

THE LORD'S DAY
STILL IS

JOHN GIARRIZZO

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by John Giarrizzo

Why write a booklet about our obligation to keep the Lord's Day¹ holy? There are two basic answers to this question. One revolves around God; the other involves people like you. Regarding God, who has revealed his will in his holy Word, this issue relates to his character. God is worthy to be honored and glorified. As the infinite, eternal, and unchangeable God, he is worthy to be glorified for who he is. As the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and the Redeemer of elect sinners, he is worthy to be honored for what he has done. If God calls us to keep the Sabbath holy and we do not, then this is a serious offense to such a glorious God. David's love for God moved him to say, "My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law" (Ps. 119:136). David was grieved over the thought that the law of his God was being broken. Appealing to those who break the Sabbath is a way of saying, "Don't do this to such a great God." The second reason for writing is more personal, even pragmatic. It has to do with the blessings that God holds in store for those who keep the Sabbath holy and the painful consequences for those who do not.

A small booklet may have little impact on those who firmly oppose any idea of being under an obligation to keep one day a week holy to God. But for those who have not really looked into the question of the Sabbath day and its present-day relevance, my prayer is that this will give some helpful guidance in God's Word. What you are about to read is really nothing new, rather it is fairly old – as old as the Word of God. My desire is to come as Elihu came to Job, contributing fresh insights to an old dialogue (Job 32:10). But I also feel the weight of those words by the Preacher, "Is there a thing of which it is said, 'See, this is new'? It has been already in the ages before us" (Eccles. 1:10). Because this can be a difficult subject we should begin with earnest prayer. Please take a moment with me to ask the Lord to enlighten the eyes of our understanding so that we will be able to discern in his Word what is right and true in relation to the subject of the Sabbath.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, I will be using terms such as the *Sabbath Day* or the *Lord's Day* or the *Christian Sabbath* interchangeably. They are mostly synonymous, with slight degrees of emphasis.

“O Lord of glory, grant us the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16), and the illumination of the Holy Spirit, so that we may clearly understand your will pertaining to the question of the Sabbath Day. Guide our feeble minds into the path of truth for your name’s sake. Grant that our study of the Sabbath and Lord’s Day may be according to your Word and thus honor your Name and glorify your Son, in whose name we pray. Amen.”

Have you ever considered that what you do on Sundays has an important bearing on your relation to God? The stakes are even higher for those of us who are pastors and church leaders. We must be diligent to present ourselves to God as “one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). As elders, we are called to “teach what is in accord with sound doctrine” (Tit. 2:1). To remain ignorant about the Lord’s Day, or *just to go with tradition* is not acceptable to the God whose Word is living and active. This is the very point made by Jonathan Edwards:

And so far is undoubtedly true: that if this be the mind and will of God [then] he has not left the matter to human tradition but has so revealed his mind about it in his Word that there is to be found good and substantial evidences that it is his mind, and that the revelation is plain enough for them that have ears to hear, that is, for them that will justly exercise their understandings about what God says to them. And no Christian should rest till he has satisfactorily discovered the mind of God in this matter. If the Christian Sabbath be of divine institution, it is doubtless a thing of great importance to religion whether it be well kept or not, and therefore that every Christian should be well acquainted with the institution of it.²

THE BIRTH OF THE SABBATH

Seeing when and how the Sabbath first came into existence will go a long way toward understanding whether we are still obligated to keep the day holy unto the Lord. As I sit at my desk, a roll of blueprints lies nearby which contains the plans to a new guest house we are building for my mother. These plans have several pages presenting the various stages of construction this project must follow. One very important

² Jonathan Edwards, “The Perpetuity And Change Of The Sabbath,” in *Sermons and Discourses 1730-1733*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. 10. Edited by Mark Valeri (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1999), p. 223.

page gives the dimensions for the concrete footing, which of course is essential to any building. If the footing is not poured correctly, it will cause serious problems down the road when the rest of the structure is built. This is exactly where many interpretations on the Sabbath go awry – they either minimize the footing or skip over it entirely. When we think of the foundation of the Sabbath, we need to see that it was founded by divine institution on the bedrock of creation. So, if you seek to obtain a correct understanding of the Sabbath, you need to begin with the fact that the Sabbath goes all the way back to creation. The Sabbath was established on the seventh day of creation, as shown in Genesis 2:1-3:

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 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. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.³

It is essential to get a good grip on how this text lays the foundation for all that follows regarding the Sabbath. Three important truths, based on three verbs, jump out from this text.

GOD RESTED ON THE SABBATH

The first observation we see is that *God rested* on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. The term used here for “rest” conveys the sense of an activity coming to an end. When God rested on the seventh day, it simply means that he ceased from the activity of creating. “God’s rest both at the conclusion of creation in Genesis 1-2 and later in Israel’s temple indicates not mere inactivity but that he had demonstrated his sovereignty over the forces of chaos (e.g., the enemies of Israel) and now has assumed a position of kingly rest further revealing his sovereign power.”⁴ The focus here is not on what God did on the seventh day, but on what he was no longer doing, that of creating.⁵ The omnipotent Creator did not rest because he was exhausted and had to

³ All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

⁴ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), p. 62.

⁵ It should also be noted here that God's rest on the seventh day was not a rest from all kinds of activity (John 5:17), but only the work of creation, *i.e.* the six days of labor.

catch his breath for “the Creator of the ends of the earth . . . does not faint or grow weary” (Isa. 40:28).

Every act of creation required nothing more of God than a spoken word. God isn't toiling in sweat and anguish – just the opposite. He created an ordered, obedient cosmos with nothing more than a few words from his lips. Not only was his labor effortless, it was perfect. Every creative act began with a word and ended with this pronouncement, “And God saw that it was good.” . . . God's rest isn't a picture of fatigue, but a display of absolute sovereignty.⁶

Let us also consider that God, in his eternal nature, is infinite. There is no succession of time by which he is bound or governed. Therefore, God did not set apart the Sabbath for his own needs. Neither did God require six days to create the world, for he could have accomplished it in less than six seconds. Why, then, are we informed that God “rested on the seventh day”? It is because creating the world in six days and resting on the seventh serves as an example and pattern for all humanity. Being created in God's image carries certain moral and ethical obligations for us all. Part of our obligation as image-bearers is to imitate God (Eph. 5:1). Thus, this rest announced in Genesis 2:2-3, is God's model for our instruction and imitation. The Sabbath of God's rest lays the foundation for our weekly Sabbath rest. What better vindication can be given of the binding character of the Sabbath's authority than to show it as an act of divine conduct worthy of our imitation? That pattern to which the Creator himself submits his own Being certainly imposes a similar authority upon humans created in God's image. “In no conceivable way could the Almighty so perfectly and with such unchallengeable authority declare not simply his will in a positive institution, but the essentially moral character of the precept, as by revealing his own compliance to the rule which he imposes on his creatures.”⁷

GOD BLESSED THE SABBATH

Our second observation is that *God blessed* the seventh day. It is pertinent at this point to ask why God blessed this day. It was not because it was the seventh day, nor even because God completed all his

⁶ Winston T. Smith, *Rest*, (Glenside, PA; Vantage Point Books, 2006), pp. 3-4

⁷ George Elliott, *The Abiding Sabbath: An Argument for the Perpetual Obligation of the Lord's Day* (1883), p. 24.

work which he had done (v. 2), but because “in it he rested from all his work.” Scripture speaks of God blessing nature (Gen. 1:22), humankind (1:28), the Sabbath (2:3), nations (Ps. 33:12), and certain classes of men (Gen. 24:1, Ps. 1:1-3). The inferior is blessed by the superior (Heb. 7:7). When God blesses, he bestows that virtue which renders his blessing effectual. But the Sabbath, being mere time and thus intangible, in one sense is incapable of receiving blessing. Nevertheless, in blessing this day, God was instituting this day as the day through which special blessings were to be conferred. God was appointing it as the day on which he would confer peculiar benefits upon all who, like him, rest from their works. The fact that God blessed the seventh day in distinction from the previous six helps to highlight the truth that this day was intended to bring certain benefits to humanity which the other days would not. This is further supported by what Jesus said in Mark 2:27, “the Sabbath was made for man.” These words serve as a commentary on Genesis 2:2-3, by showing that the Sabbath was made for man’s benefit and for his good – it was to be a blessing to him.

