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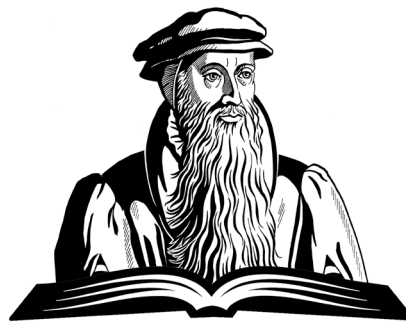
by Rev. Jonathan Mattull

Lecture #35

The Ten Commandments:

A Day for Holy Love

Catechism Questions 57 thru 59



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- 30. The Duty Required of Man—*Questions 39 through 42*
- 31. The Ten Commandments: A Preface of Grace—*Questions 43 & 44*
- 32. The Ten Commandments: Love for God—*Questions 45 thru 48*
- 33. The Ten Commandments: Love for God's Worship—*Question 49 thru 52*
- 34. The Ten Commandments: Love for God's Name—*Questions 53 thru 56*
- 35. The Ten Commandments: A Day for Holy Love—*Questions 57 thru 59***
- 36. *Coming Soon*
- 37. *Coming Soon*
- 38. *Coming Soon*
- 39. *Coming Soon*
- 40. *Coming Soon*

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Lecture #35

The Ten Commandments: A Day for Holy Love

Question 57: *Which is the fourth commandment?*

Answer: *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 manservant, nor thy maidservant, 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.”*

Question 58: *What is required in the fourth commandment?*

Answer: *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.*

Question 59: *Which day of the seven hath God appointed to be the weekly sabbath?*

Answer: *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.*

As we continue our study of the Catechism and the Ten Commandments, we come now to the fourth commandment. The preface has reminded us of God’s grace. The first commandment has directed us to love the one true God. And the second commandment has taught us to worship him as he has commanded in his Word. The third commandment exhorted us to give God the glory that is due unto his name. And now the fourth commandment comes and also focuses upon God, and directs us in one way of loving him. It commands us to use the time he has appointed for his holy worship, and to do so in a holy way. Thus, these commandments call us to love God. The

Catechism takes a little more space to treat this commandment, but this is due to some special features of the commandment itself. Instead of trying to consider all that the Catechism has to say about the fourth commandment in one lesson, we'll divide our treatment of it into two. In this lesson, we'll look at how God, by this commandment, sets apart an entire day for a holy purpose. In our next lesson, we'll look at how we are to use that day in a holy way.

So for this lesson, we have three Questions. The first, identifies the commandment, Question #57: "Which is the fourth commandment?"—"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 manservant, nor thy maidservant, 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." Notice that the commandment addresses those who are leaders in the home—husband and father. And yet it commands him regarding all that is under his authority. So it's not just that he personally is to keep it, but he is to use influence over those in his home, as it impacts them as well. Now, this is important, as we think about what we do on the day, and how it impacts others.

Well, let's look at the next Question, #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." Simply note that it's "such set time as he hath appointed in his word." Not that a pastor, not that a council, not that any mere man, not the whole church collectively, but what God has established—that's to be kept holy.

We'll spend a lot of our lesson on this idea, so let's look at the next Question, which is #59: "Which day of the seven hath God appointed to be the weekly sabbath?"—"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." Now, in this lesson, you'll hear me refer to this as "the Lord's Day," or "the Sabbath," or "the Christian Sabbath." All of those are synonyms referring to the same thing. So the Lord's Day is the Christian Sabbath; the Christian Sabbath is the Lord's Day; or we can simply say it's the Sabbath. Well, we'll look at these things more in detail.

For our lesson today, we'll look at three points: first, An Appointed Time for Holy Love; second, A Day Appointed for Holy Love; and third, The Day Appointed for Holy Love.

So first, An Appointed Time for Holy Love. Whatever we do, demands that we dedicate certain time to do it. If you're going to train your body to run long distance, you must set apart time to run. If you're going to read a book, you must dedicate time to do so. You may have a strong desire to run. You may read a lot about it. You may study it. You may think it through, and talk to others who do so. But if you do not set apart time to do it, it will never happen. It's true of reading. You may want to read many books in a month, or in a year, or however you wish to measure it. If you don't set apart time, it will never happen.

