

Day Seven in the Days of Creation (Genesis 2:1-3)

Genesis 2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts.
² By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Richard Phillips on Day Seven...God's Seventh-Day Rest

“It is unfortunate that the Bible’s first chapter division isolates the conclusion of Genesis 1’s creation account by placing the seventh day in Genesis 2. This division is not seen in the original texts, the chapter and verse divisions only appearing as a late-medieval innovation. The chapter division notwithstanding, Genesis 2:2’s statement, “on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done,” marks the conclusion to the creation account.

Genesis 2:1 introduces the seventh day: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.” God looked on all the varied creatures gathered together rendering praise to his marvelous glory...from stars above to fish in the sea, and with man to bear his image. The creation was not a static collection but a marvelous machine now set in motion, with its natural laws and seasons, all designed to make life on earth possible, as a stage on which to manifest the glory of God in history.

While each of the prior six days records creative activity by God, the seventh day was one of rest: “And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done” (Gen. 2:2). God rested simply because his work in creation was finished. The word for “rested” (Hebrew, shabat) has the primary meaning of “ceasing.” Having finished his creation, God stopped from the work he had been doing.

Genesis 2:2 does not claim that God ceased from doing any and all work. The Westminster Confession places God’s works into two broad categories. The first is creation, which God finished after the sixth day. God’s second work is providence, which means God’s ongoing work to “uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures” according to the purpose of his will. Jesus once pointed out that while God rested from creation on the seventh day, he did not cease from doing good: “My Father is working until now, and I am working” (John 5:17).

It is because of God's ongoing work after the seventh day that the deists are mistaken in describing God as a clockmaker who wound up the universe and then walked away.

Alasdair Paine writes that “he makes the sun rise and sends the rain, [and] gives water and food to animals. . . . In every beautiful sunset we marvel at the work of the Creator, who is constantly involved in his world.”

Genesis 2:3 responds to God's rest by declaring, “God blessed the seventh day.” Previously, God's blessing rested on living creatures, such as the fish, birds, and mankind (Gen. 1:22, 28). ***Now, as God blesses the seventh day, it is evident that this, too, is for the benefit of his creatures. The days of God's creation work were declared good. But his seventh day of rest is declared blessed, marking it out as special. Clearly, we are to think differently about the seventh day compared to the other six.*** God's Sabbath thus challenges the way that people think today. ***We think of work as the activity that accomplishes the most things, whereas God sees his rest as especially profitable. As God sees it, entering his rest is key to a fruitful and blessed life.***

Genesis 2:3 establishes the seventh-day rest as a creation ordinance to be perpetually observed: “God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.” For God to call something “holy” is to set it apart for himself. Later in Scripture, God will claim numerous things as holy, including the temple, its priests, and Israel's feast days. ***The very first thing that God sanctified was the seventh day, noting the significance of the seventh-day rest.***

The reality of the Sabbath rest as a perpetual ordinance for all creation is amplified by the fourth commandment, after Israel had been delivered from bondage in Egypt (Exodus 20:8-10).

Note that the fourth commandment takes up a universal scope, marking its application not just to old covenant Israel but to all persons. Its rationale links back to Genesis 2:2–3: “For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Ex. 20:11).

Like the first commandment against idolatry and the sixth commandment against murder—indeed, like all ten—the Sabbath is a perpetual principle rooted in God's character. John Calvin summarizes that Genesis 2:3 “is nothing else than a solemn consecration, by which God claims for himself the meditations and employments of men on the seventh day.”

God's Sovereign Rest

The Bible develops from God's rest a rich theology of divine sovereignty. God's Sabbath rest, we find, is a sovereign rest.

God did not cease all activity when he rested on the seventh day. An important way to understand God's entering his rest is that of a sovereign king's taking up his throne and entering his reign. We can see this connection in the Bible accounts involving the construction and completion of Israel's temple. Solomon took seven years to build it, dedicated it on the seventh month, and gave a dedicatory prayer consisting of seven petitions...

