechism itself. "Read the Bible and discuss it" remains the most important part of every class session. Nevertheless, as people used the original catechumen edition, it became apparent that pastors, day school teachers, Sunday School teachers, homeschoolers, and parents needed guidance in understanding and discussing the Bible stories from a Lutheran perspective. To fill this need, catechist editions of both *Old and New Testament Catechesis* have been prepared.

I am indebted to Mrs. Susan Gehlbach, our technical editor, for the painstaking and thorough way in which she plowed through the manuscripts for the new editions of both *Old and New Testament Catechesis*. Rev. John Klieve and Deacon Matthew Gatchell designed the covers for each of these volumes. Deacon Gatchell also offered invaluable assistance in the preparation of the "study helps" for the second editions and in preparing the manuscripts for publication. Finally, I give thanks to God for the faithful catechumens of Peace Lutheran Church, Sussex, Wisconsin, who remain so enthusiastically supportive of the work of the Concordia Catechetical Academy: to promote Luther's Small Catechism and faithful Lutheran catechesis in the Church-at-large.

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Introduction to Old Testament Catechesis

Old Testament Catechesis is part of *The Lutheran Catechesis Series*, published by the Concordia Catechetical Academy, Sussex, Wisconsin. *The Lutheran Catechesis Series* offers a comprehensive set of catechetical materials for a Lutheran congregation, elementary school, and homeschool family. A complete listing of materials in the series is available on line at: www.peacesussex.org/CCA.

Old Testament Catechesis is a survey of Old Testament Bible stories. It is intended to build a foundation of Bible knowledge and vocabulary from the Old Testament, and teach the words of the Small Catechism under the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, the Sacrament of the Altar, and, from the Table of Duties, “To Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers,” and “What the Hearers Owe Their Pastors.” The catechist and catechumens will be working directly with the text of the Bible and the text of the Small Catechism. *Old Testament Catechesis* provides a schedule of thirty-two lessons and 184 Old Testament terms. Each lesson contains three parts: the Bible story to be read for that class session, the section of the catechism to be “learned by heart” in advance of that class session for oral recitation in class, and Old Testament terms which apply to the Bible story.

Bible Story

The narrative stories of the Bible are among the most important portions of the Bible for any Christian to know. The first five books of the Old Testament—known as the Pentateuch or the Torah—are the foundation of the Old Testament. These books of Moses include the narrative of man’s creation in the image of God, his fall into sin, the flood, the tower of Babel, the stories of the patriarchs, God’s deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt, the giving of God’s Law, and the first promises of the Gospel of our salvation in Christ. The first twenty lessons focus on these stories. The rest of the Old Testament narratives and the preaching of the prophets cannot be understood apart from these stories. The twelve remaining lessons survey important narratives from the historical books of the Old Testament that follow the Pentateuch.

The Bible Translation

The New King James Version of the Bible, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc., is the translation recommended in *The Lutheran Catechesis Series* and used in all quotations of the Holy Scriptures. It is necessary that the catechist and catechumens all use the same translation of the Scriptures, and that the translation not be a paraphrase.

Working with the Text of the Bible Itself

In the catechumen edition, there are no questions, answers, or commentary on any of the Bible Stories beyond the titles and terms assigned to each lesson. The reason for this is to develop the habit of working with the text of the Bible itself. The narrative should be read out loud, verse by verse, by members of the class taking turns. The catechist should interrupt the reading by asking questions of the reader and other members of the class. All his questions should flow out of the text of the narrative itself: What are the facts of the story? Who is who? Who did what? Why did they do it? What did God promise? How did God act? How does this story point to the work of Jesus? How does this story teach salvation by grace alone through faith in Christ? These are the kinds of questions that need to be asked throughout

the reading of the narrative. This means that the catechist should be very familiar with the story so that he can lead the discussion. The catechist's goal is to place the catechumen into the story, so that the catechumen begins to see the story of the Bible as his own story of faith. The catechist edition provides guidance in the kinds of questions the catechist might ask and how he might direct the discussion of the story.

Ordinarily, *Old Testament Catechesis* will be taught by the pastor of the congregation, or by those who have been instructed by the pastor so that they are able to teach the lessons faithfully. Parents who use *Old Testament Catechesis* for homeschooling their children are encouraged to ask questions of their pastor, so that they, too, remain thoroughly grounded in the Lutheran confession of the faith.

