

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

HAVING SEEN WHAT THE SCRIPTURES PRINCIPALLY TEACH US CONCERNING GOD, IT
FOLLOWS TO CONSIDER WHAT THEY REQUIRE AS THE DUTY OF MAN

QUESTIONS # 120 & 62.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #120. *What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it?*

A. The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it, are taken from the equity of it, God allowing us six days of seven for our own affairs, and reserving but one for himself, in these words, *Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:*¹ from God's challenging a special propriety in that day, *The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God:*² from the example of God, who *in six days made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day:* 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; *Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.*³

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #62. *What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment?*

A. The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment are, God's allowing us six days of the week for our own employments,⁴ his challenging a special propriety in the seventh, his own example, and his blessing the sabbath-day.⁵

Question 1—*Why are there more reasons annexed to this command than any other?*

Answer—Reasoning is the method used by both the prophets and apostles to address the people of God when they were attempting to elicit the obedience of the people, 1 Sam. 12:7; Acts 17:2. The capacity for reason and reception of the true knowledge of God is that means which God has appointed for the sanctification of his people, Col. 1:9, 10.

This command, although moral like the other commands, has less of that natural rationale being only partly natural and partly positive in its composition, Lev. 26:2. Thus, there is a proneness of men to break this command, Ex. 32:22; yet, these reasons are given that its violation be made the more inexcusable, Rom. 1:20; John 15:22. Nonetheless, Christianity, being a reasonable faith, 1 Pet. 3:15; there is an appeal not only to the nature but the reasonableness of the will of the Lord given in this command, Rom. 12:1.

Question 2—*What is the first reason given?*

Answer—The first reason is taken from the equity of the command whereby God allows us six days for our own business and reserves but one day of the week for Himself, Ex. 20:9. The strength of this reason lies in the fact that it would be highly unreasonable

¹ Ex. 20:9.

² Ex. 20:10.

³ Ex. 20:11.

⁴ Ex. 20:9.

⁵ Ex. 20:11.

and ungrateful to begrudge a seventh part of time for His immediate service, 2 Tim. 3:2. Nonetheless, like our first parents, in refusing to abstain from one tree, when they were allowed the use of all the rest, this ingratitude appears, Gen. 3:2, 3, 6.

The force of this reason lies in several considerations: 1.) We have time enough to serve ourselves in six days and is it not only just, or equitable, to serve God upon the seventh day? Isa. 56:1, 2. 2.) We have time enough to tire ourselves upon the six days in laboring and is it not a kindness to both body and soul to be obliged to rest upon the Lord's day? Deut. 5:14. 3.) There is enough time to raise our appetite for spiritual rest and refreshment being that it returns so seldom and, therefore, we ought to rejoice in its return, Ps. 118:24. 4.) The Lord might have taken six days and allowed us one day and none could have quarreled with Him, Dan. 4:35; and shall we, as those rich, take from that poverty which He has reserved unto Himself? 2 Sam. 12:2-6.

Question 3—*What is the second reason given?*

Answer—The second reason is taken from God's challenging a special propriety in that day, Ex. 20:10. Although all days (and time itself) belongs unto God, Eph. 5:16; yet, this day is His in a peculiar manner, Rev. 1:10. He specifically calls the Sabbath days His own, Ex. 31:12, 13. The strength of this reason lies in the fact that God, as a gracious God, makes a grant of Himself to us in the covenant of promise, in which He claims this day as His own, and gives us this great privilege to have communion with Him on it, Isa. 58:14. It is indeed a privilege to have a foretaste in grace here of what shall be more fully enjoyed in glory hereafter, 1 Cor. 13:12.

The force of this reason appears in the following: 1.) If we have a God, it is reasonable that there should be time set apart for His service, Deut. 5:15. 2.) It is a sacrilegious robbing of God to steal from Him the time consecrated to His use by profaning the Sabbath, Prov. 20:25; Mal. 3:8.

Question 4—*What is the third reason given?*

Answer—The third reason is to be found in the example of God, who, though He might have created everything in a moment, yet used six days and rested upon the seventh, Gen. 2:2.

The force of this reason is to be found in: 1.) God's *imitative* example is a most binding rule, Eph. 5:1. When God works in a way of accommodation to our estate, it often provides an example which is imitative, *cf.* Matt. 5:45. 2.) Because God rested and took complacency in His works on the seventh day, profaning of the Sabbath is indicative of an eminent and signal contempt for God and His works, Ps. 139:14; 143:5, 6.

Question 5—*What is the fourth reason given?*

Answer—The fourth reason is discovered in the blessing which God has put upon the Sabbath day and its keeping, Ex. 20:11. This imports God's honor by its keeping wherein God promises to shower upon His people His blessings the rejection of which is akin to Esau's rejection of the blessing, *cf.* Heb. 12:16, 17. It also imports our own interest whereby the good we receive by its observance far outweighs the penalties God attaches to those who profane it lest they should lose time, Neh. 13:18.

The force of this reason should be apparent because: 1.) The Lord put a peculiar honor upon this day above all others—it is holy of the Lord and honorable, Isa. 58:13. 2.) The Lord has set it apart for a spiritual blessing to His people, so that in the sanctification of that day there is to be found blessing, Isa. 56:6, 7. 3.) The Lord has even promised to make that day the spring of temporal blessings, not worldly loss, Lev. 25:20, 22.