The point is that God's rest declares his sovereign reign over all the history that will follow his creation of the heavens and the earth. It is in this respect that we should understand the significance of the fact that this seventh day is not marked off, like the six others, by "evening and morning." The point is not that the original seventh day had no end—the fourth commandment clearly sees it as a normal day—but that it symbolized a divine reign of sovereign rest that will last forever. God's temple in Jerusalem declared his sovereign presence and rule to save his covenant people. Likewise, God's creation rest declared his eternal sovereignty over all people, places, and events in the history of the world.

The Bible declares God's true and absolute sovereignty over everything. In Isaiah 46:9–10, he proclaims: "I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'

It is most appropriate that God, as the Maker of heaven and earth, should exercise his full rights of ownership. Moreover, the attributes that enabled God to create the universe out of nothing were not suspended when he entered his rest. Rather, history reveals the full expression of God's omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence."

God's Saving Rest

The New Testament adds to God's sovereignty the idea of God's saving rest. We find this idea in Hebrews 4, where, quoting Psalm 95, the author looks back to Israel's entry into the promised land as entering God's rest.

Hebrews reflects from this that God's rest on the seventh day was symbolic of a future rest of which the land of Canaan was itself a type. The true Sabbath rest is the salvation that God offers through Jesus Christ.

The final rest without evening or morning is the glorious eternal age that Jesus will bring when he returns from heaven to earth. In this sense, God blessed the seventh day and made it holy to bear testimony to the consummation that he entered through the work of creation and that we enter through Christ's work of redemption...He conquered sin and Satan through his atoning death on the cross and overthrew death by his glorious resurrection from the grave. It is through faith in Jesus, therefore, that we enter into his rest.

Hebrews was written to people who professed faith in Jesus. Yet he urged them to make sure that they entered Christ's rest. For us, the final rest is more than the present salvation we enjoy, including the forgiveness of our sins. The salvation rest is the eternal life that Jesus offers beyond both the grave and the end of history for those who persevere in faith. Hebrews 4:9 thus declares that "there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God."

Hebrews constructs an analogy between God's six days of working, followed by a seventh day of rest, with our present lives of trusting in Christ through all difficulties, followed by the eternal glory that awaits beyond the grave. The key to our success, according to Hebrews 4:7, is to listen to God's Word in Scripture as he summons us onward in faith: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." ***The Israelites failed to enter the promised land because they rebelled against God amid their difficulties. We are to do otherwise, continuing to trust in Christ, pressing onward in our difficulties, and not hardening our hearts in unbelief. By relying on God's grace in our present trials, we will persist until Christ's return, when the final rest appears.*** Hebrews 4:11 thus urges: "Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience."

As we struggle in the challenges of life, Jesus calls us to his own side for the journey: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:28–29). The final rest is eternal life, and trusting in Christ, we are certain to enter it with him.

Keeping the Sabbath Rest

Since the seventh-day rest was made holy by God at the climax of creation and then highlighted as one of the Ten Commandments written by the finger of God on stone, its ongoing validity is clear.

Christians do not, however, rest on the Sabbath in the manner of Old Testament Israelites under the threat of the penalty of death (Ex. 31:14). ***Instead, Christians receive the Sabbath rest as a blessing from God and offer our day back to him as holy to the Lord.***

In pursuit of biblical Sabbath observance, I suggest three categories in which Christians should keep the Sabbath holy: through corporate worship, as a testimony to the final rest that is yet to come, and as a holy source of refreshment and enjoyment in the Lord.

First, since God entered his rest by way of taking up his throne of sovereignty, the most important activity for Christians is to join together as a church to exalt him in gathered worship. Psalm 47:6–7 sets our response to his enthronement: “Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm!”

One of the ways to think of the difference between Christian worship and Old Testament worship is to note the change to the day on which we worship the Lord. In both Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:2, the New Testament notes that the apostles gathered the church for worship on the first day of the week...Not only do we commemorate his resurrection, but we meet with Christ and gain spiritual nourishment through God’s Word, prayer, and the sacraments.

The vital importance of weekly attendance in the gathered worship of the church cannot be overstated. The fourth commandment looks back to Genesis 2:3 in saying that “the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Ex. 20:11). ***Christians should conceive of Sunday worship as a spiritual feast, as well as a solemn obligation.***

How greatly Christians cheapen the Sabbath day when they come to church wondering only what they “can get out of it.” If we will worship with a primary aim of giving God the glory he deserves as our sovereign Lord and Father, we ourselves will be the first to be blessed.

