

# WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

## SHORTER CATECHISM

### LESSON # 31 (Q3LES6) - REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY

1. **Prayer**
2. **Bible reading: EXODUS 16: 22 - 30**
3. **Review:** In our last lesson, we covered the third commandment. We learned that “vain” means empty, and that we should not treat the Lords name in an empty, cavalier manner, but with sincerely. We learned that, as presented in this commandment, “The Lord’s name”, or “the name of the Lord” means anything whereby he maketh himself known. God requires the holy and reverent use of his name (includes his names, titles attributes ordinances Word and works), and forbids the sin of abusing or profaning his name. Finally, we learned that, although punishment for the sin of profaning God’s name is not often punished by man, violators of this commandment will not escape God’s righteous judgement.
4. **Introduction:** In this lesson, we will begin our discussion of the fourth commandment, relating to observance of the Sabbath day. This commandment is covered in SC q’s 57 through 62. This commandment has more questions associated with it than any of the other commandments, and is also an interesting commandment, with significantly more meaning that it sounds like from a first reading. Because of the number of questions related to this commandment, we will discuss the first three SC questions in this lesson.

#### 5. **Questions:**

**Question 57:** Which is the fourth commandment?

**Answer:** The fourth commandment is, *Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

**Question 58:** What is required in the fourth commandment?

**Answer:** The fourth commandment requireth the keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his word; expressly one whole day in seven, to be a holy sabbath to himself.

**Question 59:** Which day of the seven hath God appointed to be the weekly sabbath?

**Answer:** From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly sabbath; and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian sabbath.

## 6. The SC and the LC.

The fourth commandment is covered in the SC in six questions (57 – 62). In the LC it is covered in seven questions (Q115 – 121). The LC covers the same material, in a slightly different sequence and manner, and also covers a couple additional items, which we will look at. Unlike most of the other commandments, the fourth commandment receives direct attention in the WCF, in chapter 21, Religious Worship.

## 7. Worship in the fourth commandment

a. TV introduces this commandment with a question covering the first four commandments, asking: **“What is the difference between the worship required in this fourth commandment, and the worship required in the first, second and third commandments?”** His answer: **‘The first commandment hath a respect unto the object of worship; the second commandment hath a respect unto the means of worship; the third commandment hath a respect unto the manner of worship; but this commandment hath a respect unto the time of worship.’** This identifies a different purpose of worship for each of the four commandments which contain our duty to God.

- The first commandment deals with the object of worship, God.
- The second commandment deals with the means of worship – in accordance with God’s Word.
- The third commandment deals with the manner of worship – in a reverent manner.
- The fourth commandment deals with the time of worship – as we will discuss.

## 8. Keeping holy to God, such set times as he hath appointed.....

- a. Both the SC, the LC and the WCF are in agreement as to what duty is required in this commandment. Both the SC and LC say: “such set times as he hath appointed in his word, expressly one whole day in seven.” The WCF, chapter 21, paragraph 7 says in part: “As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in His Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all men, in all ages, He hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a sabbath, to be kept holy unto Him:.....”.
- b. The scripture proof for this is **Exodus 20: 8 – 11**. See also (**Isaiah 56: 1 – 7** “<sup>(1)</sup>**Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgement, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to re revealed.** <sup>(2)</sup>**Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.** <sup>(3)</sup>**Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.** <sup>(4)</sup>**For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant;** <sup>(5)</sup>**Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of the sons and daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.** <sup>(6)</sup>**Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant;** <sup>(7)</sup>**Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine alter; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.)**

God makes it clear in His Word that we are to dedicate one day of seven to His worship.

- c. We must keep holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his word. What are the times that he hath appointed in his word? What about Christmas and Easter? (52 + 13 + 3 + 1)

God says only such set times as He hath appointed in his Word. In God’s Word, He specifies the 52 weekly sabbaths, plus a number of others, especially in the Old Testament.

Are Christians still responsible for the holy days God appointed in the Old Testament?