Well, this is also true of the most important thing we have, which is to worship God. Worship does not just take place accidentally. It demands specific time for us to stop whatever else we're doing, so that we may focus our thoughts and affections upon God. In order to hear God's Word preached, people have to gather at a specific time. In order to sing his divine praises and fellowship, we have to be together at a specific time. God's people, in other words, must gather at a specific time in order to worship him. This is true of family worship. If our family is going to worship him

in the home, everyone must have the same time set apart for that.

You see, the idea is, if we're going to engage in this, we have to do so at a certain time. This is true of public, and private, and secret worship. Of course, it's true that we are to honor God at all times. There's not a time in our lives, a second in our lives that we're not supposed to be honoring God. Remember, our chief duty, our chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever (Question #1). So whether it's a Monday, or a Wednesday, or a Thursday; whether we're eating and drinking; whether we're playing, or studying, or working; whatever we're doing, we're supposed to be doing so to the glory and enjoyment of God.

However, to worship him demands that we set apart ourselves unto that focused devotion to God. We have to focus exclusively upon him, and devote our attention, our thoughts, and desires, all that we are, to him. Perhaps this might help us see this point. In our own day, people are starting to show frustration and concern about the way that personal time with family and friends is often interrupted by our phones. The family may be together for a meal, and yet each member may be distracted by their phone. They're texting their other friend or family members, they're engaging in other activities, but they're not actually focused. So that they're physically present, but they're mentally distracted. Well, one way some have begun to deal with this is to put their phone on silent—not just vibrate, but silent; or even to turn it off altogether, so that the personal relationship and interaction with the people present may take place without distraction. The personal relationship is special, and so they're saying no to these virtual things.

So think of it this way, when a man and a woman get married, they're often make plans to have time together on their own after their wedding. They're effectively saying no to every other engagement, and to every other person. They take off time from work or school. They assign out other responsibilities of theirs to others to take care of, and put everything else aside, so that they can be with one another without distraction. Why do they do this? They're not just doing it because it's a duty or expectation. They do it because they love one another and they want to spend time with one another.

Well, this might help us understand what God is doing with this commandment. He's saying, "I want time with you. I don't want you to be present and distracted. I don't want time where your attention is divided. I want time with you. As we'll see, the commandment tells us to set aside everything else, so that we can give our undivided attention to him. Moreover, the commandment is telling us, as if God is saying, "You need undistracted time with me." Isn't that true? It's so easy for us to become distracted with other things—with hobbies, with jobs, with work, with school, with friends, with family even—and yet our attention to God becomes less. God is saying, "This is what you need. It's for your good." Of course, this is necessary, if we're going to love God and have a meaningful relationship with him through Jesus Christ, we must have time set apart to do so. However, we are not the ones to tell God when that time is. We don't get our calendar out, we don't pull out our phone and say, "Well, I can fit you in here or there." No, God is the one above us, and he tells us what that time is. He says, "Clear your schedule." He says, "Don't make appointments." He says, "Don't do other things. This is the day, this is the time that I want with you." Well, this is what he's done in the commandment. He's identified the time that we're to keep free from all other things in order to worship him.

And so, second, A Day Appointed for Holy Love. So far we've seen that if we're to give God the honor that he deserves, it demands that a specific time is honored and set apart. In other words, if we're going to focus upon God, and particularly worship him, we must do so at a certain time. We've also seen that it right for God to determine what that time is. The commandment identifies

that he has specifically set apart one entire day, as that time to be kept free from everything else. Well, certainly, on every other day, we should be praying, and reading our Bibles, and talking about the Lord. But this day is special. It's set apart from everything else. You see, the commandment directs us back to creation. This is important. We read, "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." In other words, the seven-day week is not an accident of history. In fact, there have been times in history when people have tried to disrupt the seven-day week, and they made it ten days, and it's been disastrous. It is ordered by God for our lives. It was established at creation. In fact, if you look back at Genesis, you'll see that God worked for six days, then he rested the seventh—six days labor, one day resting.