A second purpose in Sabbath-keeping is as a testimony to the final rest in the age to come with Christ. The Sabbath day is a sign of God’s salvation...In setting aside one day out of seven for God, we bear testimony first to ourselves. How easy it is for Christians to become so enmeshed in this world that we forget that we are meant for a better world to come! As a royal priesthood and holy nation (1 Peter 2:9), Christians are set apart by God from the world and its ways.

By turning aside from worldly affairs one day out of seven, we remind ourselves of our higher calling and privileges.

Ezekiel 20:12 says, “I gave them my Sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them.” ***Sabbath-observing Christians are also a sign to the unbelieving world in its mad pursuit of work and pleasure. As we pull back from worldly activities, we reveal that there is a special people in this world, the Christian church, who are devoted to God and are freed from bondage to work and recreation.***

Third, Christians keep the Lord’s Sabbath as refreshment from their worldly labor, by devoting themselves to spiritual engagement with the Lord. Here we return to the creation principle of man’s imitating his Creator. God “rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done” (Gen. 2:2). ***We are to receive the Lord’s Day as a spiritual blessing and offer it holy to God. Calvin explained that “God did not command men simply to keep holiday” on the Sabbath, “but rather that they, being released from all other business, might the more readily apply their minds to the Creator of the world.”***

As far as possible, we should set aside our work and worldly recreations to offer a whole day to God and to spiritual enrichment. Isaiah 58:14 concludes with a promised blessing. If we “take delight in the LORD,” God says, “I will make you ride on the heights of the earth...”

Excerpt From: Richard Phillips. “Genesis.”

How Should We Approach the Christian Sabbath (Lord’s Day)?

Jerry F O’Neill, Crown and Covenant Publications

“To claim or desire freedom from the fourth commandment is to miss its grand purpose- to help us understand and enjoy the redemptive rest of Jesus Christ...In keeping the Lord’s Day preserve, promote and participate in the eternal rest of God.

We are called to observe this day until God fulfills His wonderful promise that “the new heavens and the new earth, which I make, shall remain before me...it shall come to pass that...from one Sabbath to another, shall flesh come to worship before me” (Isaiah 66:22,23)

To focus on what we can or cannot do on the Lord’s Day is to miss the point. Rather, we should ask, “What is the best way I can observe God’s holy day?” In answering this question, we work yo honor Christ by pleasing Him and bringing glory to Him in the day that is uniquely His.

All legalistic approaches to the Sabbath are inappropriate; but the Bible does tell us how to observe this special day...

Isaiah 58:¹³ “If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot
From doing your *own* pleasure on My holy day,
And call the sabbath a delight, the holy *day* of the Lord honorable,
And honor it, desisting from your *own* ways,
From seeking your *own* pleasure
And speaking *your own* word,
¹⁴ Then you will take delight in the Lord,
And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;
And I will feed you *with* the heritage of Jacob your father,
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

Acts 20⁷ On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul *began* talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

J G Vos on the Main Significance of the Sabbath

“It is a mistake to regard the Sabbath as grounded primarily in considerations of practical usefulness....It is true, of course, that Sabbath observance brings great benefits of physical and mental rest to man; indeed, this feature is stressed in the Sabbath commandment as found in Deuteronomy 5:12-15. It is true, also, that faithful Sabbath observance tends greatly to advance the cause of the Church and religion. In fact, it would be hard to overemphasize the real benefits that result from faithful observance of the Sabbath. Yet, in spite of all this, it should be realized that these practical benefits do not constitute the sole reason, nor even the main reason, for Sabbath observance.

It is quite possible that the prevalent neglect of the Sabbath that exists at the present day may be due, in part, to regarding the Sabbath only in terms of practical benefits, while losing sight almost entirely of the typical or sacramental meaning of the Sabbath.

The Sabbath has its main significance apart from that, in pointing forward to the eternal issues of life and history...Every week the return of the Sabbath reminds us that human history will have a consummation; that there will be an end of the world, followed by eternity...The Sabbath is a week recurring example of eternity.

It should always recall to the believer's mind the truth that eternity is the real goal of human life and world history."

