

Catechetical Sermon, January 26th, 2025

Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 34, "The First Commandment"

Scripture Lesson: Isaiah 44:9-20

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| Lesson Aim | To understand three things: First, what the first commandment is, second, what it requires and third, how it is fulfilled in Christ. |
| Steps to Learning | Read the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 34 and Isaiah 44:9-20 . Discuss the sermon and the particulars of the lesson below. It may be best to work through the material over several days or sessions. |
| Discuss | <p>Why are we motivated to care to obey the first commandment? We are motivated to obey the first commandment, as we are any commandment, because Jesus was crucified for our sins and raised for our justification.</p> <p>What is the first commandment in context? The first commandment is the first of ten commandments (literally "ten words") that was a part of the Mosaic Covenant. Each commandment was a stipulation or requirement outlining obedience to God for the Israelites as they were in covenant with God. The sanctions of curses and blessings in the Land of Israel ended with the end of the Mosaic Covenant and the beginning of the New Covenant in Christ. Yet, the ten commandments apply to the church today in their moral dimension.</p> <p>What does the first commandment require? The commandment states, "You shall have no other gods before me." That is, we are not to believe and act in such a way that attributes God's ownership and rule and consequent worship to someone or something else." The Old Testament reading from Isaiah 44 helps to outline the sins against the first commandment, which are: the lack of knowledge of God, pride in attributing power and authority to idols and replacing love for God with love for idols. Positively, to obey the first commandment is to believe that obedience to God in love for him and exclusively worshipping him is good, right and satisfying. To obey God is to love him through Christ and to subordinate the things in creation to their proper place below the worship of God.</p> <p>What is it for Christ to fulfill the first commandment? To understand this, we must first believe that Jesus Christ is the express image of God; he explains him. Through faith in Jesus we understand that God is holy and rightly demands exclusive worship from us who are mere creatures dependent on him for life and breath and everything. Faith in Jesus, which justifies, humbles us to receive the fact of God's holiness and right to demand true worship. As we study Christ and his life, we are grateful to understand that Jesus proved his righteousness by his perfect love and worship of the Father. Jesus never served idols but rejected them out of his obedience to the Father.</p> |
| Bible Reading | Matthew 22-28 (Reading through the Gospels) |