But notice the commandment: "The LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." What this means is that God has set apart that day, the entire day, a full day, for a holy purpose. Well, when did he do this? Well, he did it at creation. This means he did it before his covenant with Abraham. He did it before he met with Moses at Mount Sinai. He did it before the tabernacle was established, and he did it before the temple was established. He did it before there were Jews and Gentiles, because he did it when there was no such division. He did it for all mankind. This is exactly what Jesus indicates in Mark chapter 2, and verse 27. Now he was reproofing certain corruptions and legalistic tendencies of the Pharisees, but notice his words. He says, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." This tells us both that the Sabbath is a good gift, but it also tells us that it was not made for the Jews. It wasn't made for Abraham and his descendents. Oh, it includes them, but it's not exclusively for them. The Sabbath was made for man. Marriage was made for man. Marriage is not a Jewish institution. It's not a Mosaic institution, though Moses was used of God to help clarify and set boundaries upon the institution of marriage. But marriage itself goes back to creation. And so it's lawful for men and women who aren't Christians to become married, because it's an institution God has given to all men. Well, the Sabbath is the same. It was made before the fall, so it's not something that's ceremonial. It was made for all men, and so it stands still today. In other words, God set apart one day, at the beginning of all creation, for all men, for all time. Of course, this should make sense. All men ought to worship God, not only personally and privately, but publically. Setting apart everything else is to devote themselves to his worship. And to do that there must be time set apart. And God has established that one whole day devoted to that. Thus, all men ought to give God the time he's appointed to worship him.

And what a hurtful thing it is for men, women, and children do not observe this day. There are other things creep in, or they even shamefully prioritize other things—their own entertainment and recreation, or jobs and extra money. Oh, the Lord has given us an entire day for his worship, which is for our good, and we need such a day. Throughout the world, people ignore this appointment and use it for their own purpose. The great problem with that is that such things take us from the actual thing we need: to worship God, and to receive his guidance, his correction, his reproof, but also his encouragement and promises, and indeed his blessings of salvation on that day.

Notice as well, it is a whole day set apart to God. God has set apart one entire day. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy—not remember the Sabbath morning; not remember the Sabbath day to keep most of it holy; but remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. And the Lord blessed the Sabbath day to keep it holy. And the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it. He did not set apart an hour, a morning, or any other part of the day. He set apart the entire day, a whole day, that is, to be kept holy. It is not to be used like the other days. The other days are common. They are to be used for any and every lawful thing. But God has set apart one day to be a day for worship.

We'll look more at what is to be done on that day in the next lesson, but simply notice for now that it is the whole day that is set apart by God, for all men. If we can remember that, we would gain much in our understanding.

Well, third, The Day Appointed for Holy Love. We've seen that by this commandment, the Lord sovereignly and kindly appointed that one whole day in seven be set apart as a holy day unto himself. Well, which day is it? In the Old Testament, we see that it was the seventh day of the week. We can see this in the week of creation. The first day of the week corresponds to our Sunday, the second day of the week to our Monday, and so on through the seventh day, which is our Saturday. Thus God did all of his creative work Sunday the first day through Friday, the sixth day, then he rested on the seventh day, our Saturday. Throughout the Old Testament, we see the Jews observing the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath. And even today, if you're around those who are practicing Jews, they go to the synagogue—or the temple, as they call it—on the seventh day of the week.

Well, some even have taught that Christians ought to keep the fourth commandment by keeping the seventh day. However, this would be to ignore a most important change that God has established in his Word. Now, he hasn't told us that in so many words, "I've changed this day to that day," but he has through example done it. Remember when John the Baptist sent his disciples to Jesus Christ and said, "Are you the Christ, the one we're looking for?" And Christ didn't then sit down telling words. He said, "Go show John what you've seen, as he heals the sick, and he casts out demons. He's showing them these things. God's actions are those which likewise teach us.

Now, God has not changed any of the moral requirement. He still expects and demands that we keep holy unto him such set times as he has appointed in his Word. What he has changed is the day that is to be observed. Now, it's not church that changed this, it's not a council of churches that changed this. Instead, as we see in Scripture, God is the one. Before Christ's death and resurrection, we see the same pattern—seventh day of the week came, and those who were in covenant went to worship God. But after the resurrection, a great change took place. I'm quite confident to say that you gather with God's people to worship him on the first day of the week, our Sunday. Well, why is that? It is because God has appointed that day to be the day that his new covenant church observes as the Sabbath. It's not that he said in so many words, "I'm changing this." Instead, as noted, he showed the change. Just as he set apart the seventh day as the Sabbath, by his act of resting from creation, so he changed the day from the seventh to the first, by his Son, who is God, resting from his work of humiliation in redeeming his people. So let's see how.