Old Testament Books of the Bible

To assist the catechumen in understanding and memorizing the books of the Old Testament canon, a study sheet is provided on p. xiii. This page arranges the names of the 39 books of the Old Testament according to their respective groupings: the Pentateuch (or the Torah), the historical books, the poetical books, the major prophet “sandwich,” and the minor prophets.

Learn by Heart—The Small Catechism

Small sections of the catechism are assigned to each lesson. These excerpts are to be learned by heart, word for word, prior to the class session at which they will be covered. Learning these sections by heart so that the catechumen can recite them fluently is the *primary* goal of these assignments. After the text of the catechism is learned by heart, then it can be used to assist in the understanding of the Scriptures. It is not intended that the catechist spend a long period of time with the catechism assignment for each lesson. Rather, the catechism section should be recited from memory by everyone in the class. The catechism should be confessed out loud at each class session by the class as a whole and by individuals within the class. After this, the catechist may take a few moments to relate the doctrine of that section of the catechism to the story for the day. Extended expositions on the catechism are reserved for future catechesis, *after* the text of the catechism has been mastered.

The focus upon the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar during Old Testament catechesis is to underscore the sacramental character of the Old Testament. The Old Testament stories about the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, the flood, the crossing of the Red Sea, the Passover, manna in the wilderness, the cleansing of Naaman the leper, etc., directly point to and are fulfilled in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It is important to understand that God has always dealt sacramentally with His people, even in the Old Testament. The focus upon “To Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers” and “What the Hearers Owe Their Pastors” from the Table of Duties is to underscore that the roots of the New Testament office of preaching are in the prophetic office of the Old Testament.

The Small Catechism

The version of the Small Catechism used in this volume is the 1986 translation of the catechism by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The Concordia Catechetical Academy has received special permission to publish this translation of the catechism in a “Learn-by-Heart Edition” with a format and marginal notes that facilitate memorization. The notes in the margin of the catechism refer to the grade level at which that particular portion of the catechism is to be learned by heart. For example, “1st +” in the margin indicates a section of the catechism that first graders and above are to learn by heart. The primary texts of the catechism (that is, the words of the commandments, the creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Bible passages on the sacraments) should be learned first, before the explanations to those texts are memorized. The primary-text material is in bold type in the catechism.

Pray the Primary Texts of the Christian Faith

A two-page listing of the primary texts of the six chief parts is included on p. xiv. This is the basic, historic, catholic catechism for which Luther wrote his explanations in the Small Catechism. Throughout the history of the church, these primary texts have served as the basis for catechetical instruction. Each “chief part” is provided with a title sentence and summary statements that help guide the catechumen in understanding how these texts are to be understood and used in the Christian’s life. These primary texts represent the “pattern of sound words” (2 Timothy 1:13) that is to be handed down to every generation of Christians.

Old Testament Terms

The Old Testament terms provide the catechumen with a concrete vocabulary of the most important people, places, and events of the Old Testament. The definitions for the terms are written from a Confessional Lutheran perspective. These terms and their definitions are intended to form a framework and vocabulary for understanding God’s saving activity in the Old Testament, for listening to the Scriptures as they are read in the Divine Service and at home, and for confessing the faith in one’s life. The terms are not listed alphabetically, but chronologically according to their occurrence in the Old Testament canon. The terms listed under each lesson are drawn specifically from that lesson. The list of terms is not exhaustive. To provide an overview of the entire Old Testament, additional terms are provided for narratives not listed in the schedule. If catechumens know the terms in this list, they will have a very good foundational knowledge of the entire Old Testament. Working with the new terms and reviewing previously covered terms is an essential part of the catechesis for each lesson.

Definitions for the Old Testament terms listed in each lesson are found in the Old Testament Term Glossary on p. G-1. *Old Testament Term Cards* are also available from the Concordia Catechetical Academy. The terms are numbered according to the order in which they appear in the schedule of lessons. This allows for the cards to be shuffled for the purpose of study and put back in order for future classes or new catechumens. It is recommended that each catechumen have a set of Old Testament Cards for study and review.