Excerpts from "CFBC Ten Commandments Commandment #4"

An Overview...the Sabbath, the Christian Sabbath, the Lord's Day... "the Market Day of the Soul"

- The matter of the Sabbath is one where divergent points of view are quite evident, and it's quite important to define terms (eg "keeping" the Sabbath)
- The Sabbath spans both Testaments...Old and New
- The Sabbath is a Creation ordinance, along with work and marriage
- The Sabbath pre-dates the Ten Commandments and the Mosaic Covenant
- The Sabbath is moral law, but has ceremonial and civil elements which are no longer applicable
- The Sabbath at its essence is "one day in seven" as an ongoing day for believers consecrated to thoroughly enjoying worship of God and deepening our fellowship with Him. Since Christ's resurrection, the day has shifted from the seventh day to the first day
- Christ affirmed the Sabbath but rejected the Pharisaic burdens
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- Paul did not abrogate the Sabbath but rather the ceremonial and Judaistic elements
- The Sabbath is a gift from God to His people, not a burden
- The Sabbath can only be properly be observed when it's delightful (if it's a burden, we are entirely missing the point)
- Our presuppositions make a great deal of difference when it comes to how the Sabbath is to be "observed" (ie enjoyed)

Introduction...

“The question of the abiding validity of a weekly Sabbath for the Christian has been a hotly debated subject. Sadly, many Christians assume that the fourth commandment no longer applies in terms of any specific day of the week for its outward observance....It is important that we understand the important distinction between the Sabbath as administered by the Old Covenant with its positive law Mosaic attachments and the Sabbath as natural law and thus included in the Decalogue and as also a creation ordinance and an eschatological symbol of our final rest.”

Jeffery Smith

“As we learn about the Sabbath from Scripture, we realize that the “rest” involved was not a lazy rest. Rather, it was intended to be a day when the working man could enjoy the Creator as well as the creation. He could devote himself more directly to fellowship with God and the worship of His Name. This “sabbath,” or “rest-day,” was a further special blessing which God gave to man so he would be refreshed and strengthened, encouraged and heartened by contemplating all that God had done and stimulated to worship God in response.”

Sinclair Ferguson

“We gather together on the first rather than the seventh day of the week because redemption is even a greater work than creation and more worthy of commemoration and because the rest which followed creation is far outdone by the rest which ensues upon the completion of redemption. Like the Apostles, we meet on the first day of the week and hope that Jesus may stand in our midst and say, “Peace be unto you.”

Our Lord has lifted the Sabbath from the old and rusty hinges where on the law had placed it long before and set it on the new golden hinges which His love has fashioned. He has placed our rest day not at the end of a week of toil but at the beginning of the rest which remains for the people of God. Every first day of the week we should meditate on the rising of our Lord and seek to enter into the fellowship with Him in His risen life.”

Charles Spurgeon

“We should rest in Christ alone for our salvation. But along with that there is still an abiding principle that we ought to worship on the Lord’s Day and trust God enough to have a weekly routine where we cease from our normal labors... He made the Sabbath for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). God gives us Sabbath as a gift; it’s an island of “get-to” in a sea of “have-to”. He also offers us Sabbath as a test; it’s an opportunity to trust God’s work more than our own.”

Kevin DeYoung

From the CFBC Catechism...

Q. 86. What is the fourth commandment?

A. The fourth commandment is, Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work, 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, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: 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. (Ex 20:8-11; 23:12; Deut 5:12-15).

Q. 87. What does the fourth commandment teach us?

A. To keep the Sabbath holy. (Lv 19:20; 23:3; Is 58:13, 14).

Q. 88. What day of the week is the Christian Sabbath?

A. The first day of the week, called the Lord's day. (Acts 20:7; Rv 1:10).

Q. 89. Why is it called the Lord's day?

A. Because on that day Christ rose from the dead. (Mt 28:1; Mk 16:9; Lk 24:1-6; In 20:1).

Q. 90. How should the Sabbath be spent?

A. In prayer and praise, in hearing and reading God's Word, and in doing good to our fellow men. (Is 58:13,14; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Lk 4:16; Mt 12:10-13).

