

# Westminster Larger Catechism

## *Question 112*

### *Third Commandment*

Halifax, 25 July 2010

#### **Introduction**

Last week, we began a study of the third commandment, having come to question 111 of the Larger Catechism:

#### **Q. 111 Which is the third commandment?**

**A.**     **The third commandment is, *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.***

We looked at the meaning of the words that are used, and then considered what is really at the heart of this commandment.

- I showed you that **God's name** involves anything by which the LORD has made Himself known to us—
  - His names, titles, attributes, ordinances, sacraments, word, works—and most of all His revelation to us in Jesus Christ, the crucified Saviour.
  
- Then we looked at what it means to **take God's name**.
  - We saw that this is something we do all the time—
    - “Taking His name” is very broad in what it encompasses...
      - We take his name in our lips whenever we speak His name.
      - We take His name in our baptism and in our confession of Him as our God,
      - We take His name in our thoughts when look at the things He had made and His acts in history.
    - There are more deliberate ways we take up His name (say, speaking His name or calling upon His name in worship),
      - but we can never get away from taking His name because He fills all heaven and earth and is revealed in all of history and all of creation—we are constantly immersed in the milieu of His revelation and glory.
  
- And then we looked at what it means to take God's name **in vain**.
  - I explained to you that the Hebrew word translated “in vain” refers to something that is empty or worthless or of little account...
    - So the essence of this commandment has to do with reverencing God's name—His revelation of Himself.

- We break this commandment when we do not respect or take seriously who He is and what He has said—
  - We act as if it is not quite real—as if God is not real!
  - We don't esteem Him for the glorious majestic God that He is, nor do we regard His works and all that is associated with Him.

You can see right away that we all have a problem with keeping this commandment.

- That is why we constantly need the righteousness of Jesus Christ.
  - We are fallen and we are not righteous.
  - But Jesus, the Son of God, came to be our righteousness—for all His people—for all who trust in Him...
    - He became the representative of the whole church—
      - living the life that we all ought to live (as our representative)...
      - and paying the penalty for all of our sins.
  - And now He is at work in us by His Spirit to restore us to personal righteousness so that might live in true obedience—
    - the very life we are called to live as God's image bearers.
    - And that work begins in us when the Spirit causes us to take God seriously—to believe that He is what He is...
      - When we are converted to Jesus Christ, we take God's revelation seriously enough that we realise that we must have Christ for our Saviour or we are on the pathway to destruction.
      - We turn to Christ with faith and gratitude and rest in Him for the forgiveness of sin and for His gracious work to transform us.
      - And we trust that on the last day, He will complete that work in us so that we might live with Him in glory forever and ever, without sin.
  - But until that day comes,
    - We realise that even though we have taken God so seriously that we have sincerely come to Christ,
      - we constantly come short as far as truly reverencing God and all that relates to Him as we ought.
      - We want to do it, but we know that we are far from the standard.
        - There is not even a time when we have *ever* revered His name as we should!
          - Even when we are engaged in worship, or when we have just been broken under the conviction of sin, we still do not truly see Him as He is.

- Yet, we are thankful that He is helping us to change and that He has fully pardoned us through our dear Saviour.
- And so today, I want to move along in our study of the third commandment to look more closely at what is required of us.
  - That is laid out for us in Question 112 of the Larger Catechism. It says:

**Q. 112 What is required in the third commandment?**

**A. The third commandment requires, that the name of God, His titles, attributes, ordinances, the word, sacraments, prayer, oaths, vows, lots, works, and whatsoever else there is whereby he makes himself known, be holily and reverently used in thought, meditation, word, and writing; by an holy profession, and answerable conversation, to the glory of God, and the good of ourselves, and others.**

I want to take a very practical approach in looking at this commandment.

- I know that all of you who are God's sons and daughters through the grace of Jesus Christ *want* to esteem God more highly than you do.
  - You yearn to reverence Him more.
  - And you yearn for others to reverence Him and you want to promote His glory in earth.
    - You know, as the Catechism puts it, that it would be good for you and for others to really engage with God in all that He is...
      - to truly stand in awe before His glorious majesty.
- So today I am going to show you from the word of God how you might esteem God more highly than you do and how you might help others to esteem Him more highly than they do.
  - Our primary text is the third commandment itself, which I have already read to you, but as a supplementary Scripture reading,
    - I have selected Romans 11:33 – 12:2.
      - READ Romans 11:33 – 12:2.
    - You can see in this passage that Paul describes the majesty of God.
      - He speaks of everything as being here for the glory of God—that it came for Him, and that it is for Him—for His glory...
        - And then He calls on us to present ourselves as a living sacrifice to God.
        - Everything about us is to be for Him!