By blessing the day, God assigned to it a special purpose. In the creation account when God blessed something, He both established purpose and endowed the thing created with the ability to fulfill that purpose. When God blessed the animals, in Genesis 1:22, He established their purpose of multiplying and filling the earth and endowed them with the desire and ability to accomplish this purpose. Similarly, in Genesis 1:28, He blessed man, giving him the purpose of multiplying, filling the earth and ruling over it. By means of this blessing He endowed man with the desire and ability to fulfill this task. In like manner, when God blessed the seventh day, He gave it purpose and the ability to fulfill that purpose. He appointed the seventh day, the day He entered into His rest, to be a weekly pattern for the observance of His rest.⁸

God dispenses his blessings through the use of means. The Sabbath is a special means in which people, even prior to the fall, are blessed of God. The nature of the Sabbath’s blessedness is seen in the manner in which it was to be kept. A seventh-day rest from labor is a blessing in itself. But refraining from labor on the Sabbath is required so that an entire day may be set aside unto God. This gets to the heart of the matter, since the peculiar blessings of this day spring from the worship

⁸ Joseph Pipa, *Lord's Day*, (Great Britain, Christian Focus Publications, 1997) p. 33.

of God within its sacred hours. God's blessing may rest on man's labors throughout the other six days, in relation to another creation ordinance of labor, but the blessings connected with man's rest and the blessings connected with man's labors are each peculiar to themselves. If a person refuses to work during the six days, he or she cannot expect to receive the various blessings that are peculiar to labor. When people refuse to rest and thus worship on the Sabbath, neither can they expect to receive the various blessings peculiar to the Sabbath.

So the Sabbath offers no promise of blessing except when observed in accordance with God's design. There are no grounds for expecting genuine spiritual blessings from the Sabbath when it is not used for spiritual profit, i.e. the purpose for which God made it and blessed it.

GOD SANCTIFIED THE SABBATH

The third observation from Genesis 2:2-3 is that God made this day *holy*. The fact that God "sanctified" this day points us to the original institution of the Sabbath. This was done so that man might observe the Sabbath for the purpose of worshipping God. It is true that this text does not give an explicit command for man to worship God on this day. But we are left with the question, why then did God bless and sanctify this day? The word *sanctify* means to make holy, to consecrate and *set apart* for service to God. So, while no explicit command to worship God is given in Genesis 2:1-3, God's use of this word *sanctify* makes worship implicit. We have a china cabinet in our dining room where my wife Roberta has placed certain plates, glasses, cups and saucers. These items have been set apart from the common, everyday dishes in the kitchen cabinets and are used only on special occasions. Our two sons knew that they were free to use the cups or plates in the kitchen, but not those in the china cabinet. If I were to purchase some new china, I would *not* have to give explicit commands prohibiting its use. All I would need to do is place the items inside the china cabinet. By so doing, I would be *sanctifying* the new china, and my sons would immediately know their duty in regards to those items. Likewise, by blessing and sanctifying the Sabbath Day, God was thus informing man of his duty regarding that day. A moral imperative was imbedded in this day the moment God made it holy. Man is to treat as holy what God has declared to be holy.

GOD IS A SABBATARIAN

These important observations from Genesis 2:1-3 reveal that the Sabbath was not an invention of man, but an institution of God, which he himself observed. God clearly kept the first Sabbath. The Sabbath was first established at creation, not when the nation of Israel began to gather manna six days out of every seven (Exodus 16). The Sabbath was first established at creation, not when the Ten Commandments were given at Sinai (Exodus 20). The Fourth Commandment refers back to Genesis 2:2-3 for its support. This fact is also consistent with the words of Jesus in Mark 2:27 and the words of Hebrews 4:4 (which we will examine later), which help reinforce the Sabbath's institution at creation.

God's rest was in celebration of his finished work. Likewise, man was to rest in recognition and celebration of God's completed work, as well as in anticipation of his own work. As God gave him a special garden in which to work, so God gave him a special day in which to worship. God is sovereign over all time and space. As Adam was responsible to work the garden and keep it, so also he was also responsible to keep the Sabbath and worship in it.

THE SABBATH IS A CREATION ORDINANCE

The term *creation ordinance* may be unfamiliar to some readers. Professor John Murray defines creation ordinances as "those commandments or mandates given to man in the state of integrity."⁹ Or we can simply say that creation ordinances are the laws that God gave to Adam and Eve before they fell into sin. These ordinances are usually grouped into three categories: *marriage*, with its accompanying procreation (Gen. 1:28; 2:22-24); *labor*, with its accompanying dominion (Gen. 1:28; 2:15), and the *Sabbath*, with its accompanying worship (Gen. 2:2-3). All these have been given by God as perpetual ordinances for all mankind. All these were established as perpetual ordinances based on *what God did*, not on *what God said*, i.e. "Thou shalt go to work," or "Thou shalt get married," or "Thou shalt keep the Sabbath holy." Some people get hung up on the fact that God did not give a verbal command (in Gen. 2) for man to observe the Sabbath. We are using a faulty hermeneutic when we place such rigid requirements

⁹ John Murray, *Principles of Conduct*, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids, MI; 1957), p. 27

on the Word of God. To demand an explicit, verbal command before we will accept the moral imperative of a creation ordinance is to impose upon God's Word an arbitrary criterion that is not supported in Scripture. We learn that such a command from God is not needed in order to constitute a creation ordinance.¹⁰ This type of hermeneutic is corrected by Jonathan Edwards in his sermon, on *The Perpetuity of the Sabbath*. He says:

God is sovereign as to the manner of speaking his mind, whether he will speak it in express terms, or whether he will speak it by saying several other things which imply it, and from which we may, by comparing them together, plainly perceive it. If the mind of God be but revealed, if there be but sufficient means for the communication of his mind to our minds, that is sufficient: whether we hear so many express words with our ears, or see them in writing with our eyes, or whether we see the thing that he would signify to us, by the eye of reason and understanding. Who can positively say that if it had been the mind of God, that we should keep the first day of the week, he would have commanded it in express terms, as he did the observation of the seventh day of old? Indeed, if God had so made our faculties, that we were not capable of receiving a revelation of his mind in any other way, then there would have been some reason to say so. But God has given us such understandings, that we are capable of receiving a revelation, when made in another manner. And if God deals with us agreeably to our natures, and in a way suitable to our capacities, it is enough. If God discovers his mind in any way whatsoever, provided it be according to our faculties, we are obliged to obedience, and God may expect our notice and observance of his revelation, in the same manner as if he had revealed it in express terms.¹¹

¹⁰ Richard Gaffin identified this as Calvin's fundamental flaw regarding the Sabbath. "A basic error is Calvin's failure to reckon adequately with the Sabbath institution as a creation ordinance. Other deficiencies in his views are due to this fundamental defect. He did recognize that the Sabbath is mandated at creation and, correlatively, that the fourth commandment is perpetually and universally binding. But the creation Sabbath is not given sufficient attention; its meaning does not have the controlling place it must in determining a fully biblical notion of the Sabbath institution. . . The meaning of the Sabbath institution prior to the fall seems not to have crossed his mind." Richard Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Christian Focus Publications, 1998), p.146

¹¹ Jonathan Edwards, *The Perpetuity And Change Of The Sabbath, Sermon 13, Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. 2* (Carlisle, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1979), p. 94.

While there is no record of God giving Adam a verbal command in the garden regarding labor, yet we understand that labor is a creation ordinance. Neither can we find a verbal command given regarding marriage, but most would agree that marriage is nevertheless a creation ordinance. Likewise, God's act of resting on the seventh day, along with his blessing and sanctifying it, has brought about the Sabbath ordinance and the consequent moral imperative connected with it. As the institution of marriage implies a commandment, so does the institution of the Sabbath. This is stated well by Raymond Perron, "Man as a creature, and this includes the first man as well as all his descendants, has the responsibility of submitting to the ordinances set in the creation structure. These ordinances are so intimately linked to his 'creature status' that the only way for him not to be subject to them is that he must by necessity cease to be a creature."¹² Jesus himself shows us the perpetual nature of creation ordinances, in regards to marriage (Matt. 19:4-6), where he assumes in his argument that God's structure for human life, instituted at creation, remains in force and effect. Paul argues in similar fashion (1 Cor. 11:7-12; 1 Tim. 2:13), as he appeals to creation for support of role and gender distinction. The point is well made that "If creation ordinances do not remain normative for human life, then Jesus and Paul could not have argued as they did."¹³ The words of our Lord Jesus in Matt. 19:8, "from the beginning it was not so," carry a specific significance for this subject. Jesus points his audience back to the creation with his reference to "the beginning," in order to show them that fidelity to one's wife is rooted in the very creation account itself. "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so." Surely it can be said today, "Because of your hardness of heart you seek to turn the Sabbath into a non-entity, but from the beginning it was not so." For some it might be said, "Because of your hardness of heart you twist, distort, and profane the Sabbath, but from the beginning it was not so." If we accept the legitimate authority of labor and marriage as creation ordinances (without verbal commands), why then would we reject the authority of the Sabbath? If creation ordinances still remain in force today, and if the Sabbath is a creation ordinance, then the Sabbath

¹² Raymond Perron, *The Creation Ordinances* (unpublished paper, 2006), p. 4.

