

Shorter Catechism: Questions 57-58

The Fourth Commandment. Part 1: There remains a Sabbath Rest for the People of God

"Let My people go, that they may worship Me." –Exodus 7:16

Word of God (Exodus 20 - KJV)

20 And God spake all these words, saying, ²I *am* the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ³Thou shalt have no other gods before me. ⁴Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth. ⁵Thou shalt not 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; ⁶And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. ⁷Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

⁸ Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days shalt thou labour, 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: ¹¹ 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.

¹²Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. ¹³Thou shalt not kill. ¹⁴Thou shalt not commit adultery. ¹⁵Thou shalt not steal. ¹⁶Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. ¹⁷Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbour's.

- **R.L Dabney (1820-1898)** – "It must be confessed that the Christian world now presents an anomalous condition touching the Sabbath. Strict Protestants usually profess in theory the views once peculiar to Presbyterians, and admit that the proper observance of the Sabbath is a bulwark of practical Christianity. But their practice does not always correspond with their theory. In actual life there is, among good people, a great uncertainty, with a corresponding confusion of usages, from great laxity up to the sacred strictness of our pious forefathers. It is greatly to be feared that those in the church who tolerate this laxity are increasing in numbers and influence. The civil law, which guarantees the Sabbath rest to all as a secular benefit and right, is enforced with more and more difficulty, especially in populous places; and this law is disregarded with increasing boldness by powerful corporations and by those who offer amusements and sensual enjoyments to the public." (<http://tinyurl.com/q6v94gd>)

Shorter Catechism

Q. 57 Which is the fourth commandment? 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 man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, 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. (Exod. 20:8–11)

Q. 58 What is required in the fourth commandment? 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. (Deut. 5:12–14)

I. The Fourth Commandment: its place in the Decalogue

- **Unique Characteristics**
 - In the first Table of the Law – Love to God, but also expresses Love to Neighbor.
 - The first commandment to be expressed in positive form.
 - The longest of all commandments.

II. The Fourth Commandment: a Creation Ordinance

- **Genesis 2** ²And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He **rested** from all His work which God had created and made.
- **Exodus 20** ¹¹For *in* six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the **Sabbath** day and hallowed it.
- **Testified to in other ancient civilizations. Dabney** - The ancient Jewish historian, Josephus, in his last book against Apion, affirms "that there could be found no city, either of Grecians or barbarians, who owned not a seventh day's rest from labor." The learned Jew, Philo, called it the "festival of all nations." The most emphatic uninspired testimony is also the most valuable because of its antiquity. The late Mr. George Smith, famous for his Assyrian researches, says: "In the year 1869, I discovered, among other things, a curious religious calendar of the Assyrians, in which every month is divided into four weeks, and the seventh days, or 'sabbaths,' are marked out as days on which no work should be undertaken" (Assyrian Discoveries, p. 12). H. Fox Talbot, in his translation of these creation-tablets, renders two lines thus: "On the seventh day he appointed a holy day, And to cease from all business he commanded." He also says: "This fifth tablet is very important, because it affirms clearly, in my opinion, that the origin of the Sabbath was coeval with the creation." So the Bey. A. H. Sayee (Trans. Soc. Bibl. Arch., Vol. v., pp. 427, 428). Mr. Sayee has translated the rules for each day of the month. Those for the seventh day (which is called "sabbath" and "day of completion") forbid the prince on that day to eat cooked fruits and birds, to change his garments, to legislate or appoint officeholders, to take medicine; and requires him to make his sacrifice to God on that day.

III. Fourth Commandment: Strengthened by our Salvation

- **God's purpose in the Exodus. Exodus 7** - ¹⁶And you shall say to him, 'The Lord God of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, "Let My people go, that they may serve (worship) Me in the wilderness"; but indeed, until now you would not hear!"

- **Deuteronomy 5** - ¹² 'Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the Lord your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. ¹⁵ And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

IV. Fourth Commandment. An Objection: Sabbath was Ceremonial

- **Colossians 2** - ¹⁶ So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.
- **Dabney** - There is another convincing proof that the Sabbath never was a merely Levitical institution, which is found in the fact that in the very law of the Decalogue God commands its observance equally by Jews and Gentiles: "In it thou shall not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, *nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.*" This stranger was the foreigner residing in the land of Israel. To see the convincing force of this fact the reader must contrast the jealous care with which the "stranger," the pagan foreigner sojourning in Jewry, was excluded from all share in the Levitical worship. No foreigner could partake of the passover; it was sacrilege. It was at the peril of his life that he presumed to enter the inner courtyard of the temple, where the bloody sacrifice was offered. Now, when this foreigner is required to keep the Sabbath along with the families of Israel, does not this prove that rest to be no ceremonial, no type like the passover and the altar, but a universal moral institution designed for all nations and times?

V. Fourth Commandment: Governs our Time

- **Q. 58 What is required in the fourth commandment?** 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. (Deut. 5:12–14)
- **Set Times** – the day itself is Divinely appointed. Will consider this in the following lesson.

VI. Fourth Commandment: Governs our Behavior

- **Q. 58 What is required in the fourth commandment?** 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. (Deut. 5:12–14)
- **WCF 21.8** - This Sabbath is then kept holy¹ unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts², and ordering of their common affairs before-hand³, do not only observe an holy rest all the day from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations⁴, (Exod. 20:8, Exod. 16:23, 25–26, 29–30, Exod. 31:15–17, Isa. 58:13, Neh. 13:15–19, 21–22) but also are taken up, the whole time, in the public and private exercises of

His worship⁵, and in the duties of necessity and mercy⁶. (Isa. 63:13, Matt. 12:1–13)

1. Keep it Holy – there is a quality to the Day that should make it unlike any other.
2. Preparing of your heart before the Sabbath Day arrives.
3. Ordering of Common Affairs before-hand.
4. Rest from your works, words and thoughts about the world.
5. Public and Private Exercise of God’s Worship.
6. Duties of Necessity and Mercy.

VII. Fourth Commandment: What is our attitude towards Holy things?

- **Isaiah 58** – ¹³ “If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, *from* doing your pleasure on **My** holy day, and **call the Sabbath a delight**, the **holy day of the Lord** honorable, and shall **honor Him**, not doing **your own ways**, nor finding **your own pleasure**, nor speaking **your own words**,¹⁴ Then you shall **delight yourself in the Lord**; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken.”