

## The Fourth Commandment: Part 2

### 119.Q. What are the sins forbidden in the fourth commandment?

- a. The sins forbidden in the fourth commandment are all omissions of the duties required, all careless, negligent and unprofitable performing of them, and being weary of them; all profaning the day by idleness, and doing that which is in itself sinful, and by all needless works, words, and thoughts about our worldly employments and recreations.

#### Commentary

1. Which of the Ten Commandments forbids the sin of **laziness**?  
The fourth commandment, which commands us to work industriously for six days of every week.
2. Why is "careless, negligent, and unprofitable" performing of Sabbath duties sinful?  
Because God requires of us not merely formal or technical obedience to his law, but a **spiritual devotion** and **obedience** to all his commandments. A merely formal observance of the Sabbath is hypocrisy.
3. Why is it wrong to be weary of the Sabbath, and wish it were past?  
This attitude of mind is wrong because it is the product of a **selfish, worldly heart** that finds no joy or satisfaction in the things of God.
4. Why is it wrong to profane the Sabbath day by idleness?  
This is wrong because God created us **active, intelligent** beings. God, who is himself intensely active, cannot be honored by human idleness, and especially not by idleness on the Sabbath day.
5. Is it wrong to take a nap on the Sabbath afternoon, or to take a walk in the open air?  
Taking a nap or a walk in the open air, provided they are kept within the bounds of **reasonable moderation**, are to be regarded as works of necessity, and they may be as necessary to bodily health and mental alertness as to eat breakfast, dinner, and supper on the Sabbath day.
6. Is it wrong to enter into an agreement to buy or sell something on the Sabbath day?  
To enter into a **contract**, whether oral or written, is itself an act of worldly business, and wrong on the Sabbath day.
7. Is it wrong to sit in church and plan out our business for the following week while the sermon is being preached?  
Of course this practice is sinful, although in its nature it is a secret sin which only God and the one who practices it can know. It is possible by **effort** and **self-discipline** to gain control over our thoughts so that they do not wander where we do not want them to go. Of course, the power of the Holy Spirit is needed to do this successfully.
8. What present-day conditions indicate a prevalent disregard for the Sabbath?
  - a. The obvious and gross **commercializing** of the Sabbath by the world,
  - b. the increasing number of Christians who repudiate the very **principle** of the Sabbath,
  - c. the general **carelessness** about the Sabbath even on the part of Christian people who profess to believe in the principle and obligation of the Sabbath.

## The Fourth Commandment: Part 2

### 120.Q. What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it?

- a. The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it, are taken from the equity of it, God allowing us six days of seven for our own affairs, and reserving but one for himself, in these words, "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work:" from God's challenging a special propriety in that day, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God:" from the example of God, who "in six days made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day:" and from the blessing which God put upon that day, not only sanctifying it to be a day for his service, but in ordaining it to be a means of blessing to us in our sanctifying it: "Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

### Commentary

1. How many reasons are annexed to the fourth commandment? Four:
  - a. the **equity** of God's allowing us six times as much time for our own occupations as we are required to devote to worshipping him;
  - b. the **special claim** that God makes to the Sabbath day;
  - c. the example of God himself in **resting** on the seventh day, following the six days of creation;
  - d. the **blessing** which God has placed upon the Sabbath day.
2. What is meant by the word equity?

It means **reasonableness** or **fairness** in a matter involving two or more parties.
3. How has God shown fairness in the Sabbath commandment?

By allowing us six days of the week for our own **occupations** and **enjoyments**, and only requiring one day to be **devoted solely** to him in a special way.
4. What is the meaning of the expression "God's challenging a special propriety in that day"?

In modern language, this means, "God's claiming that day as his **special property**."
5. Does God have the right to claim the Sabbath day as His special property?

Yes, for he is our **Creator** and **Lord**.
6. Why is breaking the Sabbath a form of stealing?

Because the person who breaks the Sabbath, by taking it for his own use, steals something which belongs especially to God; he **appropriates** God's property, the Sabbath day.
7. Why did God rest on the seventh day after the six days of creation?

In order to give an example, and lay down a **religious principle**, for the human race to take note of and follow.
8. What special religious meaning is involved in the example of God's resting on the Sabbath day after his work of creation?

The Sabbath rest into which God then entered became the **type** or example of the eternal rest of the people of God in heaven.

## The Fourth Commandment: Part 2

9. Will the Sabbath rest of God's people in heaven be a condition of idleness?  
No. Heaven will be a state both of the most perfect rest and also of, the most intense activity.
10. What is the blessing which God has placed upon the Sabbath day? In the first place, the Sabbath day is blessed by being **set apart** as a day for God's service. In the second place, it is an appointed means of **blessing to us**, and we will find it so if we observe it as God intended, in a reverent, conscientious, and spiritual manner.