- When we have been reconciled through Christ, by God’s mercy in Christ, we are restored to this purpose of living for the glory of God!
- Really, this goes back to the very first question in the catechism—that man’s chief and highest end is to glorify God and fully to enjoy Him forever!
  - We saw at that time that because God made us for this purpose, we **will** glorify Him,
    - either as those who are redeemed and want to glorify Him by partaking in the fullness of His mercy and grace that saves us from our sin and makes us into a new creation for His glory...
    - or as those who glorify Him despite ourselves—even while trying desperately to deny Him and avoid Him, and who glorify Him as a vessel of wrath upon whom He displays the glory of His vindictive justice.
    - We saw that it is our ultimate purpose as human beings that we will glorify Him.
- But now with the third commandment, we are looking at it as a **duty** that belongs to every human being—
  - that we ought:
    - to endeavour to see His glory (to reverence His name),
    - to give Him glory (to behave with reverence before Him)
    - and to promote His glory (to cause His name to be revered by others).
- There is a difference in what we shall ultimately do whether we want to or not and in what we are called to do as a duty...
  - The wicked do not seek to glorify God as a privilege and a calling,
    - they do not endeavour to glorify Him...
    - but end up glorifying Him the way Pharaoh did—as one who, having stood in opposition to God, becomes a vessel whose destruction glorifies God.
- So I speak to you, who are in Christ, as those who want to glorify God, not as those who will glorify Him despite yourselves.
  - So please consider first of all...

### **I. How you are to reverence God’s names and titles more.**

- In looking at this, I want you to understand that we looking God’s “names” in the more narrow sense.
  - I explained to you last week that God’s “name” refers to **all** that is revealed about Him—His names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word and works...

- But now I want to show you in particular how we may esteem His actual names and titles by which He is called.
- A. One of the first things you need to do is to become familiar with His names and titles.
1. God has given Himself many names by which He identifies Himself.
    - a. In the past, I have often spoken to you about the name Yahweh or Jehovah which is written as LORD with all upper case letters in our English Bibles.
      - God gave Himself this name as His own special name, to distinguish Himself from all the other so-called gods such as Baal or Molech
        - He revealed it to Moses as recorded in Exodus 3:11-14 when He called Moses to go into Egypt and order Pharaoh to let the Israelites go.
      - The name means “I am that I am.”
        - By this name, God distinguishes Himself as the one who has always been and who is pure existence in essence—the non-created, non-developing one who brought everything else into being.
        - He alone is Yahweh, and throughout the encounter with Pharaoh, He demonstrates that He alone is Yahweh.
          - This name is foundational among God’s name.
          - It is the name which He has given to Himself for us to know Him by.
    - b. And it is important to realise that when the Son of God was incarnate and came to dwell among us,
      - He was referred to by this name.
        - His coming was announced by John the Baptist, as had been foretold in Isaiah 40,
          - and the name John used in introducing Him was Yahweh, for he said, “Prepare the way of the LORD” when he called the people to repentance in anticipation of His coming.
      - And it is noteworthy as well that after Jesus had completed His work on the cross,
        - the Father officially conferred upon Him this great name so that we would know that He was none other than Yahweh.
        - In Philippians 2:9-11 it says
          - Phil 2:9-11: Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
      - We make confession Jesus Christ is Himself LORD or Jehovah.

- That is the name He has been given!
  - In Isaiah 45, after God declares that He is the only saviour,
    - He says this:
      - Isa 45:22-25: "Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself; The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, And shall not return, That to Me every knee shall bow, Every tongue shall take an oath. He shall say, 'Surely in the LORD I have righteousness and strength. To Him men shall come, And all shall be ashamed Who are incensed against Him. In the LORD all the descendants of Israel Shall be justified, and shall glory.'"
    - Obviously, this is talking about the Son of God who is given the name above every name as the incarnate one...
      - He is LORD (Yahweh), and all are justified through Him.
      - He is given the name above every name—the name LORD.
      - That is what we call Him...
        - Jesus Christ is LORD. That is our confession!
        - The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want!
- c. And did you know that this name Yahweh (LORD) is often combined with many other names...
- He is called the LORD our righteousness, the LORD who sees, the LORD who is there, the LORD of hosts (or armies), and many others.
2. And then of course God has a lot of other names...
- He is God (Elohim or El) which speaks of Him as deity...
  - He is God Almighty which speaks of His invincible power
  - He is the Lord in the sense of Master
  - He is the God of Israel which speaks of Him as God to us His covenant people whom He has chosen for Himself.
  - He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob which reminds us of His covenant.
  - He is the Alpha and the Omega (the first and the last)
  - He is Emmanuel which means God with us
  - He is the Holy One of Israel which reminds us that He does not mix with sin.
3. And then there are His many titles...there is overlap with these and with His names...
- He is the "Judge of all the earth" which reminds us that we must give an account and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.
  - He is the Good Shepherd which reminds us of His constant care for us.