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Excerpts from “Is the Lord’s Day For You?” By Joseph Pipa...

Not merely a system of doctrine, Reformed Christianity has always offered an approach to how believers ought to live. Reformed piety springs directly from Reformed thinking, and this piety includes the centrality of the church, family worship and instruction, strict adherence to God’s moral law, and God-centered worship.

Foundational to this piety is the concept that the Lord's Day is the Christian Sabbath, which we are to sanctify by acts of public and private worship as well as deeds of Christian service.

It is clear that the fourth commandment requires a careful observance of the Sabbath. The question is whether this commandment was a temporary, ceremonial law given only for Israel or a permanent, permanent, moral law given for all people.

In the Bible there are temporary laws called "positive" laws and permanent laws called "moral" laws.

A "positive" law is a commandment of God that is not morally necessary, meaning that the thing commanded in and of itself is not inherently right or wrong. God requires or forbids certain things for the immediate and temporary needs of His people and their relationship to Him in the same way that parents adapt and even change rules for their children as the children grow older. Positive laws are binding only on the people or, as in the case of Israel, the nation to whom they were given. For example, the prohibition to Adam and Eve not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was a positive law. There was nothing inherently holy about eating or not eating; rather, the prohibition was the means God chose to test their willingness to obey Him (Gen. 2:16–17). ***The ceremonial laws of the Mosaic covenant are also examples of positive law.***

A "moral" law, on the other hand, is a commandment that reflects the moral nature of God and our relation to Him and one another.

Moral laws are absolutely required of and are permanently binding on all people. "Thou shalt not kill" is an example of a moral law (Deut. 5:17). Murder is wrong not only because God's Word prohibits it, but also because it is inherently evil. "Thou shalt not kill" is a permanently binding obligation on all people in all ages (Deut. 5:17).

Although there are temporary aspects involved in Old Testament Sabbath observance (more about this below), the principle of a special day devoted to the worship and service of God is a perpetually binding moral obligation (Westminster Confession of Faith 21.7).

A Perpetually Binding Moral Obligation

By blessing and sanctifying the day, God communicated to Adam and Eve, and through the Scripture to us, the principle of keeping the

Lord's Day holy. We are to treat as holy what God declares to be holy.

We may conclude that the observation of one day out of seven is a perpetually binding moral obligation based on this creation ordinance (Westminster Confession of Faith 21.7).

Turning to the fourth commandment (Ex. 20:8–11), we note that God gives Genesis 2:2–3 as the ground for the moral obligation to keep the Sabbath day holy. In verse 11 He states, “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.”

The fourth commandment is the precise formulation and practical amplification of the creation ordinance of Genesis 2:1–3. Some, however, suggest that the fourth commandment is ceremonial because God declared it to be a sign of the Mosaic covenant (Ex. 31:16–17).

For a number of reasons, the fourth commandment is a moral and not a ceremonial law.

The first reason is the unity of the Ten Commandments. These commandments, which were given in such an awesome manner at Mount Sinai and were engraved by God's finger in stone, stand together as a unit. ***It is against all sound reason to isolate one by saying that it is ceremonial and no longer binding.***

This unity is all the more evident when we consider the relationship of the first four laws.

The first four function together as a whole, summarized in Deuteronomy and by our Savior (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37) as the great commandment. The first commandment tells us that God alone is to be worshiped; the second instructs us how He is to be worshiped; the third sets forth the attitude of the worshiper; while the fourth dictates that there is to be a day devoted to that worship.

The second reason, as already noted, is that God bases the fourth commandment on the creation ordinance. Like marriage and work, this is a perpetually binding moral obligation.

Third, note that God not only refers to the obligation of the covenant people to keep the Sabbath but also to the responsibility of the stranger not to work (Ex. 20:10). The stranger was the person outside the covenant who chose to live in the midst of God's people. Even though he was not in the covenant and could not take part in the feasts or in the sacrifices, God obligated him to keep the Sabbath.

As he was obligated to keep other commandments, he was obligated not to work on the Sabbath (Neh. 13:15–21).

Therefore, there are many sound reasons for maintaining that the fourth commandment is a moral and not a ceremonial law.