¹³ Sam Waldron, *Lectures on the Christian Sabbath* (Grand Rapids, Truth For Eternity Ministries, N.D.), 36. We find a similar reference to creation being made in reference to the Sabbath rest, in Hebrews 4:3-4.

remains in force today.¹⁴

There is more to the creation account than first meets the eye. The subsequent use of the creation account by Jesus and Paul teach us this (Matt. 19:1-8; 1 Tim. 2:12-14). When the bible looks back to creation and draws ethical principles from it, those principles are normative for all men at all times, under all circumstances. In other words, the creation account contains principles that function as moral law – they are not relative to covenant or culture but transcend both.¹⁵

THE SABBATH CONNECTION

All these ordinances are closely connected to each other and can be said to depend on each other and complement one another. The removal or neglect of any one of these ordinances will affect its connection with the others. The ordinance of marriage is necessary for the fulfillment of procreation, procreation is needed in order for man to exercise dominion, and without labor the Sabbath would be meaningless.¹⁶ It is important to see that the whole concept of the Sabbath cannot be divorced from the concept of work and labor. Work itself is a creation ordinance that is predicated upon God's work of creating the world in six days. Work and rest go together; they compliment each other. What you do to one will affect the other. While they were affected by the Fall, they have not been overthrown.¹⁷ The Fourth Commandment addresses both the work of six days and the rest of one day. To abolish the Sabbath then leaves one day per week unaccounted for. This has been stated well by Robert P. Martin:

If we start at Sinai with God's giving the law to Israel, we have not gone back far enough in history. And because of this we risk thinking of Sabbath-keeping as a duty binding on Jews but not on us, or as binding only as long as the Old Covenant was

¹⁴ Dr. Michael Horton recently made the following statement regarding this subject: "I have changed my own position in (*The Law of Perfect Freedom*), convinced now that the Lord's Day is grounded in creation as well as redemption." (<http://www.whitehorseinn.org/blog/2011/12/23/are-we-required-to-attend-church-on-sunday/>)

¹⁵ Richard Barcellos, *Reformed Baptist Theological Review*, Vol. III, No. 2 (Owensboro, Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2006), p. 32.

¹⁶ Here we also find the three institutions of the Church, State, and Family.

¹⁷ In the back of this booklet, I have included a chart on creation ordinances showing how they have been modified.

in effect, but not on Christians under the New Covenant. These ideas are wrong. And one of the reasons that they are wrong is because we do not see the Sabbath as Jesus saw it. The first thing that he says on the subject is, "The Sabbath was made for man." Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, points us to creation!¹⁸

Simply put, if we find the Sabbath in Eden, then it belongs to all people for all time. This means that it was part of man's creation before there ever was a need for his redemption. In other words, this creation ordinance of the Sabbath was given to all people before sin came into the picture, and it remains in effect to this very day. Also the creation mandate of working to rule the earth is still in force today. We still work physically, and so we must rest physically. This weekly holiday is tailored to our moral and spiritual nature as creatures made in the image of God. The Sabbath is God's gift, a great gift. If we abandon it, we will forfeit something very precious and important.

Come, glorify your God and Father. He bids you rest, but it is after His own example. He bids you labor, but it is after His pattern. Imitate the supreme Architect. Work in the order in which He worked, cease when He was please to cease. Let the day of religion, after each six days' toil, be to you a blessed and sanctified season. Let no Sabbath henceforth pass over you, without your having sought the blessings it promises, and performed the duties to which it is dedicated. Let your devout meditation on the glories of creation swell the choir of your Maker's praise.¹⁹

THE SABBATH SERVED WELL WITH MANNA

Moving on from Genesis, we come to another important text to consider in Exodus 16, because it reinforces the point that the Sabbath existed prior to the Ten Commandments at Sinai. Exodus 16 records God introducing manna to the Israelites in the wilderness. What is noteworthy in this account is how articulate the Lord is about giving Israel manna for six days, but not on the seventh day. God follows the

¹⁸ Robert Paul Martin, *The Christian Sabbath: Its Redemptive-Historical Foundation, Its Present Obligation, and Its Practical Observance* (manuscript, 2013), p. 22. This is the most thorough book I have ever read on the subject of the Sabbath. I believe that it will be *the definitive work* on this subject for years to come.

¹⁹ Daniel Wilson, *The Divine Authority and Perpetual Obligation of the Lord's Day* (London, L.D.O.S., 1988), p. 26.

six-and-one pattern of creation to the letter. In this respect what God does in Exod. 16 parallels what he did in Gen. 2:2-3, in the sense that his actions serve as a worthy example for his people. Part of the overall purpose of this incident was the moral testing of the people as the Lord says, "that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law, or not" (16:4). And when some failed this test, the Lord's words to Moses imply that this event is indicative of a longstanding pattern of violating his commands in such matters. He says, "How long do you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws?" (16:28). If the Sabbath law had just been instituted, one would expect different words, such as, "Why do you refuse to keep my (new) commandment and law?" The expression "how long" seems out of place if this is the first Sabbath in history. Is "how long do you refuse" the language of rebuke for first-time transgressors? Also the words of Moses in 16:29 give further proof of Israel's knowledge of the Sabbath *prior* to Sinai. Note the distinction of verb tenses: "See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day." The manna's absence loudly proclaimed the Sabbath's presence. It was based on knowledge of a pre-existing Sabbath.

THE SABBATH IS SET IN STONE

Most opponents of the Christian Sabbath assert that the Sabbath was not instituted until God gave the Ten Commandments to Israel at Sinai. But how could this be when the Fourth Commandment itself points us back to creation? The foundation for the Fourth Commandment is specified in Exod. 20:8-11.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 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.

The Fourth Commandment reaffirms an institution already in the world. At Sinai, the Lord did not require the Israelites to observe a Sabbath commandment that he was just creating. Neither did God suggest that he first made the Sabbath when he gave them manna

from heaven (cf. Exod.16). Instead, he points to creation (Exod. 20:11), clearly referring to Gen. 2:3. The Israelites were to observe the Sabbath because of the event of Gen. 2:2-3. So, at Sinai the Lord did not give them a new commandment, rather he commanded them to *remember* an old obligation. “The text points to what God did at creation. In the Fourth Commandment, the Sabbath is identified with the day on which God rested – the day, which he uniquely blessed and made holy. All the verbs in Exod. 20:11 point to already completed events.”²⁰ Much could be written to unpack the Fourth Commandment in order to show its ongoing obligation for our lives today. I, however, simply want to point out that the Fourth Commandment supports the Sabbath as a creation ordinance. Yet there are a few other truths worth noting about the Fourth Commandment. One truth pertains to the whole subject of redemption. As stated in Exod. 20:11, God’s people were to remember the Sabbath in recognition of God’s work and rest at creation. But in Deut. 5:12-15, a different reason is given to keep the Sabbath – that of God’s deliverance from bondage in Egypt. So, the Fourth Commandment calls us to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy, which we are to do in imitation of his example at creation and recognition of his deliverance in redemption. As Christians, we keep the Sabbath because God is both our Creator and Redeemer.

THE SABBATH REGULATES OUR TIME

The older we get, the more important it is to stay regulated – whether this pertains to our schedule, our monthly expenditures, or our digestive system. The Sabbath regulates our time with the rhythm of six days of labor and one day of rest each week. This division of time into weeks of seven days existed long before the giving of the Decalogue at Sinai. A careful look at Gen. 4:3, 7:4, 10, 8:10-12, 50:10; and Exod. 12:7, reveals that both pre-flood and post-flood time was divided into weeks of seven. God is the Creator of both space and time. G. K. Beale asks this pertinent question, “Did God create only the material space in which humans were to live, or did he not also create the temporal sphere that would regulate their existence?”²¹ As the Sovereign Lord over time, God thus regulates time and directs us how to use this commodity (Ps. 31:15). All of our time in this world comes from God,

²⁰ Martin, p. 30.

²¹ G.K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2011), p. 780.

in whom we live and move and have our being. All people will one day have to give an account for their use and misuse of time (Rom. 13:11-13; 2 Cor. 6:2). Ultimately, our time belongs to God and we are to render service to God at all times (Rom. 11:36 & 12:1; Eph. 5:15-16, Col. 4:5; Heb. 5:12; 1 Pet. 4:2-3). But we are not to render the same service to God all the time, but different services at different times. The Fourth Commandment delineates God's ordained division of time in which six days were given to all humanity to do all our work, but the seventh is a Sabbath to the Lord, in which we are to cease from such work. The Sabbath motivates the lazy person to work six days a week, but it also prevents the "workaholic" from working seven days a week.