- He is the King of Glory and the King of Kings which reminds us that He rules over all
- He is the Creator and the Redeemer which reminds us that we are His.
- He is the Prince of Peace which reminds us of the nature of the kingdom He is establishing
- He is the Lily of the Valley which reminds of His beauty.
- He is the Lamb which reminds us of His sacrifice
- He is the Lion which reminds us of His power
- He is the Rock which reminds us of the safety we have in Him
- He is the “hearer of prayer” and the Ancient of Days...

TRANS> We could go on and on with His names and titles.

- But the point is that you need to learn these names and these titles because it is by these that He wishes to be known to us.
  - Look for them as you read His word and as you listen to sermons.

B. And then meditate on them!

1. Consider what these names mean—what they say about the greatness and majesty of our God!
  - They are not just empty names.
  - They are names packed with meaning, revealing who God is...
    - and not only who He is in Himself...
      - but who He is in relation to His people!
2. The meditation I am talking about is Christian meditation.
  - It is not eastern mediation where you try to empty your mind, but it is meditation in which you fill your mind with the fullness of God and His glory!
  - You think deeply about who He is and stand in awe before Him!
    - You take to heart what He has said instead of letting it bounce off of you.
    - You stand in wondering amazement before your God.
3. Remember that glorifying God begins with what you think of Him...
  - We are often (and rightly so) concerned about helping others to esteem the Lord,
    - but then in our zeal for promoting His glory,
      - we sometimes forget that *we* are also to have a reverent esteem for Him—to be imbibing His glory.
    - It is hypocritical to seek that others would esteem Him when we ourselves do not esteem Him...
  - Yet, this precaution also has its own precaution...

- We must never suppose that you cannot seek to promote His glory until you esteem Him as highly as you ought...
  - You will *never* esteem Him as highly as you ought.
  - The point is that you are to be *seeking* to esteem Him more highly yourself as you seek to encourage others to do the same.

C. So how do you promote a high esteem for God's names in the community?

1. You do this by using His names with reverence and care.

- When ever you speak of Him (use His names), you must be mindful of who He is that you are speaking of...
  - that the person who is represented by that name is holy and awesome, so you must speak of Him in an honourable way.

2. Job is a splendid example of using God's name in this way.

- Job had received news that he had lost his wealth and that all of his children had been killed...
  - Many people would have cursed God at such a time—
    - people will curse him for something as trivial as stubbing their toe or having their computer mis-behave...
  - But what did Job do? even when he as provoked by his wife?
    - Instead of cursing God, he blessed Him—he honoured His name...
    - He said, “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord!”

3. But this is not to say that it is impossible to use God's name in a reverent way to speak a curse.

- As when Paul declared,
  - Gal 1:8: But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.
  - Paul was not using God's name in a careless or thoughtless manner when he said that!
- It honours God's name to use it reverentially.
  - Those who heard this ought to have respected God all the more, the very opposite of what happens when His name is used in a thoughtless manner.
  - It dishonours His name to use it when we don't really mean it or when we are not authorised to use it...
    - As when we curse someone for cutting us off in traffic.
- People will try to excuse themselves by saying that they didn't really mean it.



- But that is exactly the problem!
- We should never use God’s holy and awesome name in a trivial way that we don’t mean.
  - It should not just become an empty expression that falls carelessly from our lips as an exclamation...
    - even if we use some altered form like Gee or Geeze, or Gosh.
    - Always, we are to think of the glory and majesty of the One of which we are speaking.

TRANS> Learn then, to use God’s names and titles in a way that honours Him.

- Now I want to show you secondly...