This is not a denial that there are ceremonial aspects involved in the fourth commandment. Each of the Ten Commandments has ceremonial and judicial applications. The Ten Words summarize man's moral responsibility to God. The judicial laws applied the moral laws to the civic life of Israel, while the ceremonial laws applied the moral law to Israel's worship. For example, the second commandment, which forbids making graven images and bowing down to them, applies to the entire system of tabernacle/temple worship, sacrifices, and religious festivals. As types of Christ, all these elements of worship would pass away. But the moral principles of the second commandment remain. ***The fourth commandment, therefore, contains ceremonial aspects—festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths. These aspects applied exclusively to Israel, and, because Christ fulfilled them, He abrogated them (Col. 2:16–17). The principle, however, that God would have man devote a whole day to worship and religious service is woven into the moral fabric of the universe.*** Certainly there is no tension between the permanent, moral obligation of the fourth commandment and the fact that it was appointed as a sign of the covenant between God and the children of Israel (Ex. 31:16–17). The moral obligation in its seventh-day cycle would distinguish the old covenant people from all the other nations of the earth. For this reason, redemption from Egypt is given as the ground for the Sabbath in Deuteronomy 5:15. God is not replacing the creation ordinance as the basis for the commandment when He first gave it at Mount Sinai. Rather, God adds a second reason for Sabbath-keeping for Israel as His covenant people.

Pipa Jr., Joseph A.. Is the Lord's Day For You? (Cultivating Biblical Godliness) . Reformation Heritage Books. Kindle Edition.

Genesis 2...the Inauguration of the Sabbath (by declaration and example)

Genesis 2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts.
² By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Exodus 16 (prior to Exodus 20)

The Setting...

Exodus 16 ⁴Then the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction. ⁵***On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.***” ⁶So Moses and Aaron said to all the sons of Israel, “At evening you will know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt; ⁷and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, for He hears your grumblings against the Lord; and what are we, that you grumble against us?”

⁸Moses said, “*This will happen* when the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning; for the Lord hears your grumblings which you grumble against Him. And what are we? Your grumblings are not against us but against the Lord.” ⁹Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, ‘Come near before the Lord, for He has heard your grumblings.’” ¹⁰It came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. ¹¹And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹²“I have heard the grumblings of the sons of Israel; speak to them, saying, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God.’”

Day 6

²²***Now on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses,***

²³***then he said to them, “This is what the Lord meant: Tomorrow is a sabbath observance, a holy sabbath to the Lord. Bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning.”*** ²⁴***So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered, and it did not become foul nor was there any worm in it.*** ²⁵***Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field.*** ²⁶***Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the sabbath, there will be none.”***

Day 7

²⁷***It came about on the seventh day that some of the people went out to gather, but they found none.*** ²⁸***Then the Lord said to Moses, “How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My instructions?”***

²⁹ See, the Lord has given you the sabbath; therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.” ³⁰ So the people rested on the seventh day.

How Are We To “Observe” the Sabbath?

Isaiah 58:¹³ “If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot
From doing your *own* pleasure on My holy day,
And call the sabbath a delight, the holy *day* of the Lord honorable,
And honor it, desisting from your *own* ways,
From seeking your *own* pleasure
And speaking *your own* word,
¹⁴ Then you will take delight in the Lord,
And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;
And I will feed you *with* the heritage of Jacob your father,
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

Unpacking Isaiah 58:13,24...

Presuppositions...

- Rest from work, or
- Rest from ordinary activities so as to focus on worship

Perspective...

- My holy day... the holy *day* of the Lord
- Take delight in the Lord

Practice...

- Honor it
- Turn your foot...From doing *your own* pleasure
- Desisting from *your own* ways
- From seeking *your own* pleasure
- And (from) speaking *your own* word

Promises...

And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;
And I will feed you *with* the heritage of Jacob your father,

Preparation ...

Excerpts from “The Fourth Commandment”

Sinclair Ferguson

If the fourth commandment continues to be God’s word for our blessing and for the shape of the Christian life, how is this relevant to our ongoing sanctification? The Sabbath was not inaugurated at Mount Sinai but in the Garden of Eden. The giving of the Ten Commandments contained a deliberate echo of the pattern that God had given to Adam and Eve. He had worked for six days in bringing creation into being. They were his image—and therefore he made provision for them to imitate him. So he therefore ‘blessed’ the seventh day and set it apart from the other days (Gen. 2:1-3). It was not only the seventh day, it was the rest day—a day free from work; a day to bless and call holy, just as God himself had done—a day to reflect on and enjoy the wonders of God and to worship him for them.