So, from the beginning of creation, humanity always had a Sabbath. The Sabbath rests upon the essential relationship of humankind with the Creator. The moment there was a creature capable of knowing and serving God, a special time was then assigned for that purpose.

Thus, it is moral for God to require a fixed and suitable proportion of time for His service. The *particular* proportion of time to be set apart for the worship of God cannot be determined by reason (though, once revealed, it may be shown to be eminently agreeable to reason). This proportion is revealed in a positive manner by means of the example of God at creation.²²

Looking beyond creation and Sinai, we will find in the prophets that the Sabbath remained binding upon the people of God throughout the Old Testament (see Isa. 56:1-8; 58:13-14; 62:22-23; Jer. 17:19-27; Ezek. 20:12-13; 22:26; Neh. 10:28-31; 13:15-22). To sum up what we have seen so far, we see that the Sabbath was first instituted by God at creation, it was reaffirmed in the giving of manna, then it was embodied in the Fourth Commandment as a part of God's moral law, and finally it was upheld by the prophets who denounced Israel for their profaning of the Sabbath. Keeping the Sabbath was a mark of Israel's submission to God, while breaking the Sabbath was a mark of Israel's rebellion. "The Sabbath was then, as it is now, a public badge of what God meant to this people."²³ But as we come to the New Testament, we need to see that there have been some important changes made to the Sabbath, which the church must implement in her weekly worship and practice.

²² James T. Dennison, Jr., "The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath," in *Soli Deo Gloria*, ed. by R. C. Sproul (Phillipsburg, Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1976), p. 149.

²³ Iain D. Campbell, *On the First Day of the Week* (Leominster, Day One Publications, 2005), p. 97.

THE SABBATH IN THE NEW COVENANT

When we come to the New Testament, it is common to begin with an examination of the life and teaching of Jesus regarding the Sabbath Day.

JESUS IS A SABBATARIAN

When looking at what Jesus taught on the Sabbath, we discover that he personally kept the Sabbath holy and honored it. Nowhere does Jesus even suggest that the Sabbath was about to expire or be abolished. In the gospel accounts, Jesus speaks eleven times on this subject (Mt. 12:18; 12:10-12; 24:20; Mk. 2:23-28; 3:1-5; Lk. 6:1-5; 6:6-10; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; Jn. 5:8-17; 7:22-23). Yet, in none of these accounts do we find Jesus abolishing or discounting the sanctity of the Sabbath. Instead Jesus sought to correct the petty additions that the Pharisees had attached to the observance of the Sabbath.

The careful reader will see that our Savior does not plead for any relaxation of the Sabbath law in favor of his disciples; he only asks a correct exposition. The whole drift of his argument is to prove that when it is correctly understood how God intended the Jews to keep his Sabbath law, it will appear that his disciples have not, by this act, broken it at all. They need no lowering of its claims in order to escape condemnation.²⁴

Perhaps the most instructive teaching of Christ on the Sabbath is found in Mark 2:27-28, "And he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.'" Richard Barcellos makes an important point regarding this text:

Jesus here draws from creation a moral principle that is germane to mankind as a whole. First, note that both man and the Sabbath are said to be made. The verb used means "to become" or "to be." It is the same verb used in John 1:3, where it is translated "made," and where it refers to the creation of all things through the Word. What Jesus is saying in Mark 2:27 is that in the past, both man and the Sabbath came into being (*i.e.*, "were made"). That this dual creation (man and Sabbath) is described by one verb suggests that man and the Sabbath

²⁴ Robert Lewis Dabney, *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological*, Vol. 1 (Carlisle, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), p. 514.

were made at the same time. It would be exegetically clumsy to separate the making of man and the making of the Sabbath by thousands of years by placing the Sabbath's institution after Israel's deliverance from Egypt.²⁵

If God intended to make the Sabbath for the benefit of humanity, surely he intended for us to enjoy such a benefit from the beginning. The Sabbath is God's gift to humanity. Should we then turn around and use this gift as a tool for dishonoring the gift-Giver? It would be like receiving an expensive pen as a gift and then using it to write slander against the one who gave it to us.

THE SABBATH IS NOT ABROGATED BY THE NEW COVENANT

If, therefore, the Sabbath finds its foundation in creation, then it surely transcends the Mosaic economy and thus will survive its dissolution.

If this command was not for the first time introduced by the Levitical economy, but was in full force before, and if it was binding not on Jews only, but on all men, then the abrogation of that dispensation cannot have abrogated it, because it did not institute it. So we reason: if the Sabbath was instituted long before, it did not come with Judaism, and does not go with it. If it was always binding, on grounds as general as the human race, over all tribes of mankind, the dissolution of God's special covenant with the family of Jacob did not repeal it.²⁶

Dr. Martin's thoughts are worth expressing here:

The Sabbath has what is known in matters of property ownership as the right of possession, i.e., a title that should hold unless disproved. As we come to the end of the Old Testament, we admittedly assume this in relation to marriage and labor, i.e., creation institutions about which no question is ever raised by those who love and practice the truth. Should we not assume this also in the case of the Sabbath? Far from expecting the Sabbath institution to disappear under the New Covenant, we should expect it to continue—modified only to the degree that the New Covenant requires.²⁷

²⁵ Barcellos, p. 32.

²⁶ Dabney, pp. 500, 507.

²⁷ Martin, p. 165.

WE NEED A BREAK

The necessity of one day of rest out of every seven is written in the very nature of our humanity. The same divine hand that wrote the Sabbath law on the tablets of stone, first wrote it on the human constitution. The Sabbath grants physical rest to our bodies and is therefore a benefit toward our refreshment. During the 2004 Summer Olympics, I remember watching a television interview of the U.S. Women's Gymnastics Team on *The Today Show*. The team members were asked specific questions about their training schedule – how long they trained each day and if they trained every day. I was struck by their answer, for they specifically said that they needed one day off each week to rest and recover. They did not say they *wanted* one day but they needed one day off each week. Not only athletes, but also pastors and those involved in full-time ministry need this weekly rest. I appreciate what a medical doctor has written:

God calls the one who refuses to work, lazy. God calls the one who will not rest, disobedient. A seven-day cycle involving work, worship, and rest protects spiritual and physical health. What I know as a physician is that **your body will get its rest!** Either you can give your body its *Sabbaths*, its time to *cease* and *desist*, or your body will take them back. There is no exception clause allowing overwork without consequences just because you serve God. No matter how spiritual, no matter how called we are, God's plan for our lives will never negate His clearly laid out precepts from His eternal Word. Because of failure to obey God's plan for cyclical rest, the epidemic of ministers leaving their calling, burning out, and experiencing tragic moral failures continues.²⁸

Numerous examples could be multiplied here to support the point that the human constitution needs regular rest and how this is provided by a weekly Sabbath. The French implemented a completely new calendar in 1793, which was designed in part to remove all religious influences from the calendar. Their new system divided each month into three sets (called *décades*) of 10 days, of which the final day was a day of rest and festivity. This was an unpopular move, because now there were nine work-days between each day of rest, instead of six. A 10-day week proved highly impractical and was abolished by Napoleon

²⁸ Daniel Spaite, M.D., *Time Bomb in the Church; Defusing Pastoral Burnout* (Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press, 1999), pp. 67-69. Emphasis his.

in 1806. The connection of the Sabbath to the human constitution has been referred to as the *physiology* of the Sabbath or the *physiological nature of a hebdomadal rest*. Part of the reason that God established the proportion of working days to days of rest as *six to one*, is that he was accommodating to the physical constitution of the creature. The Fourth Commandment even takes into consideration the physical well-being of cattle and livestock (Exod. 20:10), for it requires the same six to one ratio of rest. Yet the Sabbath was never intended to simply be a day of physical rest, but also a day of worship, service, and devotion to God. The mere resting of the body on the Sabbath has been referred to as keeping the Sabbath like the oxen and cattle. There is an important difference between utility and duty.