Well, what happened on the first day of the week? I hope and I trust that you know—Christ arose. And the Scriptures are very clear on this. Notice John 20, verse 1: "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre." It's the day that Jesus arose from the dead. He was finished with his work of suffering. His humiliation was over! He had redeemed his people, both from sin, and the curse, and from death. And he finished that work on the first day of the week, when he arose from the dead. He rested from that work. Notice the emphasis the Bible makes of this throughout the New Testament. The first day is that day that he arose.

Well, it's also the day that Christ appeared to his disciples, and so he's patterning something for them. "This day isn't just day that I arose, but it's the day that you now are to be gathered together to meet with me." Notice John 20, and verse 19: "Then the same day"—that is, the first day—"at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace

be unto you.” Now, you’ll remember Thomas wasn’t there that first time, and yet he is there a week later. And what happens? Thomas is with the disciples, and we read (verse 26): “And after eight days again his disciples were within and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.” This expression, “eight days” is a way of saying an entire week passed. So the first day of the next week, God’s people are gathered together, and Christ appears again to his people. He is patterning and showing his blessing of his people on this day. What a privilege it is to have this day!

Well, the church discerned. It didn’t dictate, it didn’t command. But it discerned what Christ had done. So we find, for instance, the church is gathered together, and there at Pentecost, which would have been the first day of the week, the Spirit is poured out. We find as well in Acts chapter 20, and verse 7, “Upon the first day of the week,” we read, “when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.” Thus, even though Christ had ascended, the church continued to observe the first day of the week as that day set apart for worship.

Even when Paul was going to Corinth, and was preparing them ahead of time for a collection that he would then take in order to help those who stood in need, he wrote to them, in 1 Corinthians 16, verse 2, “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.” What he’s saying is this, “Since you’re already gathering on the first day, on that day, bring your giving,” so that they don’t have to be tracking down and other gatherings on other days. What’s his point? The church in Corinth—not Jerusalem, but Corinth—as with all the churches, were gathering on the first day of the week, in remembrance of Christ, keeping that day holy to him.

Even after many years had passed, when John was exiled to Patmos because of the Word of God, we see this day especially named in Revelation 1, verse 10, where he says, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.” That term “Lord’s Day” means the day especially owned by the Lord. Oh, he owns every day, but this day is sacred. This day especially is. This is why the Catechism says, “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.”

The moral requirement of the Sabbath remains to all generations. We are to keep that day he’s appointed holy. What has changed is the day we observe. And the reason this is changed is because God, in his Word, has indicated the change, both by the resurrection of his Son, and by the visits of his Son, and by the outpouring of his Spirit, and by the pattern that was observed by the church.

Well, let me close with one encouragement. Did you know that Christ, in his Word, has appointed fifty-two holy days each year for the church? To the Christian, each first day of the week is a new holy day. Under the New Testament, Christ has done away with all the Old Testament holy days—Passover and others. Though they, from the Bible, testify of Christ, they were all shadows of Christ, and are taken away. But he hasn’t left the church without a holy day. He’s given us one. It’s the Lord’s Day, the Christian Sabbath. And this comes to us every week, the first day of the week. What a happy occasion! What a great privilege that Christ has given us this for every week of the year to remember Christ, as we worship him, the resurrected Christ, the Son of God incarnate. What a great privilege that is!

Well, since this is so, let us look forward to the Lord’s Day. It approaches every week, and so every week we should be thinking about this. Oh, it’s coming! The Lord’s Day, the day of Christ’s resurrection, the day set apart for the best of things, to worship God, to be with his people, and to

love God! Oh, a time that God has set apart that he would express his love to us, and that we also may show our love to him. Well, as we'll see, there's great reason then to call the Sabbath a delight, and delight ourselves in the Lord, because the Lord has set apart the Sabbath as a day of delight. Holy love from God and through Christ, holy love to God as well. Well, may the Lord bless you as you meditate on these things, and come to delight yourselves in this blessed and holy day, to the glory of God through Christ Jesus.