



From Your Pastor

A Study of the Shorter Catechism ***“Resting in Christ”***

Fourth Commandment-Questions 57-62

WSC 57 Which is the fourth commandment? A. The fourth commandment is, Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, 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. **WSC 58 What is required in the fourth commandment?** A. 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. 5:12,13,14). **WSC 59 Which day of the seven hath God appointed to be the weekly sabbath?** A. 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 (Gen. 2:2,3; 1 Cor. 16:1,2; Acts 20:7). **WSC 60 How is the sabbath to be sanctified?** A. 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 (Exod. 20:8,10; Exod. 16:25-28; Neh. 13:15-19,21,22; Luke 4:16; Acts 20:7; Ps. 92:title; Isa. 66:23; Matt. 12:1-31). **WSC 61 What is forbidden in the fourth commandment?** A. 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, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about our worldly employments or recreations (Ezek. 22:26; Amos 8:5; Mal. 1:13; Acts 20:7,9; Ezek. 23:38; Jer. 17:24-26; Isa. 58:13). **WSC 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, his challenging a special propriety in the seventh, his own example, and his blessing the sabbath-day (Exod. 20:9,11).

Memory Verses: *“If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken” (Isaiah 58:13-14)*

An Explanation: Do you call the Sabbath a delight? This question gets at our hearts; do we see ourselves as dependent creatures of God who are called to work and rest with a certain rhythm? How do we think about the time that has been given to us? Is time ours alone, or is it a gift from God, to be used as God has commanded?!

Having completed the cosmos, God rested on the seventh day. God rested as enthroned, sovereign King over creation, pointing forward to the full revelation and realization of His good purpose for all creation. God enjoyed basking in the beauty and order of His own creation as a Gospel act, revealing Himself to His creatures as the sovereign Ruler “with us,” who will dwell with us forever.

God calls His people and all creatures to a Sabbath rest rooted in both redemption and creation. From the beginning of creation, all mankind was called to live in covenant with God, walking in His footsteps in the rhythm and pace of weekly life. Disregarding God’s commandments is disregarding God’s covenant, flouting the stipulations and blessings guaranteed to His covenant creatures. These commandments are never negotiable!

Man was created in God’s image, reflecting to the world an embodied analogy of six days of work and rest on the seventh. The Fourth Commandment teaches us to live as humble, dependent creatures of God, patterning our lives, down to the weeks, after the Master of our time, expectantly longing for the eschatological eternal rest in Jesus Christ foreshadowed in the original creation rest!

The Sabbath rest of God reminds His people of His rule and reign over creation, and through redemption, new creation and eternal rest in Christ. How ungrateful we are to disregard the good it can do for our souls and forget God’s sovereign rule and Sabbath rest for us as His people! He is LORD of our souls, our bodies, our time, and our week, and as we celebrate the Sabbath we anticipate His cosmic renewal of the heavens and the earth!

God created man, gave him dominion over creation, and commanded him to live with and for Him, resting and worshipping on the seventh day in Eden, the Garden Sanctuary where God dwelt with man, an earthly replica of a heavenly reality that pointed to an eschatological, permanent Sanctuary (Gen. 2:15; Rev. 21-22; Ezek. 28:12-19: *“You were in Eden, the Garden of God...You profaned your sanctuaries...”*).

Adam was to enjoy “working and keeping” God’s Garden Sanctuary, and through obedience to His Creator’s commands, to bring himself and creation into God’s Sabbath-Rest-Consummation. But Adam, as representative head of mankind, rebelled, and instead of rest came the agony of thorns and thistles and working in the sweat of his brow (Gen. 3:17-19). Although this first creation fell short of God’s Sabbath-Rest-Consummation, the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, has attained it and calls His people to rest in Him as we await blessed *shalom* peace in God’s presence for all eternity (Heb. 4:1-11)!

After man rebelled against his kind and caring Creator and took it upon himself to order his life, the Sabbath pointed forward to a greater rest to come: *“Arise, O LORD, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. ... For the LORD has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his dwelling place: “This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it”* (Psa. 132:8, 13-14; cf. Joshua 1:13; 2 Chron. 6:41; Isa. 66:1). Fallen man lived for himself, any way he wanted, working anytime and anywhere, regardless of what his Great Creator had taught Him.

Man refused to set his clock after God's timetable, living as if there were no consummation of the covenant. Therefore, in the time of Moses, God graciously revealed more fully in the Ten Commandments that man was created to work six days and rest on the seventh day. This was to be the pattern for redeemed man's life until the beginning of the end of time, the beginning of the consummation of the cosmos in the coming of Jesus Christ. There was not only a weekly Sabbath, but also a Sabbath rest at the end of each seven years, encouraging God's people to rest in anticipation of the eternal feast and rest to come in Messiah. Jesus fulfilled and accomplished His covenantal mission on behalf of His own in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension, so that we could find rest from our labors and from our sins, slavery to satan, and fear of death through reconciliation with God.

Christ was buried on Good Friday and rested in the tomb for three days, for us and for our salvation, rising gloriously on the first day of the week. In the Old Covenant, the week began on Saturday, pointing forward to a great work of God in Christ that would ultimately fulfill the rest symbolized by Saturday-Sabbaths. In the New Covenant, Jesus was raised from the dead on Sunday, after keeping the final Saturday-Sabbath rest of God in the tomb which we deserved. Jesus was raised and then enthroned and entered into His rest in heaven as the King of a new creation, the Lord of a new humanity.

We enter our rest by faith through the Holy Spirit in union with Christ. Believers have been raised with Christ and seated in the heavenly places with Him, awaiting the full restoration of the cosmos and of humanity, of which we are already a part by His Holy Spirit. We now rest and worship and serve God on Sundays, beginning our weeks with the "Lord's Day" and then going forth from worship and rest to work hard, diligently, and zealously in Him, awaiting His glorious return. We return, until He does, to begin each week in worship, seeking first the Kingdom and all His righteousness found in His Gospel promises, and then going out to work for His glory and His Kingdom!

What a privilege to have one day in seven, as our forefathers in Christ did, to rest on Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and receive Him through the means of grace each Lord's Day, and then to work for Him in the time He has graciously given us the other six days. How ungrateful we are if we despise this holiday, this "holy day" at the beginning of each week, and do not give God the glory that He is due. As God's creatures, redeemed by the blood of Christ, we are to live this life to the fullest as we were created to do, enjoying one day in seven as an analogical, embodied rest of worship and service that points to the pattern set by our Great Creator and Sovereign Ruler who has completed His works of creation and redemption in Christ.

Let us always remember that we have been redeemed to keep the Law of God, particularly the Fourth Commandment, for the glory of God and the good of our souls, and to enjoy "riding on the heights of heaven" as we faithfully trust and obey our God and Heavenly Father. Christ's rest is our rest, but we are still to live with not only this spiritual truth, but also with the outworking of it in the pattern of our lives for our joy and for the world to observe how mankind was created to live with God.

Prayer: Our Father and our God, we often disregard Your commandments, and we thank You for our Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is willing and gracious to forgive our sins when we confess them to You in and through His Spirit. Lord, especially with regard to our time, we often busy ourselves with our will, rather than submitting to Your will for our work week and daily rhythm. Let us imitate You through Your commandments, finding in Christ the rest and the foretaste of eternal life that we so desperately need in a disobedient, overworked, and distracted culture. In Christ's name, Amen.

In Christ's love,

Pastor Biggs