The significance of this should not be missed. The gift of the Sabbath provided a wonderful way of regulating the whole of life. It provided an inbuilt weekly time-and-motion study to help us to live well.

When the fourth commandment was given it was set within the context of the Exodus. It had, as at creation, a weekly application. But the seven-fold rhythm was extended further and applied to the whole of life in the regulation of the Sabbath years and every fifty years in the Sabbath-Sabbath Year of Jubilee.

So there was a basic application of the commandment each week, and an extended application of it every seven years, and then in a major way every fifty years. Not only weeks but years were governed by this principle of working and looking forward to the time of rest.

But when Moses received the commandment at Sinai it was also a reminder that the people had been redeemed from their bondage in Egypt. Now it was a reminder of both creation and redemption.

Although no commandment is given to this effect, and indeed the New Testament provides us with no extended explanation, it is a very remarkable phenomenon that Christians seem to have begun almost immediately to live life according to a different weekly rhythm. They met on the first day of the week, not the last day; they called that day ‘The Lord’s day’. It was the day on which the Lord had risen, and the day on which he had gathered with them.

What creation had looked forward to—the new creation in Christ; what the Exodus had pre-figured—the exodus that Jesus would accomplish in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31)—had now been realized. Now the new creation had been inaugurated—and it had a different calendar from the old....now He fulfilled his promise to give rest to the weary and heavy-laden who trusted in him...

The Pharisees who entered into controversy with Jesus got all this disastrously wrong not only in relation to the fourth commandment but in relation to all of the commandments. Our Lord's teaching makes this crystal clear. They were not, and are not, to be trusted. We do not receive the law from the hands of the Pharisees but from the hands of the Lord Jesus. Because we are not yet set free from the presence of sin we will still find that our sinful wills can both twist and resist the commandments. In our fallen nature we often fail to keep them fully even while overall we find them our delight. It should no more surprise us that this is true of the fourth commandment than it is, say, of the commandment not to covet, or of Jesus' insistence that the seventh commandment has got to do with our eyes and our inner thoughts and desires and not only with outward actions.

Perhaps a simple if personal illustration will help here. I was brought up by devoted parents who—although they did not attend church until after I became a Christian in my early teens—made sure I 'kept the Sabbath day'. No work was done in the house; the idea that I would be allowed to go out to play was as remote as my flying to school! And so the Sabbath day was a day of prolonged misery; a real burden; a day of 'not doing'; not a day to which I looked forward.

I can still sense the transformation that took place in my experience of Sunday when I became a Christian. It was now no more of a burden than a bird's wings. Rather than crush me it seemed to sustain me. Boredom was gone. It became the best day of the week. And yet it was still Sunday; it was still the first day of the week. But the sense of duty in going to the church services which I had attended and the Bible reading which I had been doing for several years, believing that doing these things might make me a Christian—these seemed overnight to be transformed into a delight.

What was the explanation? Simple: we need to come to Christ to find true Sabbath rest. For then God writes his law into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Then at last we receive the law from the hands of the one who came to bring us forgiveness and power, and no longer from the hands of the Pharisees. Then we can 'call the Sabbath a delight' (Isaiah 58:13).

<https://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2016/the-fourth-commandment/>

Appendix...Excerpts from “Sabbath Rest and Faith

The weekly sabbath plays a very important role in the spiritual life of believers. “What is the relationship between sabbath rest and faith?” ...God is the source of all blessings; God has instituted a system of rest, not anxiety; Labor is good, but God is ultimate; and man is utterly dependent upon God for everything.

Resting Requires Faith

Resting takes faith. For people to truly rest, they must recognize their own inadequacies and inabilities. To take one day a week off from our normal work is to proclaim with our lives that we are ultimately insufficient. Resting demonstrates to the world (and to ourselves) that we are utterly dependent upon God for provision.