THE SABBATH DIRECTS OUR WORSHIP

If, as some assert, there is no abiding Sabbath for New Covenant believers, what then remains to regulate our times of worship? Is this an area to be simply left to “the light of nature and Christian common sense”? If so, then man’s conscience cannot be bound in reference to the number of times he is to gather corporately for worship. Take away the Sabbath and what is left to direct man that he must gather on Sunday, instead of Friday or any other day for worship? Does he now meet on Sunday merely because it is convenient or because the church, through the centuries, has traditionally met on Sunday? On what basis could the elders exhort a member who purposely attends every other week? As was stated earlier, one reason why God instituted the Sabbath Day was so that man would thus know how much time and *how often* such time was to be devoted to the worship of God. Without the Sabbath, man would not know how to regulate the ratio of work-to-worship. So long as man is required to worship God in this world, he will need to be informed as to when he should worship and what length of time should be set aside for such service. God supplied such information when He blessed and sanctified the Sabbath Day, thus giving us a moral imperative. In writing his laws upon our hearts, God has impressed upon us the need to set aside time for the worship of God.

WHY WE NOW REST ON THE FIRST DAY

Some religious groups and denominations like the Seventh Day Adventists, Seventh-Day Baptists, and Messianic Jews do not recognize

any change of the day from the seventh day to the first day of the week (Saturday to Sunday). But the grounds for such a change is rooted in:

1. The world-changing event of Christ's resurrection – which was on the first day of the week. Five times the Gospels mention this fact (Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:1; John 20:1, 19).
2. The Post-Resurrection appearances of Christ (Mt. 28:1, 5-6, 9-10; Mk. 16:9, 12, 14; Lk. 24:1-2, 36; John 20:19, 26).
3. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Lev. 23:15-16; Acts 2:1) was on the first day of the week.
4. The corporate meetings of worship occurred on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2).
5. The change of the day is also reflected in the change of its name from the *Sabbath* to the *Lord's Day*, as seen in Rev. 1:10. The term *Lord's Day* is similar to the term *Lord's Supper at 1 Cor. 11:20*. In both cases the word *kuriakos* means that which belongs to the Lord.
6. The change of the Day is also reflected in the historical records of the early Church Fathers.²⁹ They tell us that the early church met for worship on the first day of the week, indicating a clear shift away from the seventh day.

Jesus himself set forth the transfer by meeting with his disciples on the resurrection day, and not again until a full week later. The fact that Jesus did not meet with his disciples again until the next first day of the week helps to confirm the transition from the seventh day to the first. If Jesus had met with his disciples on the seventh day, one could safely assume that there was no change in the day. If Jesus had met with the disciples on different days each week, one might easily conclude that there was no distinction of days and thus each day was as important as

²⁹ Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage in Africa (A.D. 250): "The eighth day, that is, the first day after the Sabbath and the Lord's Day." Epistle 58, section 4; Tertullian in Africa (A.D. 200): "We solemnize the day after Saturday in contradiction to those who call this day their Sabbath." Apology, Chapter XVI. Clement of Alexandria, Egypt (A.D. 194): "He, in fulfillment of the precept, according to the gospel, keeps the Lord's Day, when he abandons an evil disposition, and assumes that of the Gnostic, glorifying the Lord's resurrection in himself." Book 7, Chapter XII; Justin Martyr (A.D. 140): "But Sunday is the day which we all hold our common assembly, because Jesus Christ, our Savior, on the same day rose from the dead." Apology, Chapter LXVII; Epistle of Barnabas (A.D. 120): "We keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day on which Jesus rose again from the dead." Chapter XVII.

the next. The example of Christ is just as binding as if he gave a verbal command.

All the Gospels are very clear and very explicit about this. The first day of the week was the day of resurrection, the day when Jesus came to His disciples and broke bread with them. It was Jesus who took the initiative of making this the day of Christian worship, the day of remembrance, the day on which the church celebrated the memorial of Christ's passage from death to life. The story of Jesus coming to two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus, on the first day of the week, first explaining to them the Scriptures and then breaking bread with them, is the prototype of the Christian's Lord's Day service. The earliest Christians worshipped on the first day of the week because this was the day the risen Jesus came to them. This was the first day of a new age, the eighth day of the old age. This was the new Sabbath, brought in by the Messiah, the new Sabbath of release from the bondage of Satan which Jesus fulfilled by appearing to His disciples and eating with them. The New Testament gives us no clear statement as to what happened or how it happened. All we know is that already in New Testament times Christians celebrated worship on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10).³⁰

It is unlikely that the disciples would have changed the day on their own, or that it was simply someone's idea, which gradually evolved, until it caught on. The old Sabbath had been established by divine institution and could only be changed by divine institution. It was Christ Himself, exercising his divine authority as Lord of the Sabbath, who changed the day. Remember that the first converts to Christ were devout Jews who were fanatical in their observance of the Sabbath. They believed that if they broke the Sabbath they would suffer the wrath of God. So what caused these committed Jewish Christians to turn their backs on all their years of religious training and tradition? The most rational explanation for such a radical and instantaneous change is that the resurrected Jesus, who appeared to his disciples on the first day of the week, communicated this change to them in such a clear and unmistakable manner that it was immediately put into practice. The observance of the first day of the week as a day of worship

³⁰ Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship That is Reformed According to Scripture* (Atlanta, John Knox, 1984), p. 32.

was universal among Christians in the years immediately following the apostles. The early church was never left without a day of rest and worship – if anything, they had for a time two consecutive days for corporate worship. On Saturday they would set aside all their work of the previous six days and go to the synagogue, on Sunday they would meet in home churches. This would indicate that such a day was never in jeopardy of being lost or abandoned. It suggests God's concern to guard the perpetual keeping of the day. Richard Baxter notes:

It hath been the constant practice of all Christ's Churches in the whole world ever since the days of the Apostles to this day, to assemble for public worship on the Lord's Day, as a day set apart thereto by the Apostles. Yea, so universal was this judgment and practice, that there is no one Church, no one writer, or one heretic (that I remember to have read of), that can be proved even to have dissented or gainsaid it till of late times.³¹

Philip Schaff writes, "Nothing short of apostolic precedence can account for the universal religious observance [of the Lord's Day] in the churches of the second century. There is no dissenting voice."³²

Christ finished the work of redeeming his people from their sins. Then he entered into his rest. As a reminder of this finished work and as a pledge of our entering into his rest, the day of rest now is changed to the first day of the week. This seems to be the logic of the apostles and this is the chief point to which the early fathers point in their explanation of the change of the day.³³

I really appreciate the picturesque way Thomas Peck addresses this issue:

No ordinance of God can dread discussion; no plant of our heavenly Father's planting can ever be rooted up by the storms of controversy, and we are under no apprehension that the Sabbath, which (beside the institution of marriage) is the only flower that has been transplanted from Paradise in our

³¹ Richard Baxter, *The Divine Appointment of the Lord's Day: The Practical Works Richard Baxter, vol. 3* (Ligioner, Soli Deo Gloria, 1990), p. 879.

³² Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Vol. II* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1981), p. 201.

³³ Martin, p. 310.

fallen world, and which has survived the scorching heats and blasting winds of wickedness for so many centuries, will be done away till he comes who is the substance of all shadows, the complement of all pledges and earnestness which have been given to the people of God, and the final rest of all who are troubled for the cause of truth and righteousness.³⁴

THE SEMANTICS OF SABBATARIANISM

I have heard Christians say, “I’m not a Sabbatarian, but a *Lord’s Day* Christian, because I worship on the Lord’s Day, not on the Sabbath like the Jews.” This brings up a good point that can be explained by referring to our Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689.³⁵ In Chapter 22, Paragraph 7, we find these following words:

As it is the law of nature, that in general a proportion of time, by God’s appointment, be set apart for the worship of God, so by his Word, in a positive moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all men, in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven for a sabbath to be kept holy unto him, which from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ was the last day of the week, and from the resurrection of Christ was changed into the first day of the week, which is called the *Lord’s day*: and is to be continued to the end of the world as the *Christian Sabbath*, the observation of the last day of the week being abolished (Emphasis mine).

These words were first hammered out by the Westminster Divines (1644-48), who sought to show the continuity between the Sabbath of the Old Covenant and the Lord’s Day of the New Covenant. It was in this context that the term *Christian Sabbath* came into general use. *Christian Sabbath* conveys the idea that the Lord’s Day carries the same obligation “binding all men . . . to be kept holy unto him.” The authority and obligation of the Fourth Commandment regarding the seventh day has been removed from that day and has now been attached to the *first* day of the week. For centuries now, Christians holding to the Lord’s Day and the obligation to keep it holy have referred to themselves as “Sabbatarians”. It was commonly understood that such

³⁴ Thomas Peck, *The Writings of Thomas Peck, Vol.1* (Carlisle, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1999), p. 196.