## **II. How you are to reverence God’s attributes, and how you might do it more**

A. God’s attributes are those things that are rightly *attributed* to Him:

1. These are presented all through scripture—
  - a. As when Moses saw the glory of God and heard the words:
    - Exodus 34:6: "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth..."
  - b. or in Psalm 90:2, when Moses says:
    - Psalm 90:2: "From everlasting to everlasting, you are God."
  - c. or when David spoke of Him:
    - in Psalm 139 as the one who knows even the words that he is about to speak and sees into his very heart, and the one who is present in all places.
    - or in Psalm 33 as the one whose counsel and purpose stands forever.
  - d. or when the letter to the Hebrews 12:29 speaks of Him as a "consuming fire."
2. The Larger Catechism has a nice summary of His attributes in Question 6 when it says:
  - "God is a spirit, in and of Himself infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection; all sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, everywhere present, almighty, knowing all things, most wise, most just, most merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

B. We need to see that God’s attributes are all around us (in creation).

1. We ourselves are made in His image.
  - We have a certain measure of things like wisdom, justice, mercy, truth, graciousness—

- These attributes are attributes that God has shared with us as those made in His image.
  - They are often greatly mangled and distorted because of our sin and corruption, but we can still see them all around us.
  - But we are to honour these things inasmuch as they are reflective of God.
    - For example, we are to have a very high esteem for wisdom and understanding so that we search for them as for gold and silver.
      - And so that we speak highly of them when they are seen among us and to speak despairingly of them when they are mangled.
    - We are to delight in mercy and to seek to speak words that minister grace to the hearers.
    - We are to praise justice and equity wherever it is found and to promote it in our society, in our family, and are to cultivate it in our own lives.
      - When our children exhibit these attributes, we are to praise them, and when they do not,
        - we are to correct them, all the while correcting ourselves for our poor example.
  - As God's image bearers, it is for us to display the beauty of His attributes by living out those attributes everyday!
2. And then there are those attributes that are seen in certain aspects of creation...
- Such as God's eternal power that we admire as seen in His creation...
    - Just think of the grandeur of the galaxies, and of the detailed planning and wisdom that is packed into the design of a single cell...
      - I am made of cells and cells are made of molecules and molecules are made of atoms and atoms are made of quarks...
        - and who knows what smaller unites are yet to be discovered!
      - And these are all literally floating around in space, yet they stay in their places because God's voice commands them to do so.
  - In mathematics, we deal with the concept of infinity, even though we can't fully understand it.
    - This is reflective of the infinity of God who is infinite and eternal.
    - We cannot do math in the real world without these concepts.
3. You honour God as you praise Him for all these glorious attributes that are found in Him to perfection.

- You praise these things as they are seen in creation, knowing that they are all reflective of the glory of God.
- You take delight in them and promote them and speak against that which is contrary to them (foolishness instead of wisdom, oppression instead of mercy).
- And then you come before God and sing praises to Him for His attributes, declaring His glory before the nations in our songs and in our speaking and in our writing!
  - Rather than taking these attributes in vain—ignoring them—dismissing them—mangling them,
    - we are to highly esteem them as that which reveals the glory of God.

TRANS> That is how you are to reverence the attributes of God.

Now, thirdly, I want you show you:

### **III. How you are to reverence His ordinances, and you might do it more...**

A. Ordinances are simply those things that God has ordained or instituted for us.

1. Many of these are ordinances of worship. For example:
  - He has ordained that songs of praise should be sung to Him,
  - that public and private prayer should be offered up to Him in the name of Jesus Christ,
  - that baptism and the Lord's Supper should be administered,
  - that His word should be read and preached,
  - that benedictions should be pronounced to put His name upon His people,
  - that families should call upon Him daily in their homes,
  - that we should remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,
  - that men should be set apart to as elders in the church,
2. He has many other ordinances as well...that are not directly related to worship...
  - that we should tithe and should support the poor,
  - that we are to encourage one another,
  - that we are to go and reconcile with our brother when he has wronged us or when we have wronged him.
  - that we are to support the weak,
  - that a man should leave his father and mother and be joined to His wife,
  - that we are to comfort one another,
  - that we are to admonish one another,
  - that children are to honour their parents,
  - that church discipline is to be administered,
  - that we are to pay our taxes,
  - that men are to be set apart to rule,
  - that we are to subdue the earth, that we are multiply and fill the earth.

TRANS> You see that the list could go on and on.

B. But the point is that we are to have a reverence and high esteem for all these things because they are God's ordinances...