Resting includes more than the mere cessation of activity. Indeed, one may be physically motionless and have ceased from normal weekday work, but may still be distracted with thoughts and anxious about getting back to work (side thought: have you ever considered the difference between good, biblical resting and sloth? They can appear identical but be vastly different). Resting requires faith in God to supply what is lacking, to defend where we are weak, and to grow what we have sown.

This is why true resting could never be legislated or otherwise externally coerced. There is a heart-level submission that is required. A movement away from sinful self-exaltation to humble dependence is needed:

The progression from ceasing to resting underscores the basic movement from idolatry to faith. First we discover all the deception and falsehood of the securities offered by the world, and, with repentance, we *cease* to trust them. This includes especially all our efforts to make our own way or to save ourselves. Then we learn that God has done all the work of redemption for us and that he continues to work through us. We learn, by faith, to *rest* in his grace.

Resting requires believers to submit their whole being to God; not merely the body, but the heart, mind, and soul must all be knelt before God in humility.

Some authors speak of a legal versus an evangelical obedience. On the one hand, the person seeking to observe sabbath rest legally (or, as if still under the law), seeks to earn God’s favor by their own faithfulness to a command. Or, the legally obedient Christian could even be driven to obey the sabbath command out of a sense of fear; they could be driven by fear of divine wrath if found disobedient. On the other hand, the person seeking to obey evangelically, or with gospel obedience, will observe sabbath rest from their secure position in Christ.

These believers will, in faith, seek to obey all of God's commands, neither thinking that they are earning God's favor nor fearing God's divine wrath, but in humble dependence upon God's grace they rest.

Sabbath Rest Encourages Faith

Because of the transaction-like nature of labor and compensation, combined with a sinful heart, man is often tempted to ignore the provision of God found in every blessing. If left to themselves, fallen people will come to lean on his own strength. In contrast, the weekly sabbath stands as a reminder that: labor is a good gift, but a terrible idol; man is dependent upon God for everything; and God wants us to be content.

The Sabbath is a weekly reminder that, while labor is good, God is ultimate. Labor honors God, images God, and points to our working God. However, rest also honors God, images God, and points to God. If we lose a biblical balance between work and rest, one will dominate the other, and an idol has been formed....Weekly resting from our work patterns can be a way to combat this idolatry....

The sabbath reminds believers that they are not the true source of their own blessings and provision; their own industriousness is not the means of their survival. Indeed, our Sabbath observance will not give us genuine rest if we use it merely as an excuse to be workaholics the rest of the week.

Only in the sure knowledge that we don't have to manufacture our success in life by our own efforts can we have freedom not to be continuously working at making our own way. The Sabbath is a weekly reminder that "man does not live by bread alone." God has built into creation a rhythm of rest designed to point man outside of himself and toward God, from whom all blessings flow. It takes faith to stop working (and, hence, stop making money) in order to spend time with God. This faithful "shabbat", ceasing, is both the blessing and a means of blessing from God.

The sabbath points outside of our weekly routine toward greater realities: the final rest to come, and the one who has procured that rest. sabbath rest is a weekly blessing that re-orientes the priorities of believers according to the design of God. Having been re-oriented and reminded that God, not labor, is ultimate, man is then able to most effectively honor God in both work and rest....

Man is utterly dependent upon God for everything. Related to its reorienting nature, the sabbath also reminds sinful men that they are ever dependent upon God. Setting apart a day is helpful for recognizing, that we are incapable of providing for ourselves—either physically or spiritually.

Combined with the preached word and the sacraments, the sabbath becomes a tangible reminder that believers are utterly lost without God's provision.

Relationship with God, not the production and acquisition of things, is the only means of lasting contentment. Weekly sabbath rest provides time, space, energy, and imagination for coming to the ultimate recognition that more commodities, which may be acquired in the rough and ready economics, finally do not satisfy. Only communion with God can satisfy.

Weekly sabbath rest requires faith on the part of believers. Only those secure in Christ can ever find lasting comfort.

Additionally, weekly rest also nurtures faith by reminding believers of three important themes: work is a good gift, but a terrible master; man is dependent upon God for all things; abiding contentment can only be found in Christ.

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<https://founders.org/articles/sabbath-rest-and-faith/>