QUESTION 4: What does the Law of God require of us?
ANSWER: Christ teaches us in sum, Matthew 22: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

EXPOSITION: Christ rehearses the substance of the law in Matt. 22:37, and in Luke 10:27, from Deut. 6:5, and Lev. 19:8. He explains what is meant by that declaration: "Cursed be he that confirms not all the words of this law to do them;" that is, he who does not love God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength, and his neighbor as himself. These several parts must be explained more fully. You shall love the Lord your God. To love God with the whole heart, is, upon a due acknowledgment of his infinite goodness, reverently to regard and esteem him as our highest good, to love him supremely, to rejoice and trust in him alone, and to prefer his glory to all other things, so that there may not be in us the least thought, inclination, or desire for anything that might be displeasing to him; yea, rather to be willing to suffer the loss of all things that may be dear to us, or to endure the heaviest calamity, than that we should be separated from communion with him, or offend him in the smallest matter, and lastly, to direct all this to the end that he alone may be glorified by us. The Lord your God. As if he would say, you shall love that God who is your Lord and your God, who has revealed himself unto you, who confers his benefits upon you, and to whose service you are bound. There is here an opposition of the true God to false gods. With all your heart. By the heart we are to understand the affections, desires, and inclinations. When God, therefore, requires our whole heart, he desires that he alone should be loved above everything else; that our whole heart should be stayed on him, and not that a part should be given to him and a part to another. In short, he wills that we make nothing equal to him, much less that we should prefer any thing to him; or that we should be willing to share only a part of his love. To love God thus, is what the Scripture calls "walking before God with a perfect heart;" the opposite of which is not to walk before God with a perfect heart, which is to halt, and not to surrender the whole person to him. Objection: God alone is to be loved. Therefore, our neighbors, parents and kindred are not to be loved. Answer: This argument is false, because it proceeds from a denial of the manner, to that of the thing itself. God alone is to be loved supremely, and above every thing else; that is, in such a manner that there may be nothing at all which we either prefer or put upon an equality with him, and which we are not heartily willing to part with for his sake. But we ought to love our neighbors, parents, and others, not supremely, nor above everything else, nor in such a manner that we would rather offend God than our parents; but in subordination to and on account of God, and not above him. With all your soul. The soul signifies that part of our being which wills, together with the exercise of the will, as if he would say, you shall love with your whole will and purpose. With all your mind. The mind signifies the understanding, or that which perceives; as if he would say, as much as you know of God, so much shall you love him—you shall bend all your thoughts that you may know God truly and perfectly,

and so shall you also love him. We can love God only as far as we know him. We now love him imperfectly, because we know him only in part. But in the life to come we shall know him perfectly, and shall, therefore, love him perfectly; for "that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor. 13:10) With all your strength. This embraces all actions, and exercises, at the same time, both external and internal; that they may be in accordance with the law of God. This is the first and greatest commandment. The love of God is called the first commandment, because all the others proceed from this, as their source. It is the impelling, the efficient, and final cause of obedience to all {25} the other commandments of God. For we love our neighbor because we love God, and that we may manifest our love to God in the love which we cherish towards our neighbor. It is called the greatest commandment

1. Because the object upon which it is immediately directed is the greatest, even God himself.
2. Because it is the end to which all the other commandments look; for our entire obedience is designed to show forth our love to God, and to honor his name.
3. Because it is the principal worship of God, which the ceremonial law subserved, and to which it gave place. The Pharisees extolled the ceremonial law and worship above the moral; while Christ, on the other hand, calls love the greatest commandment, and gives precedence to the moral law and worship, because whatever was instituted under the ceremonial system was on account of love, and was designed to give place to it.

Objection: The love of God is the greatest commandment. Therefore it is greater than faith, and hence justifies rather than faith.
Answer: Love is here to be understood as including the entire obedience which we owe to God, in which faith is included, which justifies, not of itself as a virtue, but correlatively, as it apprehends and appropriates the merits of Christ. But the love which is opposed to faith, and which in particular is so called, does not justify, because the application of the righteousness of Christ is not made by love, but by faith alone; yea, love springs from faith; for faith is the cause of all the other virtues. The second is like it: you shall love your neighbor as yourself. To love your neighbor as yourself, is in view of your love to God; or because you love God, do well unto your neighbor according to all the commandments of the Lord; or will and do to your neighbor those things which you will that he should do to you. Now every man is our neighbor. It is called the second commandment:

1. Because it embodies the substance of the second table, or those duties which are performed directly towards our neighbor. If you love your neighbor as yourself, you will neither murder, nor injure him.
2. Because the love which we cherish towards our neighbor must arise out of the love of God; it is, therefore, naturally subsequent to it. It is said to be like unto the first in three respects:

1. In the kind of worship which it requires, which is moral or spiritual. This is no less required and sanctioned in the second table than in the first, for it everywhere opposes itself to a mere formal worship.
2. In the kind of punishment which it threatens against the transgressor, which is an eternal punishment; for God inflicts this, as well for the violation of one table, as for that of the other.
3. In the connection which holds between the two tables; for neither one can be maintained without the other. It is also unlike the first:

1. In the object which it immediately respects, which in the first is God, in the second our neighbor.
2. In the order of cause and effect. The love which we cherish towards our neighbor originates in the love which we have to God; but not the contrary.
3. In the degree of love. We must love God supremely. But the love which we have for our neighbor must not be above every thing else, nor stronger than that which we have for God; but only as we love ourselves.

From what has now been said, it is easy to return an answer to the objection sometimes made: The second commandment is like unto the first. Therefore the first is not the greatest; or, therefore our neighbor is to be regarded as equal with God, and is to be worshipped in like manner. To this we reply, that the second is like unto the first, not absolutely, and in every point of view, but only in certain respects; and unlike it in the particulars already specified. On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets; that is, the entire doctrine of the Law and the Prophets, is reduced to these two heads; and all obedience to the law, inculcated by Moses and the Prophets, arises from love to God and love to our neighbor.

Objection: But there are also many promises of the Gospel in the Prophets. Therefore it would seem that the doctrine of the Prophets is not properly restricted to these two commandments.
Answer: Christ speaks of the doctrine of the law, and not of the promises of the gospel, which is evident from the question of the Pharisee, who asked him which was the greatest commandment, and not, which was the principal promise in the law.