

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

SHORTER CATECHISM

LESSON # 28 (Q3LES3)

THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME

1. **Prayer**
2. **Bible reading: Psalm 96: 1 - 13**
3. **Review:** At our last meeting, we covered SC questions 42, 43, & 44, which form an introduction to the ten commandments. We discussed the sum of the first four commandments, which contain our duty to God, learning that our duty to God is *“to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind”*. We learned that the sum of our duty to man is *“to love our neighbor as ourself”*. We also learned that the comprehensive duty of the ten commandments is “love”. In the preface to the ten commandments (I am the Lord thy God which hath brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage), we learn that God first tells us that **HE** is the boss. Then, after reminding us that he freed His people from bondage, God gives us a promise of freedom from enslavement from sin.
4. **Introduction:** This week we will start our study of the ten commandments and their requirements. As seems logical, we will start with the first commandment. The first commandment, its requirements and prohibitions, are covered in questions 45 through 48 in the SC.
5. **Questions:**

Question 45: Which is the first commandment?

Answer: The first commandment *is thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

Question 46: What is required in the first commandment?

Answer: The first commandment requireth us to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God, and our God; and worship and glorify him accordingly.

Question 47: What is forbidden in the first commandment?

Answer: The first commandment forbiddeth the denying, or not worshipping and glorifying the true God as God, and our God; and the giving of that worship and glory to any other, which is due to Him alone.

Question 48: What are we specially taught by these words “before me” in the first commandment?

Answer: These words [before me] in the first commandment, teach us, That God, who seeth all things, taketh notice of, and is much displeased with, the sin of having any other God.

6. The Presentation of the Commandments in the SC and LC.

- a. The presentation of the ten commandments is generally consistent between the SC and the LC
 - Each introduces the commandment with the question “Which is the XXth commandment?”
 - This is generally followed in the SC by the question “What is required in the XXth commandment? The LC generally adds the word “duty” before “is required”.
 - This is generally followed in the SC by the question “What is forbidden in the XXth commandment. The LC generally adds the word “sin” before “forbidden”.
 - For commandments 2 through 5 the question is asked: “What are the reasons annexed to the XXth commandment.
- b. Remember LC question 99, the eight rules required for a right understanding of the ten commandments, they are applied to these questions. Rule 4 (That as, where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; and, where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded: so, where a promise is annexed, the contrary threatening is included; and, where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included.) is especially noticeable in the “What is required”, “What is forbidden” format of the catechism.

7. The First Commandment.

SC q45 and LC q103 are identical in question and answer. They ask, “Which is the first commandment?” The first commandment is ***Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.*** Where have you heard this before? (**Exodus 20:3**)

8. Requirements of the First Commandment

- a. The SC q46 and the LC q104 are consistent, asking what duties are required by the first commandment. The LC, however, expands greatly (I understand why memorizing the LC can be much more difficult.)
- The SC says: “The first commandment **requireth** us to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God, and our God, and to worship and glorify him accordingly.”
 - The LC says: “The duties **required** in the first commandment are, the knowing and acknowledging of God to be the only true God, and our God; and to worship and glorify him accordingly, by thinking, meditating remembering, highly esteeming, honoring, adoring, choosing, loving, desiring, fearing of him; believing him; trusting, hoping, delighting, rejoicing in him; being zealous for him; calling upon him, giving all praise and thanks, and yielding all obedience and submission to him with the whole man; when in any thing he is offended; and walking humbly with him.” (read again)
- b. How many duties are required in the first commandment?
- To know God to be the only true God, and our God. (**Isaiah 43:10 “Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.”**)
 - To acknowledge God to be the only true God, and our God. (**Deut 26:17 “Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgements, and to hearken to his voice:”**)
 - To worship and glorify him accordingly. (**Matt 4:10 “Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”**)
- c. In accordance with SC q46 and LC q104, what are we required to know about God? (TV)
- That He is, that there is a God.
 - What God is in all those glorious attributes and perfection’s whereby he maketh himself know.
- d. In the first commandment, what are we required to acknowledge about God? (TV)

- That God is the only true God (1 Cor 8:6 ***“But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.”***)
- That we ought to take and own God for our God (Psalm 48:14 ***“For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.”***)

e. What is meant by “worship and glorify him accordingly”? (TV)

We ought to worship and glorify God as the only right object of divine worship and honor:

- In our minds (by thinking, meditating, remembering & esteeming Him (Psalm 63:6 ***“When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.”***)
- In our wills (by choosing him for our chief good, and devoting ourselves to his service) (Josh 24:22 ***“And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnessed against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses.”***)
- In our hearts (by loving him desiring him, fearing him, believing and trusting in him, grieving for our sins against him, hoping in him, delighting and rejoicing in him) (Deut 10:12 ***“And now , Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,”***)
- In our lips (by calling upon him and speaking well of his name. (Psalm 145:21 ***“My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.”***)
- In our lives (by yielding all obedience unto him, being zealous for his glory, careful to please him, fearful of offending him, and by walking humbly before him. (Col 1:10 ***“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;”***)

9. Sins Forbidden in the ten commandments.

a. Again, the SC and LC are in agreement, although the LC expands the answer significantly:

- The SC says: *“The first commandment forbiddeth the denying, or not worshipping and glorifying the true God as God, and our God; and the giving of that worship and glory to any other, which is due to him alone.”*
- The LC says: *“The sins forbidden in the first commandment are, Atheism, in denying or not having a God; Idolatry, in having or worshipping more gods than one, or any with or instead of the true God; the not having and*

avouching him for God, and our God; the omission or neglect of any thing due to him, required in this commandment; ignorance, forgetfulness, misapprehensions, false opinions, unworthy and wicked thoughts of him; bold and curious searching into his secrets; all profaneness, hatred of God; self-love, self-seeking, and all other inordinate and immoderate setting of our mind, will, or affections upon other things, and taking them off from him in whole or in part; vane credulity, unbelief, heresy, misbelief, distrust, despair, incorrigibleness, and insensibleness under judgements.”

b. What are the sins forbidden in the first commandment?

- Atheism
- Idolatry
- Profaneness

c. What is Atheism?

Atheism is the denying, or not having a God. (**Psalm 14:1** *“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.”*)

d. What is the idolatry forbidden in this commandment? This is a good one.

- The giving of that worship and glory to any other which is due to God alone. (**Rom 1: 21 - 25** *“(21) Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (22) Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, (23) And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. (24) Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: (25) Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen”*)
- Some examples of idolatry:
 1. Having and worshipping other gods besides the true God, with the outward man; as when persons worship the heathenish gods, or angels, or saints.

Any examples?

2. By giving that honor and respect to any thing in the world which is due only unto God, with the inward man, which is heart-idolatry

Any examples?

- e. What is the profaneness forbidden in this commandment?

The not worshipping and glorifying the true God as God, and our God.

Profaneness occurs when:

1. Persons do not know God, or have misapprehensions of him. (**Jer. 4:22** *“For my people is foolish, thy have not known me; they are sottish children, and thy have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.”*)
2. Persons are forgetful of God. (**Jer 2:32** *“Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire: yet my people have forgotten me days without number.”*)
3. When persons hate God, or love themselves or anything else more than God, desire creatures more than God, trust in arms of flesh more than God, delight in objects of sense more than God, when persons set their affection upon anything in the world more than God, and take off the heart, in whole or in part, from God.” (**Rom 8:7** *“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”*)
4. When persons omit or neglect to give that worship and glory which is due unto God, either with the inward or outward man. (**Isa 43:22** *But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.”*)

10. Before Me.... (because)

- a. SC q48 and the LC equivalent, q106, are identical. Their answers are consistent, with the LC expanding on the LC answer.

SC q48 says, *“These words [before me] in the first commandment teach us. That God, who seeth all things, taketh notice of, and is much displeased with the sin of having any other god.”*

LC q106 says, *“These words [before me] or before my face, in the first commandment, teach us, that God, who seeth all things, taketh special notice of, and is much displeased with, the sin of having any other god: that so it may be an argument to dissuade from it, and to aggravate it as a most imprudent*

provocation: as also to persuade us to do as in his sight, whatever we do in his service.”

b. Does God really see all things?

Yes. He is everywhere present, and is infinite in understanding. **(Jer 23:24 *Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him: saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? Saith the Lord.*)**

c. What is wrong with having any other god, to the extent that God takes notice?

- God told us not to have any other God before him. **(Exodus 20:3 *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”*)**
- God does not take lightly to disobedience of his people
- This is a violation of the most important commandment. **(Isa 42:8 *“I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.”*)**

d. What do you think is meant by the phrase *“is much displeaseth with”*?

He demands the worship and glory due him, and is not happy when he does not get it. **(Ex 20:5 *“Thou shalt no bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.”*)**

11. SUMMARY

The first, and most important commandment in God’s eyes is, *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”* God requires us to accept him as the only God, the living and true God. Likewise, he forbids us from having or worshipping any other god, to the extent of putting anything in our lives before him. God takes great displeasure in our worshipping other gods, and if it does not please God, we should seriously consider our priorities.

12.