

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

SHORTER CATECHISM

LESSON # 32 (Q3LES7)

REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY

1. **Prayer**
2. **Bible reading: NEHEMIAH 13: 15 - 22**
3. **Review:** In our last lesson, we began our study of the fourth commandment. We learned that the fourth commandment, defined in SC question 57, deals with the observance of the sabbath day. SC question 58 deals with what is required in the fourth commandment, and SC question 59 covers which day of the seven God has appointed to be the weekly sabbath.
4. **Introduction:** This week we will continue our discussion of the fourth commandment. We will cover SC questions 60, 61, and 62. Let's look at all the SC questions dealing with the keeping of the sabbath, including a review of the first three questions, SC q57, 58 & 59.
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.

Question 60: How is the sabbath to be sanctified?

Answer: The sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy.

Question 61: What is forbidden in the fourth commandment?

Answer: The fourth commandment forbiddeth the omission or careless performance of the duties required, and the profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful, and by unnecessary thoughts, words or works about our worldly employments or recreations.

Question 62: What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment?

Answer: The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment are, God's allowing us six day of the week for our own employments, his challenging a special propriety in the seventh, his own example, and his blessing the sabbath day.

6. The SC, LC and WCF.

- a. The three SC questions we are covering in this lesson, q60 through q62, are also covered in three questions in the LC, q's 117, 119, and 120 (we covered 118 last week). The WCF, chapter 21, Religious Worship, paragraph 8 compliments SC q60 and LC q117.

7. Sanctifying the sabbath.

- a. We will begin with SC q60, which asks how the sabbath is to be sanctified. There is enough material in this question alone to make up a couple of lessons. (Review the question.)

- b. The question asks how the sabbath is to be sanctified. What is meant by “sanctify”?

Again to my trusty **Webster’s New 20th Century** dictionary.

- From Latin **sanctus**, holy, and **facere**, to make
- To make holy; specifically, (a) to make free from sin; to purify; (b) to set apart as holy; to consecrate; (c) to make a person holy

- c. So who originally sanctified the sabbath?

God (Genesis 3:3 “And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.”)

- d. How does man sanctify the sabbath?.

Man is to sanctify the sabbath by observing it and keeping it holy (**Exodus 20: 8 “Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy.”**)

- e. “A holy resting all that day” What is meant by a holy resting? What are we supposed to rest from?

“Such employments and recreations as are lawful on other days” (**Exodus 20: 9 – 10 “⁽⁹⁾Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; ⁽¹⁰⁾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:”**).

- f. “Spending the whole time” WCF c21p8, LC q119, & SC q60 all say “*whole time*. (**Lev 23:3 “Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.”**)

- g. Public and private exercises of God’s worship.

- Public exercises of God’s worship.
- Private exercises of God’s worship.

- h. What work is lawful on the sabbath?

“The works of necessity and mercy.” TV list many things which are not lawful, mainly to do with commerce (buying & selling, plowing).

- Necessity: eating, drinking, defending ourselves, feeding cattle, (Matt 12: 10 – 11 ***“They said unto him, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day? And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it and lift it out?”***)
 - Mercy: (Matt 12: 12 – 13 ***“How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath-days. Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.”***)
- i. The LC now brings up a very good and important point, which is passed over in the SC. The answer to LC question 117, which the counterpart of SC question 60 on how the sabbath is to be sanctified, is virtually the same. But it adds a sentence not included in the SC. It says: ***and, to that end, we are to prepare our hearts, and with such foresight, diligence, and moderation, to dispose and seasonably dispatch our worldly business, that we may be the more free and fit for the duties of that day.”***

What is this telling us?

This says that, not only are we to observe the sabbath with resting and worship, but are to prepare our employment so that we can rest from them on the sabbath, and prepare our hearts so we are ready to worship the Lord on the sabbath. Good scripture proofs: (Luke 23: 54 – 56 ^{“(54)”}***And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.*** ^{“(55)”}***And the women, also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.*** ^{“(55)”}***And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.”***

And (Exodus 16: 22, 25, 26 ^{“(22)”}***And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man; and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.*** ^{“(25)”}***And Moses said, Eat that to-day is the sabbath unto the Lord: to-day ye shall not find it in the field.*** ^{“(26)”}***Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none.”***)

- j. As the sabbath is a day of rest, are we allowed normal recreations on this day?

No (Isaiah 58: 13 – 14 ^{“(13)”}***If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shall honor him, not doing thine own ways, not finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:*** ^{“(14)”}***Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and***

feed thee with heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”)

- k. The WCF, chapter 21, para 8 says: *“The sabbath is to be kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employment’s and recreations, but also are taken up the whole time in the public and private exercised oh His worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.”*
- l. How are we to spend the sabbath? In the public and private exercises of God’s worship. Works of necessity and mercy. How many of us prepare ourselves for the sabbath, and spend the whole time worshipping God?

8. What is forbidden on the sabbath-day?

- a. The SC, q 61 and LC q 119 are in complete agreement on this one, although the LC expands a bit. It says, *“The sins forbidden in the fourth commandment are, all omissions of the duties required, and careless, negligent, and unprofitable performing of them, and being weary of them; all profaning the day by idleness, and doing that which is in itself sinful; and by all needless works, words, and thoughts about our worldly employment’s and recreations”*.
- b. “Omission and careless performance of the duties required” Duties required, see SC questions 58 and 60.
- Public and private exercises of God’s worship.
 - Works of necessity and mercy
- c. “Profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful
- idleness
 - doing that which is in itself sinful
- d. “Unnecessary thoughts, words, or works about our worldly employments or recreations”.

(Jer 17: 24, 27 “⁽²⁴⁾And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but hallow the sabbath day, to do on work therein; ⁽²⁷⁾But if ye will not harken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and it shall not be quenched.”)

As the Pastor says: **“It’s not lawful to worry on the sabbath.”**

9. The reasons attached (annexed) to the fourth commandment.

- a. God’s allowing us six day of the week for our own employments.
 - God could have asked for more time, but he gave us six days for ourselves. **(Exodus 20:9 “Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work”)**
 - This includes time for us to prepare ourselves for the sabbath.
- b. His challenging a special propriety in the seventh **(Exodus 20:10 “But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God.”)**
- c. His own example. **(Exodus 20:11 “for in six days the Lord made the heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day”)**
- d. His blessing the sabbath day. LC q 120 adds: *“and from that blessing which God put upon that day, not only in sanctifying it to be a day for His service, but in ordaining it to be a means of blessing to us in our sanctifying it; (Exodus 20:11 “wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”)*

10. SUMMARY

- a. God has allowed us six days of the week for our own employment’s. But he requires that we dedicate such set times as He has established in His word, especially one whole day of the week to honor and worship Him. We are required to spend the whole time in the public and private exercises of His worship, except such time that is taken up in the works of necessity and worship. We should not consider this a duty, but an honor.