

# Shorter Catechism: Questions 49 & 52

The Second Commandment. Reasons annexed to the Second Commandment

"...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, And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments."

## Word of God (Exodus 20 - KJV)

**20** And God spake all these words, saying, <sup>2</sup>I *am* the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

<sup>3</sup>Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

<sup>4</sup>Thou 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: <sup>5</sup>Thou 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; <sup>6</sup>And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

<sup>7</sup>Thou 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.

<sup>8</sup>Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: <sup>10</sup>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: <sup>11</sup>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.

<sup>12</sup>Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. <sup>13</sup>Thou shalt not kill. <sup>14</sup>Thou shalt not commit adultery. <sup>15</sup>Thou shalt not steal. <sup>16</sup>Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. <sup>17</sup>Thou 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.

## Shorter Catechism

**Question 49** – Which is the second commandment?

A: The second commandment is, Thou 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: thou shalt not bow down thy self 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; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. (Exod. 20:4–6)

**Question 52** - What are the reasons annexed to the second commandment?

A: The reasons annexed to the second commandment are, God's sovereignty over us, (Ps. 95:2–3) his propriety in us, (Ps. 45:11) and the zeal he hath to his own worship. (Exod. 34:13–14)

**Larger Catechism Question 110** – What are the reasons annexed to the second commandment, the more to enforce it?

A: The reasons annexed to the second commandment, the more to enforce it, contained in these words,

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; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments; are, besides **God's sovereignty over us**, and **propriety in us**, his **fervent zeal for his own worship**, and his **revengeful indignation against all false worship**, as being a **spiritual whoredom**; accounting the breakers of this commandment **such as hate him**, and threatening to **punish them unto divers generations**; and **esteeming the observers of it such as love him and keep his commandments**, and promising **mercy to them unto many generations**.

## I. Reason annexed: God's sovereignty over us & propriety in us

*God's Sovereignty over us - "I the Lord thy God"*

- **Psalm 45** – <sup>11</sup> So the King will greatly desire your beauty; because He is your Lord, worship Him.
- **Flavel** - "I the Lord; which shews that it belongs to God only to institute his own worship, and make it effectual; and therefore to do that in his worship which he never commanded, is sinful and dangerous"

## II. Reason annexed: Zeal he has to His own worship

*God cares about His worship – "For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God"*

- **Exodus 34** - <sup>13</sup> But you shall destroy their altars, break their *sacred* pillars, and cut down their wooden images <sup>14</sup> (for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God)

### Is there such a thing as proper jealousy?

- **Larger Catechism Q. 148** - The sins forbidden in the tenth commandment are, discontentment with our own estate; envying and grieving at the good of our neighbour, together with all inordinate motions and affections to any thing **that is his**.
- The New Testament warns us against provoking the Lord to jealousy by breaking the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment: **1 Corinthians 10** - <sup>14</sup> Therefore, my beloved, **flee from idolatry**. <sup>15</sup> I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say ... <sup>20</sup> Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they **sacrifice to demons** and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. <sup>21</sup> You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. <sup>22</sup> Or do we **provoke the Lord to jealousy**? Are we stronger than He?

## III. Punishing Three or Four Generations of those that Hate Him

1. **Fathers and Mothers who hate God will have children who do so as well**
  - a. **Proverbs 22:6** says – "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it."
2. **There is a natural Headship in the Family Order**
  - a. **1 Corinthians 7** - <sup>14</sup> For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.
3. **God's Nature is Unchanging – the example of King Jeroboam**

- a. **1 Kings 13** - <sup>33</sup> After this event Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but again he made priests from every class of people for the high places; whoever wished, he consecrated him, and he became *one* of the priests of the high places. <sup>34</sup> And this thing was the sin of the house of Jeroboam, so as to exterminate and destroy *it* from the face of the earth.
  - b. **1 Kings 14** - <sup>15</sup> For the Lord will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water. He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the River, because they have made their wooden images, provoking the Lord to anger. <sup>16</sup> And He will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who sinned and who made Israel sin."
  - c. **1 Kings 15** - <sup>29</sup> And it was so, when he became king, *that* he killed all the house of Jeroboam. He did not leave to Jeroboam anyone that breathed, until he had destroyed him, according to the word of the Lord which He had spoken by His servant Ahijah the Shilonite, <sup>30</sup> because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he had sinned and by which he had made Israel sin, because of his provocation with which he had provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger.
- How do these means work themselves out?
    - **Psalm 49** - <sup>13</sup> This is the way of those who *are* foolish, and of their posterity who approve their sayings.
    - **The Cycle of Poverty - Wikipedia** - *The cycle of poverty has been defined as a phenomenon where poor families become impoverished for at least three generations, i.e. for enough time that the family includes no surviving ancestors who possess and can transmit the intellectual, social, and cultural capital necessary to stay out of or change their impoverished condition.*
    - **James Fisher** - Not but that the haters of God to all generations shall meet with deserved punishment; but the threatening is limited to the third and fourth generation, for a greater judgment upon wicked parents, **some of whom may live to see their posterity of these generations**, and to **read their own sin in the punishment of their offspring whom they have seduced**; as Zedekiah, for his wickedness, saw his sons, and the princes of Judah, slain before his eyes, Jer. 52:3, 10.
    - Is there hope? Yes. **1 John 1** - <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
  - How can we reconcile this with Ezekiel 18:20?
    - **James Fisher** - This passage in Ezekiel is to be understood of the son who does not tread in the steps of his wicked father; as is evident from ver. 14, 17 -- "If he beget a son that seeth all his father's sins, and doth not such like, he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live;" whereas the threatening in this commandment respects wicked children, who copy after the example of their graceless parents, as Nadab the son of Jeroboam did, who "walked in the way of his father, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to Sin" I Kings 15:26

## IV. Rewarding Many Generations of them that Love Me

- **Genesis 18** -<sup>19</sup> For I have known him [Abraham], in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”
- **Job 1** -<sup>5</sup> So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings *according to* the number of them all. For Job said, “It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” Thus Job did regularly.
- **Watson** - The mercy which God shows is superabundant. 'Abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands.' God visits iniquity 'to the third and fourth generation' only, but he shows mercy to a thousand generations. The Lord has treasures of mercy in store, and therefore is said to be 'plenteous in mercy', and 'rich in mercy'. The vial of God's wrath drops only, but the fountain of his mercy runs. The sun is not so full of light as God is of love.

## V. New Testament Worship – Simplicity

- **2 Corinthians 3** -<sup>12</sup> Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—<sup>13</sup> unlike Moses, *who* put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. <sup>14</sup> But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ. <sup>15</sup> But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. <sup>16</sup> Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. <sup>17</sup> Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. <sup>18</sup> But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

## VI. How to approach the Worship of God

1. **Worship must be spiritual.**
    - a. **Plumer states** “Its seat must be in the soul”.
  2. **Worship must be according to divine directions.**
    - a. **Plumer states** “It be free from ceremony, tradition, and will-worship” and so forth. This is what we studied today.
  3. **Worship must be offered in true faith.**
    - a. **Plumer states** [that unless we have true faith], “the most appropriate public worship will soon become a burden, and we shall cry out, “what a weariness it is!” We must draw near to God in faith when we worship.”
  4. **Worship must be offered to God through Christ.** Our worship has to be offered through the merits of Jesus Christ.
    - a. **Plumer states**, “The Saviour takes our imperfect services, puts them into his golden censer, sprinkles them with his own precious blood and presents them before God for a sweet-smelling savour”.
- **William Plumer**, ‘When someone spoke to Leighton of his very valuable library he said, ‘One devout thought is worth it all’”