³⁵ You can obtain a copy of this Confession from our *Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America* (ARBCA) at www.ReformedBaptist.com.

a title did not apply to the seventh day but rather conveyed a strict observance of the first day. This, no doubt, is why various groups such as Seventh-Day Adventists and Seventh-Day Baptists, avoided using the term Sabbatarian to define themselves, because it had been used for centuries by believers holding to the sanctity of the Lord's Day. Since this term has served the church well for such a long time, there is no need to change it. If anything, it needs to be reintroduced to most believers today who profane the Day.

3 SABBATH VIEWS

Partial Sabbatarian *	Sabbatarian	
	7 th Day Sabbatarians	1 st Day Sabbatarians
<p>16th Century</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin Luther • Ulrich Zwingli • Philip Melancthon • John Calvin 	<p>16th Century</p> <p>Some Anabaptists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew Fischer • Oswald Glaidt <p>Jewish</p>	<p>16th Century</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Knox • Heinrich Bullinger • Zacharias Ursinus • Caspar Olevianus • Martin Bucer • Peter Martyr • Theodore Beza
<p>17th Century</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anglicans / Episcopalians 	<p>17th Century</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7th Day Baptists 	<p>17th Century</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presbyterian • Independent • Particular Baptist**
<p>Present Day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dispensationalists • Modern day Evangelicals • New Covenant Theology • Sovereign Grace Churches 	<p>Present Day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7th Day Adventists • 7th Day Baptists • 7th Day Pentecostal • World Wide Church of God 	<p>Present Day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian Reformed • Presbyterian • Reformed Baptist**

* These are referred to as PARTIAL SABBATARIAN because they still upheld the validity of the fourth commandment and worshiped one day in seven.

** Reformed Baptists are distinguished from Sovereign Grace churches and Calvinistic Baptists by their strict adherence to the Second London Confession of Faith of 1689 cf. chapter 22, paragraphs 7 & 8.

YEAH, BUT WHAT ABOUT THOSE TROUBLESOME VERSES?

Over the centuries opponents of the Christian Sabbath have raised up certain *proof-texts* which they believe release us from having to keep the Sabbath. These generally have been Rom. 14:5-6; Gal. 4:10; Col. 2:16-17; and Heb. 4:1-13. One reason to reject the notion that these texts overthrow the Fourth Commandment is that they do not go far enough in what they say. The fourth commandment includes the one in seven principle of working six days (“six days you shall labor and do all your work”), which is then followed by mention of how the seventh day is to be a Sabbath to the Lord. If these texts were to rescind the fourth commandment, we could expect some mention of the other half of the commandment that pertains to working six days. At the very least we would expect this part of the commandment to be addressed somewhere else in the New Testament. Does the New Testament stipulate, explicitly or implicitly, that we are now free from work? Does the New Testament indicate that we now must work seven days a week? Does the New Testament direct us to decide for ourselves how many days a week we will work? Unless the New Testament sheds new light on the number of days man is to work or not work, we must fall back on what light we have been given from the Old Testament and continue to apply it to our lives today. Six days of work and one day of rest make up the divine package of the Fourth Commandment. They form a unit; they are two sides of the same coin. Thus, one part cannot be removed without also affecting the other.

Of these “problematic” texts, the only one that specifically mentions the Sabbath is Col. 2:16-17, “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.” At this point it is important to note that Paul nowhere in this text addresses the moral obligation of keeping one day in seven. When Paul mentioned the Sabbath in 2:16, it is highly unlikely that the church at Colossae would have interpreted his words as an abrogation of the Lord’s Day. One reason is because, in following the example of the Apostles, the early church met for worship

on the first day of every week.³⁶ Remember that an important part of hermeneutics is determining what the original letter meant to the original audience in their original context. What would the words of Col. 2:16-17 mean to these early Christians who met for worship on the first day of the week, a day they referred to as the “Lord’s Day” (Rev. 1:10), the “First Day,” and/or the “Eighth Day”? Would they have really assumed that Paul was releasing them from the obligation of the fourth commandment, or loosening them from sanctifying the Lord’s Day? To suggest such a notion is to impose an interpretation upon the text that cannot be supported by the grammar or the context of this passage. In other words, it may be asserted that Col. 2:16-17 makes for a very poor tool with which to chisel out the fourth commandment from the Decalogue.

Yet, non-Sabbatarians will assert that these texts rescind the part of resting one day in seven, thus implying that New Testament believers are free to decide for themselves whether they will now work seven days a week. Here we must ask some practical questions: If the Sabbath was made for man, for his benefit, why would God take away this benefit from those under the New Covenant or, at best, make it optional? If man was given one day out of every seven to rest from his previous six days of physical labor, has the New Covenant believer come to the place where he no longer needs such physical rest? If God determined that it was good for man to have this physical rest for one day out of every seven, is he now leaving it up to man to decide for himself how many days he should work before resting? If one of the purposes of the Sabbath day, in addition to corporate worship, was for man to turn his thoughts and attention toward God throughout that day (Isa. 58:13), does it no longer matter to God whether we do this? If the New Covenant believer is no longer required to give God “the time of day” in any manner different from what he would do on the other six days, how is the New Covenant superior to the Old in this manner? How does this bring us closer to God?

³⁶ “The Jewish Sabbath was kept, however, by the early Christians along with their own Lord’s day for a considerable period; till at length, in 364 A.D. the Council of Laodicea condemned the practice as Judaizing.” John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*, p. 177. The term “Sabbath” is never applied to Sunday in the New Testament and it did not come to be regularly used for the “Lord’s Day” until after Constantine. More than that, this term (Sabbath) is only rarely applied to Sunday in the literature of the first three centuries. This could be because the early believers sought to avoid any confusion with the Jewish Sabbath and the Jewish manner of observing it.

The abandonment of the Lord's Day has not been a common practice in Christian churches until recently. It is striking that there is no prolonged discussion of the Sabbath in any of the New Testament epistles, perhaps because the early churches experienced no major problems or issues in regards to the observance of the Lord's Day. It appears that corporate worship on the Lord's Day was the universal practice among all the churches of early Christendom. One searches in vain for the one book, or the exegetical or theological argument which is supposed to have laid the Sabbath in the grave once and for all. The Sabbath has disappeared from our land (and from many of our churches) because it is no longer convenient to our lifestyle. Our problem is not a lack of biblical or theological support for the Sabbath. It is a lack of interest and a lack of passion. Christians break the Sabbath on a regular basis with no qualms of conscience and with little apparent consequence from the Lord. Yet Jesus shows that not all our sins will be judged in this life. He says, "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19 NKJV). These words carry serious weight, especially for those of us in positions of leadership.

CHRIST'S LORDSHIP OF OUR TIME

Many Christians are quick to confess Jesus as Lord, without considering the ramifications of such a statement. They may acknowledge that Christ is Lord of their lives, but often times that does not include all of their lives. Many believers will admit that Christ is Lord over their money and they demonstrate submission to his Lordship by giving back to the Lord a tenth or more of all that they earn. But Christ is certainly Lord over our time as well. Just as all the money we possess ultimately comes from him and belongs to him, certainly all the time we have comes from him and belongs to him (*My times are in your hand*; Ps. 31:15a; cf. Ps. 89:7). Just as believers give a portion of their money to the Lord, so are we called to give a portion of time to the Lord and that portion is one day out of every seven. God loves a cheerful giver and requires that we give *not reluctantly or under compulsion* (2 Cor. 9:7).

Again, the Sabbath reveals our hearts. The Sabbath forces you to ask yourself important questions: Who or what controls your

world? Whom or what do you serve? How much of our busyness is really an effort to prove our worth and escape the sense that there is something very wrong with us? Complicating matters, when God confronted Adam and Eve, he cursed the very things in which men and women would seek to find their worth: he cursed their labor. . . The very things we would hope to give us meaning and worth have been cursed so that to be “fruitful” in them will require extreme effort. . . What’s going on here? How can God argue for Sabbath rest on the one hand but promise to frustrate our work on the other? The answer is that God wants us to find our rest in him, not in our own proud efforts.³⁷

The way we use our time says a lot about us, so does the manner in which we give our time to others. Walter Chantry says it most succinctly:

Is there any greater compliment than to say, ‘I always have time for *you*’? You can offer no higher favor than to give another your undivided attention . . . If human relationships are tragically broken and people are deeply wounded by our not having time for them, what of your relationship with God? Surely you have time for the One who made you! You do have time for the God who chose you from eternity to be his special people, don’t you? He washed away your sins by the death of his Son so that you could be his precious ones, his very own. You would not insult the Most High by being too busy for him! Time for the Lord is the issue about which the fourth commandment speaks.³⁸

This matter will not only affect the way we worship, but also the day on which we worship. Many large churches that have multiple Sunday services often feel compelled to offer Saturday evening services as well. This may be done in order to ease the overcrowding of their Sunday services, to accommodate those who have to work on Sundays, or to offer an alternative for those seeking to do other things on Sunday. I can understand their difficulty and their desire to provide for the needs of those who work on Sundays. But it must not be forgotten that the Lord’s Day is a “holy day.” It is the one and only day out of every seven that God sanctified and set apart for rest and worship. The Fourth

³⁷ Smith, *Rest*, pp. 7-14.

