

REFORMATION 500 WEEK 34: HEIDELBERG CATECHISM QA'S 92-95

Question 92: WHAT IS THE LAW OF GOD? “And God spoke all these words, saying: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. [**First Commandment**] You shall have no other gods before Me. [**Second**] You shall not make for yourself a carved image – any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. [**Third**] You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. [**Fourth**] Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 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 cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made 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. [**Fifth**] Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you. [**Sixth**] You shall not murder. [**Seventh**] You shall not commit adultery. [**Eighth**] You shall not steal. [**Ninth**] You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. [**Tenth**] You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.”

We were created in God’s image to imitate God by obeying His law – which harmonizes with His eternal and unchangeable wisdom. God created Adam and Eve with a knowledge of His law (Rom. 2:14-15). “The law was engraved upon the heart of man in his creation, and is therefore known to all naturally” (Ursinus, 104). “Since the fall, however, which resulted in the corruption and depravity of our nature, a considerable part of the natural law has become obscured and lost by reason of sin [Rom. 7:7], so that there is only a small portion concerning the obedience which we owe to God still left in the human mind. It is for this reason that God repeated, and declared to the church the entire doctrine and true sense of His law, as contained in the Decalogue [i.e. the Ten Commandments]” (492). God wrote the Ten Commandments in **stone** (Exodus 31:18) as His **permanent** will for mankind. The other laws (both *ceremonial* and *judicial*) were *temporary*, designed only for Israel in the Promised Land, and were abolished by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:14-16).

But the Ten Commandments were not abolished. Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17). Jesus fulfilled the law “by teaching it and restoring its true meaning and sense, which He did by freeing it from the corruptions and glosses of the Pharisees, as appears from His sermon on the Mount” (Ursinus, 496). He fulfilled the law by obeying it perfectly and suffering its curse on the cross (Gal. 3:13). “Christ fulfills the law in us by His Spirit, by whom He renews us in the image of God [Rom. 8:4]

... This obedience is commenced in us in this life by the Spirit of Christ, and will be perfected in the life to come” (Ursinus, 496). We were “created, and have been redeemed by Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, that we might keep this law ... both in this life and in the life to come [2 John 1:7; 1 John 2:3-4; 1 Cor. 7:19]” (Ursinus, 491).

The preface to the law, “I am the LORD your God, who delivered you from bondage,” makes it clear that God redeems His people from the bondage of sin in order that they might obey His law out of thankfulness for salvation (John 14:15; 15:14).

Question 93: HOW ARE THESE COMMANDMENTS DIVIDED? **Into two tables: the first of which teaches, in four commandments, what duties we owe to God; the second, in six, what duties we owe to our neighbor.**

The Ten Commandments were written on “*two* tablets of stone” (Ex. 34:1), for they contain all we owe to **God** and our **neighbor**. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the **first** and great commandment. And the **second** is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these *two* commandments hang all the law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22:37-40).

Question 94: WHAT DOES GOD REQUIRE IN THE FIRST COMMANDMENT? That, on peril of my soul’s salvation, I avoid and flee all idolatry, sorcery, enchantments, invocation of saints or other creatures; and that I rightly acknowledge the only true God, trust in Him alone, with all humility and patience, expect all good from Him only, and love, fear, and honor Him with my whole heart; so as rather to renounce all creatures than to do the least thing against His will.

To have other gods is not to have the true God (the God of the Bible), or to worship anything that is not God. The unbelieving and ungodly have always “worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25). Sorcery, enchantments, or praying to unseen spirits are just some of the many ways people try (vainly) to find answers and help apart from the true God (see Deut. 18:10-12). God saves us so that we might begin in this life to love and desire Him more than anyone or anything else, so that our greatest desire is to please Him, and to fear to do the least thing against His will (Luke 14:26-33). “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God, my soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (Ps. 42:1-2). “Make me walk in the path of Your commands, for I delight in it” (Ps. 119:35).

Question 95: WHAT IS IDOLATRY? **Idolatry is to conceive or have something else in which to place our trust instead of, or besides, the one true God who has revealed Himself in His Word.**

Part of putting off the old man and putting on the new man is to avoid and flee all idolatry. Since we believers are not perfectly sanctified in this life, the sin of idolatry still clings to our heart, and therefore we must daily fight against it: “do not become idolaters as were some of them.... Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry” (1 Cor. 10:7, 14). “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21). Every day we need to be reminded to put God first. “Seek *first* the kingdom of God” (Matt. 6:33).

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