### 121.Q. Why is the word "Remember" set in the beginning of the fourth commandment?

- a. The word "Remember" is set in the beginning of the fourth commandment, partly because of the great benefit of remembering it, and being thereby helped in our preparation to keep it, and, in keeping it, better to keep all the rest of the commandments, and to continue a thankful remember of the two great benefits of creation and redemption, which contain a short abridgment of religion; and partly, because we are very ready to forget it, for that there is less light of nature for it, and yet it restraineth our natural liberty in things at other times lawful; that it cometh but once in seven days, and many worldly businesses come between, and too often take off our minds from thinking of it, either to prepare for it, or to sanctify it; and that Satan with his instruments much labors to blot out the glory, and even the memory of it, to bring in all irreligion and impiety.

### Commentary

1. What benefits come from remembering the Sabbath day?  
We cannot really keep the Sabbath aright unless we remember it beforehand. If we think of it beforehand, and keep it in mind through the week, we will be in a better state of mind to observe it as it should be observed.
2. How does keeping the Sabbath help us to perform other religious duties better?  
A spiritual observance of the Sabbath day helps to keep us in touch with God. When we are really in **communion** with God, all other religious duties can be performed more earnestly and willingly. But if we neglect the Sabbath, our communion with God will be weakened, and we will be likely also to neglect other duties.
3. What two great works of God does the Sabbath day call to our minds?  
The works of **creation** and **redemption**, which, as the catechism informs us, together "contain a short abridgment of religion." The Sabbath day calls these two works of God to our minds because God instituted the Sabbath when he finished his work of creation, and our Savior Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the first day of the week, which is the Christian Sabbath.
4. Why is it especially necessary that we remember the Sabbath day?  
Because we are very likely to **forget it**.

## The Fourth Commandment: Part 2

5. Why is it so easy to forget the Sabbath day?

One reason is that the light of nature tells us very little about the Sabbath. By the light of nature we could only know that a **portion** of our time ought to be devoted to God our Creator. We could not know what portion of our time, nor exactly how it ought to be spent.

6. Why do many people consider the Sabbath commandment burdensome and unreasonable?

Because the Sabbath commandment restrains our natural liberty in matters which are lawful on other days. To buy, sell, work at our ordinary occupations, engage in sports and other common recreations are not wrong in themselves. These practices are not sinful on other days of the week; they are wrong only on the Sabbath day. But many people are not satisfied with six days of the week for their own business and pleasure; they want all seven. Because the Sabbath interferes with this desire, many people consider it unreasonable and burdensome. And those who have this attitude toward the Sabbath will be inclined to neglect and forget it.

7. How does the fact that the Sabbath comes only once a week make us likely to forget it?

When there are six days filled with all kinds of **business** and **activity** between Sabbaths, it is only natural that we tend to forget the Sabbath.

8. Why does Satan, with his servants, try so hard to break down and destroy the Sabbath day?

Satan understands that the people being converted to Christ, and repenting of their sins, and loving and serving God depend chiefly upon the **preaching of the gospel** and the **public** and **private** exercises of God's worship.

## The Fourth Commandment: Part 2

### Scripture References

- Ezek. 22:26. The omission of a duty is itself a sin.
- Acts 20:7-9. Inattention (luring divine service may result in falling asleep).
- Ezek. 33:30-32. Careless, negligent, and unprofitable performing of religious duties.
- Amos 8:5. The sin of profaning the Sabbath by being weary of it, and wishing it were past.
- Mal. 1:13. The sin of regarding public divine worship as a weariness.
- Ezek. 23:38. The Sabbath is especially profaned by doing that which is in itself sinful, that is, something which is sinful no matter when it is done.
- Jer. 17:24, 27; Isa. 58:13-14. It is wrong to profane the Sabbath by unnecessary works, words, or thoughts about our ordinary affairs.
- Exod. 20:8-11. (Question 120 being an analysis of the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, no Scripture references except the commandment itself are required.)
- Exod. 20:8. The word Remember is the first word of the Sabbath commandment.
- Exod. 16:23; Luke 23:54-56 compared with Mark 15:42; Neh. 13:19. To remember the Sabbath day in advance helps us to keep it.
- Ps. 92 (Title, "A Ps. or Song for the Sabbath day"), verses 13-14; Ezek. 20:12, 19-20. Faithful observance of the Sabbath enables us to perform all other religious duties better.
- Gen. 2:2-3; Ps. 118:22-24 compared with Acts 4: 10-11; Rev. 1:10. To remember the Sabbath day helps us to think of God's two great works of creation and redemption, which form a summary of religion.
- Ezek. 22:26. By nature we very easily forget the Sabbath.
- Neh. 9:14. There is less light of nature for the Sabbath than for most other of the Ten Commandments: therefore, it is very easy to overlook and disregard the Sabbath. Our knowledge of the Sabbath depends almost entirely on the Bible.
- Exod. 34:21. The Sabbath commandment restrains our natural liberty even in platters which are lawful at other times.
- Deut 5: 14-15; Amos 8:5. Worldly business conning oil the weekdays often takes our minds off the Sabbath and keeps us from observing it aright.
- Lam 1:7; Jer. 17:21-23; Neh. 13:15-23. Satan and his servants try very hard to prevent spiritual Sabbath observance, and to destroy the institution of the Sabbath day.