³⁸ Walter Chantry, *Call The Sabbath a Delight* (Carlisle, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), p. 16.

Commandment still remains in force and effect: “Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy.” There is now something distasteful about the church gathering for corporate worship on Saturday. This is expressed most eloquently by George Elliot:

It is easy to comprehend how the Jewish Sabbath must almost at once have lost its hold on the affections of the disciples. That day of dread and gloom on which their Master lay in the tomb could not be any more a “delight.” In the most powerful manner possible those feelings of festal gladness and holy joy inseparable from the true idea of the Sabbath were forever disconnected from the seventh day. Henceforth, not the day of seeming defeat and of the sealed sepulchre, but the day of the Saviour’s glorious triumph is the holy day of the church, its chief day of religious convocation and social worship.³⁹

Sinclair Ferguson also says it very well:

For one thing, this view of the Sabbath helps us regulate the whole week. Sunday is “Father’s Day,” and we have an appointment to meet Him. The child who asks, “How short can the meeting be?” has a dysfunctional relationship problem – not an intellectual, theological problem. Something is amiss in his fellowship with God.⁴⁰

OLD, RESTING, AND REFORMED

Sadly, Sabbath observation is often the first of the Ten Commandments to disappear from our churches and the last to return. The Christian Sabbath is one topic that receives very little attention in churches or seminaries today. How often do we hear of a sermon series on the Sabbath or the Ten Commandments? As a result many believers simply do not know what to do with the fourth commandment. I grew up in a Roman Catholic home and viewed Sunday as just an extra day off school in which I could sleep in before having to go to Mass for an hour. But once that ceremony was over, I was free to do whatever I pleased with the rest of the day. The whole subject of the Sabbath and the Lord’s Day meant nothing to me until I was converted and had entered seminary.

³⁹ George Elliott, *The Abiding Sabbath: An Argument for the Perpetual Obligation of the Lord’s Day* (1882), pp. 188-9.

⁴⁰ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *In Christ Alone: Living the Gospel Centered Life* (Orlando, Reformation Trust, 2007), p. 229.

As a tender, new Christian, I wanted to be sure that I was living an obedient life pleasing to the Lord. I am so thankful that we have not been left to our own devices in trying to figure this question out on our own. This issue was resolved long ago by our Puritan forefathers. We are the heirs of their biblical struggles, the fruits of which have been set forth for succeeding generations to embrace in that most excellent document known as the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689. One intent of this document was to display solidarity with their Presbyterian brethren who earlier framed the Westminster Confession, as well as with their Independent brethren whose Savoy Declaration was an adaptation of the Westminster Confession. These historic documents give a faithful interpretation of Scripture regarding several important doctrines, including the doctrine of the Sabbath. A comparison of these three confessions shows complete agreement regarding the Sabbath.⁴¹ The obligation and proper observation of the Sabbath was of such importance that it was plainly set down in these documents. Yet, how many churches include a doctrinal position on the Sabbath in their statement of faith these days? How many churches today even take a position on the Sabbath? Today there is a new movement afoot that is described by the title of a recent book: *Young, Restless, and Reformed*. It seems that the doctrines of grace known as *Calvinism*, are making a comeback among many young Christians. I look forward to the time when being *Reformed* will include keeping the Sabbath holy. There was a time when Christians took a bold stand for the Sabbath. In the nineteenth century, various *Sabbath-societies* were founded both in Britain and America for the purpose of promoting the sanctity of the Lord's Day in the face of growing apathy. The founding of the London Society for Promoting a Due Observance of the Lord's Day (later changed to the Lord's Day Observance Society) in 1831 was one visible expression of such concern. Large conventions were once held in honor of the Sabbath, and were supported by various Sabbath-

⁴¹ "The Three Forms of Unity, the confessional standards of Continental Calvinism, do treat the Sabbath much less extensively and with a somewhat different accent than the Westminster Standards. But in the main, especially beginning in the seventeenth century following the Synod of Dort, British-American Presbyterianism and Continental Calvinism became of one mind on what Sunday observance should look like in view of the continuing validity of the fourth commandment. We may speak here of a Reformed consensus or, as it may be put, a consensus of generic Calvinism." Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "Westminster and the Sabbath," in ed. Ligon Duncan, *The Westminster Confession Into the 21st Century* (Ross-shire, Christian Focus Publications, 2004), p. 124.

committees and alliances.⁴² Sadly, many of these noble societies have run their course and are now a thing of the past. But sadder still is the fact that in many Christian churches today the Sabbath itself has become a thing of the past.

BELIEVERS NEED TO STAND UP FOR THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH

The Sabbath gives believers opportunity to be salt and light in their communities. Years ago my wife Roberta worked as a hair stylist for a salon that was open seven days a week. She made it clear before accepting the job that she would not work on Sundays. The employer agreed but over time asked Roberta to come in to work if another stylist was ill. My wife was willing to help in times of emergency. But before long the salon was scheduling her to work two Sundays each month. After praying, we agreed that Roberta would have to go to the owner and request all her Sundays off, otherwise she would have to quit her job. The owner responded that Roberta was such a good employee and that she didn't want to lose her. The owner then promoted Roberta to manager so that she could schedule her own Sundays off. In a recent year, my son David was fired from his job at a popular Christian bookstore for refusing to work on Sundays! Not long ago, one of our deacons counseled a college student who had been absent from public worship two weeks in a row because his employer scheduled him to work on those Sundays. The deacon explained that the Lord does not want us to forsake the assembling of ourselves together for worship (Heb. 10:25), and that we are to uphold the fourth commandment by keeping the Sabbath holy. He encouraged the young man to go to his store manager and respectfully explain that he wanted Sundays free so that he could be in church for worship each week. This became an opportunity (as it usually does for believers) for this young man to share his faith and convictions through the avenue of the fourth commandment and the need to be faithful in corporate worship. Oftentimes managers are unsympathetic and unwilling to grant such a request. Fortunately in Arizona, we have laws prohibiting employers from forcing their employees to work on Sundays against their religious convictions and practices. Our young college student was obliged to

⁴² Some were: The Lord's Day Alliance of the United States; The Lord's Day League of New England; The Lord's Day Alliance for the South; Mid-West District of the Lord's Day Alliance; The Northwest Sabbath Association; The Sunday League of America; The Weekly Rest Day League of the Pacific Coast; The Woman's National Sabbath Alliance. See www.archive.org/stream/sundayworldsres00jackgoog/sundayworldsres00jackgoog_djvu.txt

refer to these laws before his employer finally granted his request. May the Lord be pleased to raise up more men and women who will boldly stand up for the sanctity of the Lord's Day.

Yes, the Sabbath stretches through all ages. It affects all men in every period of time. It distinguishes the true servants of God from the wicked, more than any other ordinance. It upholds the visible profession of religion before the eyes of mankind; keeps up the face and aspect of Christianity in the world. It is the most direct honour that a man can pay to the name and will of the ever-blessed God. And it will never cease in its authority here, till our Sabbaths on earth give place to that eternal Sabbath of which they are the pledge, the preparation, the end.⁴³

TAKE A TASTE TEST

Most of us are familiar with the enjoyable experience of sampling the various flavors of ice cream at the local *Baskin Robbins*. Tasting the samples on the little spoons helps you to determine which flavor of ice cream to order. God's Word calls us to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8; 1 Pet. 2:3). One way we can see the Lord's goodness is by keeping the Sabbath holy. It was Daniel who suggested to the steward assigned over him and his friends, "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see" (1:11-13). I pray that what you have read thus far has convinced you to begin keeping the Christian Sabbath holy in obedience to the Fourth Commandment. But if you are still uncertain, then test yourself by observing the entire Lord's Day in light of such texts as Exod. 20:8-10; Neh.13:15-22; Isa. 58:13-14; Matt. 12:1-13; and 1 Cor. 16:1-2.⁴⁴ The Jews in the wilderness were required to collect twice the amount of manna on the day before the Sabbath so they could rest on that day. We can learn from this example by making the extra effort to finish

⁴³ Daniel Wilson, *The Divine Authority and Perpetual Obligation of the Lord's Day* (London, L.D.O.S., 1988), p. 27.