- They are associated with His name, that is, they are associated with **Him!**
- 1. So when it comes to the ordinances of worship—you are to highly esteem these!
  - In the reformed churches, there used to be a strong and high view of the worship of God...
    - but over the years with revivalism, there has been an emphasis on the service being primarily for the purpose of winning the lost.
    - Singing, instead of being the offering of the sacrifice of praise, as it is said to be in scripture,
      - became a way of warming up the hearts of the lost for receiving the gospel.
      - This was a huge shift and the songs changed—
        - This is when what are now referred to as the “old Gospel hymns” came on the scene.
        - Now we have new songs as well,
          - but there is still this mentality that we are not offering praise to God, but just warming up our hearts for the sermon.
    - Of course I am not talking about those churches that no longer regard preaching as important.
      - I am talking about what would be the more conservative churches who understand the centrality of preaching in worship,
        - but who have lost a regard for the other parts of worship that God has ordained.
    - Congregants who think this way will come in late so long as they do not miss the sermon...
      - or they will suppose that it is all the same as long as they hear the sermon on a CD and will make less effort to attend.
  - But this is not the right way to look at the ordinances of worship!
    - If God has ordained these, we need to hold them in very high esteem.
    - If the King of heaven calls upon His people to come before Him with songs of praise, with prayers, with sacraments,
      - then we ought to do it with great reverence and fear.

- We saw last week in Malachi how the priests (and the people they represented) were offending the LORD in their worship.
- The LORD had ordained that they should offer sacrifices to Him, but they were taking those that were blind or lame.
  - Remember what the LORD said to them in Malachi 1:6-9?
    - Mal 1:6-9: "A son honours his father, And a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honour? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts To you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?' "You offer defiled food on My altar. But say, 'In what way have we defiled You?' By saying, 'The table of the LORD is contemptible.' And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favourably?" Says the LORD of hosts. "But now entreat God's favour, That He may be gracious to us. While this is being done by your hands, Will He accept you favourably?" Says the LORD of hosts.
    - They acted like God did not care how they came to Him!
- My brothers and sisters, you are not to saunter in half way through the service and offer half-heated songs of praise to God and stand like a lump on a long when prayers are offered to God, with your mind wandering off to a thousand other things...
  - These are *God's* ordinances and you take His name in vain when you do not receive them as such!
    - They are not the ordinances of man, they are *His* ordinances.
  - You are to prepare yourself for worship all through the week.
    - You are to arrange your schedule so that you get sufficient rest.
      - You are coming to present yourself before the LORD!
    - You are to by praying and preparing yourself before you come.
    - You are to dress your soul, dealing with malice and bitterness, and stirring yourself up to hunger for God's word...
      - You are to meditate on the glory of God and the goodness of God so that you will be eager to pour out your devotion to Him in songs and prayer!
      - And you are to consider your need before Him so that you will come seeking His blessing with due reverence.
- My brothers and sisters, coming before God as He has ordained is not to be taken lightly!

- It is a high privilege!
  - I would venture to say that we offend more in this than we do by immoral behaviour or by unkind speech.
    - And that is not to say that immorality and unkind speech are not highly offensive!
      - The difference is, most of us know that these are offensive, but we don't even think about how offensive it is when we are so careless and hardly think about the fact that we are coming before the living God to worship Him.
      - That is at the very heart of what it means to take His name in vain...
        - to take God's name (in this case His ordinances) in a light and careless manner—to lightly esteem them.
        - Let us come with gladness and reverence before Him!
2. And then there are the other ordinances of God that are not directly connected with worship—
- paying taxes, that men provide for their families, labour, marriage, filling the earth, and so forth...
  - We are to receive all these ordinances from the LORD also and honour them as God's institutions.
    - Those who do not do their labour as to the LORD forget that He is the one who has called us to this kind of service.
      - You have the privilege everyday, whether you are changing diapers or running the nation,
        - to engage in your calling as that which is handed to you from our glorious God and who will reward you for your faithfulness!
        - Offer up your work to Him as a sacrifice with reverence!
  - And with marriage,
    - You are to live in it as God's ordinance, even as that which is a reflection of the glory of the relationship Christ has with His church.
    - It is not for you to make the rules—
      - to decide if you will sacrifice for your wife or if you will submit to your husband—
      - Or if you can walk out on your spouse!
        - It is God's ordinance and you are to esteem it as such and to serve Him joyfully in it.

- And this is true of all of God's other ordinances, everything from paying taxes to comforting your Christian brother when his mother has died...
- We are to engage in all these as gifts from God, walking before Him, and performing these things for His glory.

**Conclusion:**

So I hope you are starting to see how far-reaching the third commandment is.

- It reaches into all of life.
- We have looked at what it is to esteem His names, His titles, His attributes, and His ordinances today.
  - Next week we will look at more ways to reverence Him.
- But as we conclude, I want to remind you once again what a privilege it is that we can do this!
  - We lost sight of the fact that we were made for God when we fell just after we were created...
  - But in Christ, we are restored to live for His glory again—and what a privilege!
    - He is the great God, and the better we come to know Him,
      - the more we will see how worthy He is of our highest reverence and esteem!
    - “Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things to whom be the glory for ever and ever Amen.”