

## 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 # 114 & 56.

*(Larger Catechism)*

Q #114. *What reasons are annexed to the third commandment?*

A. The reasons annexed to the third commandment, in these words, [*The Lord thy God,*] and, [*For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain,*]<sup>1</sup> are, because he is the Lord and our God, therefore his name is not to be profaned, or any way abused by us;<sup>2</sup> especially because he will be so far from acquitting and sparing the transgressors of this commandment, as that he will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment;<sup>3</sup> albeit many such escape the censures and punishments of men.<sup>4</sup>

*(Shorter Catechism)*

Q #56. *What is the reason annexed to the third commandment?*

A. The reason annexed to the third commandment is, That however the breakers of this commandment may escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment.<sup>5</sup>

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Question 1—*Why are reasons annexed to the third commandment?*

*Answer*—The reasons, which prove man to be a reasonable creature, are given to engage men to move from their own corrupt judgments regarding sin to apprehend the majesty of the divine judgment against sin, Acts 24:25. Reasons, when rightly improved, help to convince men of the rightness of acting in accordance with the truth, Prov. 3:17. Thus, they function as so many cords of redemptive love used to draw us to an ease and joyful obedience, Matt. 11:28-30. Yet, they may also serve to warn men, as rational creatures, that they have engaged a course that will lead them to death, Prov. 16:25. Particularly, in this sin of breach of the third command, wherein men do not either perceive their sin or their danger, reasons are annexed to assure men that this will not escape judgment, Eccl. 12:14.

Men are prone to think lightly of this sin, so as to hold themselves to be guiltless, while heaping up sin to themselves, because: 1.) This sin, having so little of the world or flesh in it, appears in a special manner to proceed from that malicious and wicked one, the devil, Jas. 3:16. 2.) It springs from low and unworthy thoughts of God and His name, Ps. 36:1, 2. 3.) There are many profanations of the name that men, in common with a world in conspiracy against God, do not allow to be such though they are, Jas. 5:12. 4.) There are many profanations which men do not perceive, such as when they engage that holy name in duties by way of formality or lack of faith, Zech. 7:3-6. 5.) These often flow from the unbridled passions or anger of men, contrary to the apostolic admonition, Col. 4:6. 6.) By

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<sup>1</sup> Ex. 20:7.

<sup>2</sup> Lev. 19:12.

<sup>3</sup> Ezek. 36:21-23; Deut. 28:58, 59; Zech. 5:2-4.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Sam. 2:12, 17, 22, 24; 1 Sam. 3:13.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Sam. 2:12, 17, 22, 29; 1 Sam. 3:13; Deut. 28:58, 59.

custom, the taking of the Lord's name in vain loses all sense because a heart careless about God lets its tongue run into irreverent liberty, Jas. 3:5-12. 7.) Profane swearing proceeds from unwatchfulness Ps. 141:3, 4. 8.) In some men, it arises from a total disregard for God and true religion, Ps. 55:19.

Question 2—*What are the reasons annexed to this command?*

*Answer*—There are two lines of reason held forth: 1.) The name of the Lord itself, which demands our care to sanctify and avoid all profanation, Lev. 19:12. Which name is to be especially sanctified by them that are able to call the Lord *their* God, Deut. 6:13-15. His making over Himself to be our God by way of covenant should strengthen not diminish our obligation to a holy and reverential use of His name, Ex. 15:2. 2.) Such is the sanctity of the self-revelation of the Lord by His name that He promises that great guilt shall be attached to those who violate this command, Ex. 20:7. That this is no idle threat has been demonstrated in the Scripture for all who have ears to hear, Lev. 24:11-16. Nor should any think that Christ has loosened this command, Matt. 5:33-37.

Question 3—*What is it that is taught by these reasons?*

*Answer*—The *first* thing that is taught by these reasons is that those who profane the name of God often escape punishment from men because: 1.) There is so little zeal for the honor of God's name in the world because its sanctity does not *seem* to affect our own, or others, goods or well-being, Eccl. 8:13; which reflects our lack of awareness of our estate, Luke 23:40. 2.) Correction often seems to be hindered by the infirmities of the flesh, 1 Sam. 2:12, 17, 22, 24; 3:13. 3.) Yet, if men did enforce this command faithfully by punishing outward blasphemy, it would still not be possible for it to reach many of the abuses of men which occur secretly or privately, Job 1:5.

The *second* thing that is taught is that, though men escape the punishment of men, they shall not escape the judgments of God, Deut. 5:11. The fact is that profaning the name of God: 1.) Brings divine wrath upon a nation, Hos. 4:1, 2; Jer. 5:7, 9. Those who abuse the name of the Lord make the land to mourn, Jer. 23:10. 2.) Brings divine wrath upon families, Zech. 5:3, 4. 3.) Brings divine wrath upon individuals, Ezek. 36:21-23. These strokes are sometimes upon the body, Deut. 28:58, 59. Other times, they reach to the soul because however much men may forget this sin, God does not, Lev. 24:15. It is a sin for which they will reckon sooner or later, Jude 15. Though a man should find pardon, it is such a sin that it stays ever before an awakened conscience in reminder, 1 Tim. 1:13. Finally, if it is not pardoned, it is a sin that will lie upon that soul in hell for eternity, Rom. 2:5.