- d. TV spends a lot of time discussing the duration and composition of the “day”. He points out that it is meant as a full 24 hour period, not just sunrise to sunset. He

then spends a lot of time discussing if the 24 hour period is from the evening before to the sabbath evening, or from the morning after midnight to the following midnight. In Lev 23: 32, God seems to be telling the Israelites to celebrate the sabbath from evening to evening, but reading in context, this requirement is only for the ceremonial sabbath, the day of atonement, on the tenth day of the seventh month, and not his weekly sabbath. He offers a number of scripture proofs to back up midnight to midnight. **Is this important, or are we arguing like the Jewish Rabbi's of old ?**

## 7. Which day of the seven.....

- a. In the SC, this is a separate question, number 59. In the LC, this answer is included in the "what is required question, number 116.
- b. **Exodus 20** makes it clear that the sabbath is to be the seventh day of the week. This requirement is repeated in **Deut 5:12 - 14**, in much the same words as used above. It is evident that God required six days of work, followed by a day of rest and worship. And, as He established the first day at creation, and commands the sabbath on the last day after six days of work, this would be the seventh day, or, in our current calendar, Saturday.
- c. This is in agreement with both the LC question 59, the second half of LC question 116, and the WCF, chapter 21, para 7, all which state *"from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly sabbath"*
- d. An interesting subject, worth discussion, is: was the sabbath celebrated on the seventh day from Adam to Moses?

It seems probable that Adam passed the celebration of the sabbath on down the line, and it was celebrated on the seventh day. Although no specific scripture proofs are specific on this point, In Genesis :1 through 2:3, God identifies his six days of labor, and seventh day of rest. Adam, being made in God's image, must have had this information in his heart. Further, Moses, in **Exodus 16: 23 – 26**, (our opening scripture reading), before the commandments were given to him, talks of the sabbath on the seventh day.

- e. If God appointed Saturday, as the seventh day in order from creation, as the sabbath, why do Christian celebrate the sabbath on Sunday?
  - God established the work schedule of six days work, one sabbath day of worship and rest.

- From the beginning this was clearly referenced from creation, the seventh day of the week, or Saturday.
- God is unchangeable, and the requirement for six days of work and one day of rest remains the same.
- But after Christ's fulfillment of God's covenant of grace by his death on the cross, God reestablished the sabbath, based on the more important event, indeed, the most important event in history, the salvation of man by grace. This is not God changing his mind, but a part of his plan.
- This is confirmed by scripture. **(1 Cor 16: 1 – 2 <sup>(1)</sup>Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. <sup>(2)</sup> Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”)**

**(Acts 20: 7 “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”)**

TV says: *“There is a like reason for the appointment of the first day as there was for the seventh. The reason of God’s appointing the seventh was, his resting from his works of creation; and there is a like reason for appointing the first day, which was the day of Christ’s resurrection, namely, the Son of God’s resting from his suffering works about man’s redemption, into which rest he is said to enter which we are more nearly concerned to remember.*

- The pastor pointed out to me that no one really knows if what we celebrate as Sunday actually falls on the seventh day anniversary of the original day of God’s rest.
- God blessed and hallowed a **sabbath day**, and that is a day he will designate as he pleases.

## 8. Keeping the sabbath day.

- a. Question 118 of the LC asks an interesting question concerning the observing of the sabbath. It asks: *“Why is the charge of keeping the sabbath more specially directed to governors of families, and other superiors?”* What is the answer?

- b. The answer to LC question 118 is: *“The charge of keeping the sabbath is more specially directed to governors of families, and other superiors, because they are bound not only to keep it themselves, but to see that it be observed by all of those that are under their charge and because they are prone oftentimes to hinder them by employments of their own.*
- c. Weak on scripture proofs. God does establish the order of things, including the hierarchy.
- d. And because they are prone oft times to hinder them by employments of their own. What is meant by this?
- e. Back to the magistrates (our elected officials). They should be in charge of enforcing the keeping of the sabbath, but do not. They pass laws which allow other things to be done which are in conflict with God’s will.