Old Testament Term Groups

There are 184 terms in *Old Testament Catechesis*. They have been divided into “term groups” to make the study of these terms more manageable. For easy reference, each term group is titled and identified by the first term from that group. Each term group contains 12 to 30 terms. As each lesson is covered, the terms from that lesson should be studied along with the terms that have been covered previously from that group. As the lessons are covered, the number of terms being studied from each group will gradually increase until all the terms from that particular group have been introduced. Mastery of one term group should be accomplished before moving on to the next group. Mastery of the Old Testament terms is easily accomplished by spending several minutes a day reviewing the terms from a particular group. It is suggested that five point term quizzes be held each week to reinforce this habit of study and the comprehensive learning of the Old Testament terms. On each week’s quiz, catechumens may be asked to identify five terms, chosen randomly by the catechist, from the particular group that is being studied.

Old Testament Timeline

A timeline of the entire Old Testament is provided to assist the catechumen in understanding the sweep of Old Testament history and the placement of each of the 32 *Old Testament Catechesis* stories within that history. The timeline includes major events, key people from each lesson, and a comprehensive listing of prophets and kings throughout Israel’s monarchy and the divided kingdom. The messianic line is

indicated by names that appear in bold type. A brief sketch of the intertestamental period is also included in the timeline to bridge the gap between the Old and New Testaments.

How to Use Old Testament Catechesis

Old Testament Catechesis was originally developed as a one-year course for fifth- and sixth- graders to be used in building a foundation of Bible knowledge in preparation for intensive catechesis in the Small Catechism. This material may also be adapted for use in all the Sunday school classes and adult Bible classes of the congregation over the course of a year. This allows for everyone in the congregation and family to be studying the same stories at the same time. If *Old Testament Catechesis* is used in a Lutheran day school, it is recommended for the fourth grade. The Old Testament terms learned in *Old Testament Catechesis* should be reviewed periodically and accompany the catechumen in further catechesis.

To the Catechist

The Catechist Edition of *Old Testament Catechesis* was prepared to assist pastors, day school teachers, homeschoolers, and parents in discussing the Bible Stories from *Old Testament Catechesis* with their catechumens. Catechists are *not* to read from this material during class sessions. This material is to assist the catechist in understanding the basic meaning of each Bible story. This material is *not* intended to exhaust the meaning of the story. Catechists should become thoroughly familiar with each Bible Story so that they can teach the story, ask questions, and discuss with their catechumens with only the text of the Bible in front of them.

Central Thoughts

Several “central thoughts” are offered for each lesson. These central thoughts are intended to convey the basic themes of the Old Testament narrative. Central to *Old Testament Catechesis* is the emphasis upon the first promise of the Gospel in Genesis 3:15 and the promise of the Gospel to Abraham. God’s faithfulness to His promises, in spite of Israel’s sin, is an important theme throughout the lessons. All the promises of the Old Testament are to be understood as promises of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They all find their fulfillment in Him. *Old Testament Catechesis* highlights the use of the divine name “I AM” or “LORD,” which refers to “the eternal God of the promise of salvation.” Old Testament Israel is a prophetic type of the New Testament church. Just as false doctrine, unfaithfulness, and idolatry affected Israel, so these things also threaten the church. Just as the faithful prophets were often persecuted for preaching the truth, so the faithful pastor often suffers for being faithful to the Word of God.

Key Questions

This section lists examples of the kinds of questions that can be asked of the catechumens as the Bible story is being read. These questions are not exhaustive. They follow a general line of direction that uncovers the central thoughts of each lesson. The catechist should use these questions as a general guide and not be bound to them too rigidly.

Catechesis Summary

The key questions are answered in the “Catechesis Summary.” These summaries attempt to show that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the central message of both the Old and New Testaments. They deliberately and intentionally highlight God’s faithfulness to His promises and His actions to save fallen man, by grace alone, through the promise He made to Abraham. Justification by faith in God’s promise to Abraham is a dominant theme in the summaries. Abraham believed the Lord’s promise, and by this promise the Lord declared him righteous. It is the same for us. The catechesis summaries will also highlight allusions to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the sacraments in the Old Testament.

“Learn by Heart” Catechism Connection

This brief section is intended to open the mind to see how the faith and doctrine of the Small Catechism is in agreement with the Old Testament Scriptures. Although the main purpose of assigning sections of the catechism each week is to learn these sections by heart, the catechist should certainly point out connections to the catechism in the Old Testament stories. These “catechism connections” only scratch the surface of the many allusions to the catechism in the Old Testament stories.