⁴⁴ Also consult the Second London Confession of Faith of 1689, Chapter 22:8, *The sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering their common affairs aforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all day, from their own works, words and thoughts, about their worldly employment and recreations, but are also taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.*

all our laundry, shopping, cooking, cleaning, yard work, car-washing, and gas-pumping on Saturday in order that the Lord's Day may be free from such distractions.⁴⁵ Keeping this day holy includes getting plenty of rest the night before and preparing our heart before worship by meditating on God's Word and praying. Be sure to enter into the worship with all your heart and soul, seeking to drink deeply of the public means of grace. "Be not, therefore, in the school of Christ like an idle boy in grammar-school that often hears but never learns his lesson – he still goes to school but profits nothing. Thou hatest it in a child – Christ detests it in you!"⁴⁶ After worship, your family can enjoy a simple meal at which time you can discuss the sermon, have family devotions and read. Use this day to extend hospitality by inviting someone to your home for dinner and fellowship. Use this day to reach out to the homeless, to visit the sick or those in the nearby jail, and to help the widow. This is a day to do good and to show mercy. I encourage you to take the Sabbath for a test-drive and celebrate the Lord's Day in a genuine fashion for at least six months and see if you are not in better spiritual condition than before. See if God doesn't keep his Word from Isaiah 58:14, "then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

THE DEFENSE RESTS

It should become clear that this *queen of days* was instituted by our Creator in Paradise, re-established in the wilderness, ratified in the moral law at Sinai, and transferred by the Lord of the Sabbath to its present position as the weekly festival of his resurrection. If Adam in

⁴⁵ The Puritans are great teachers when it comes to observing the Lord's Day and keeping it holy. Some Puritan works that are worth consulting are: Lewis Bayly, *The Practice of Piety*; Henry Scudder, *The Christian's Daily Walk*; William Gouge, *The Sabbath's Sanctification*; Thomas Shepard, *Theses Sabbaticae*; George Swinnock, *The Christian Man's Calling*. Swinnock writes, "Readers, if I were to counsel thee how to spend a market-day, so that thou mightiest gain much wealth and treasure, I doubt not but thou wouldst harken to me. I am now to advise thee how to spend the Lord's-day, the market-day for thy soul, so that thou mayest get the true treasure, durable riches and righteousness. I pray thee to hear and obey the directions which I have to deliver to thee from the Lord for that end." *The Works of George Swinnock, Vol. 1* (Carlisle, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), p. 226.

⁴⁶ Lewis Bayly, *The Practice of Piety* (Morgan, Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1997), p. 197.

his state of innocence required a weekly day of rest for worship, how much more do those of us who are his fallen descendants?⁴⁷ Preaching on this subject, Thomas Chalmers said,

Rest assured that a Christian having the love of God written in his heart, and denying the Sabbath a place in his affections, is an anomaly that is no where to be found. O how is it possible that a man can be under the dominion of a principle of piety, who does not love that day which brings to piety its most precious opportunities? How is it possible that he can wear the character of a religious being if that day which offers the freest time for the lessons and exercises of religion is spent in other exercises or idly suffered to roll over his head in no exercise at all? How is it possible that there can exist within him any honest care for eternity, if the best season for carrying on the preparations of eternity pass away?⁴⁸

May the Lord of the Sabbath grant to his church the same spirit expressed by Thomas Watson, “This is the day of sweet intercourse between God and the soul. How can a spiritual heart choose but to call the Sabbath a delight? Is it not delightful to a queen to be putting on her wedding clothes in which she shall meet the king her bridegroom? When we go about our Sabbath exercises, we are dressing ourselves, and putting on our wedding clothes in which we are to meet our heavenly bridegroom the Lord Jesus Christ, and is this not delightful? To find this holy delight is to be in *the Spirit on the Lord's Day.*”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Michael Horton sums it up: “Nevertheless, we should all be able to agree on the following points: The New Testament prescribes the Lord’s Day as the weekly gathering of the Lord’s people for the means of grace and public worship; The New Testament insists upon the regular attendance upon these public means of grace. We need a whole day to be bathed again in the powers of the age to come in the communion of saints; Any celebration of the Christian Sabbath or Lord’s Day that is not filled with this festive delight in Christ as he is clothed in the gospel is just another superstitious ritual. The carelessness for the Lord’s Day is ultimately a carelessness for the means of grace and the communion of saints, which is part and parcel of the Gnostic and antinomian spirit of our age. Christ has not done away with forms, structures, and tangible means any more than he has surrendered his body to the grave.” (From <http://www.whitehorseinn.org/blog/2011/12/23/are-we-required-to-attend-church-on-sunday/>.)

⁴⁸ Thomas Chalmers, *Sermons Preached at St. John’s Church, Glasgow* (Edinburgh, Waugh & Innes, 1823), pp. 288-9.

⁴⁹ Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments* (Carlisle, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1981), p. 118.

The Lord's Day is that weekly window of opportunity for drawing near to God in corporate worship and taking advantage of the public means of grace in a way that is not afforded at any other time of the week. We are to call the Lord's Day a delight, which means that we are to consider it our joy and privilege. This is the day for sweet communion with the Lord and the Lord's people. It has been said before that the Christian Sabbath is a sign of a standing or falling church. The way we celebrate the Sabbath is a definite indicator or thermometer of the state of true religion in the land, in the church, in the family, and in our own heart. The health of one's spiritual state will be directly affected to the degree that the Sabbath is observed and sanctified. When the Lord's Day is profaned, when professing Christians become careless in their observation of it, then it is inevitable that the local church, the community, and even the nation will decline. Let us look upon the Sabbath as part of our joy and delight. "This is the day that the Lord has made, Let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps. 118:24).

We Greet the Day of Light

<p>We greet the Day of Light When God our Maker stood The Day dividing from the night And saw that it was good.</p> <p>We take the Day of Rest Jehovah sanctified One of the seven, which He blessed For man did He provide.</p> <p>We hail the Day of Grace The Gospel Jubilee When Christ proclaims in every place The truth that sets us free.</p> <p>We see the Day of Power On which the Spirit gains A willing people in the hour Our risen Saviour reigns.</p>	<p>We haste the Day of God And seek the rest to come For all the saints redeemed by Blood in their eternal home.</p> <p>Lord GOD, upon us shower These blessings rich we pray, Grant us Thy light, rest, grace and power On this, Thy holy Day!</p> <p>In Thee alone we boast, In Thee alone we rest: The Father, Son and Holy Ghost, One God, forever blest!</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>John Peter Bodner, March 8, 2004. S.M.</i></p>
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CREATION ORDINANCES IN LIGHT OF REDEMPITIVE HISTORY

By John Giarrizzo

CREATION ORDINANCE	AFFECTED BY THE FALL	ADDRESSED IN THE DECALOGUE	TYPIFIED IN CHRIST	AFFECTED BY REDEMPTION	CHANGED AT CONSUMMATION
Marriage/Procreation Genesis 2:23-25, 1:28	Pain in childbearing; your husband shall rule over you. Genesis 3:16	7th commandment Exodus 20:14 10th commandment Exodus 20:10	This mystery refers to Christ and the Church. Eph. 5:31-32 Rev. 19:7, 21:2-9	Be married in the Lord. Treat wives as weaker vessels & heirs of the grace of life. 1 Cor 7:39, 1 Pet. 3:7 1 Cor.7:14, 2 Cor. 6:14	They neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. Matt. 22:30
Dominion/Labor Genesis 1:28, 2:15	Ground is cursed. You shall eat by sweat of your brow. Genesis 3:17-19	4th commandment Exodus 20:9 8th commandment Exodus 20:15	Work with your hands, share with those in need. Eph. 4:28 Work as unto the Lord, Col. 3:23-24	Work with your hands, share with those in need. Eph. 4:28 Work as unto the Lord, Col. 3:23-24	They'll reign forever. Rev. 22:5 Their deeds follow them. Rev. 14:13
Sabbath Genesis 2:1-3	Unrest & toil, Gen. 5:29 Chaos and evil, continually, Gen.6:5	4th commandment Exodus 20:8-11	These are a shadow of the things to come, the substance belongs to Christ. Col. 2:16ff. and Matt 1:28	Day is changed to the first day of the week. Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:2, Rev. 1:10	His servants will rest and worship Him. Rev. 14:13, 22:3 Heb. 4:9

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are Creation Ordinances universally binding upon all people in all ages? If so, How and Why?
2. What happens when people neglect, abandon, or disobey the Creation Ordinances?
3. By instituting the Sabbath God has made time for us to meet, but do we make time for God?
4. Can you think of any commandment that generates more lively discussion among professing Christians than the Fourth Commandment?
5. How is the Sabbath to be measured or framed – from sundown to sundown, or midnight to midnight?

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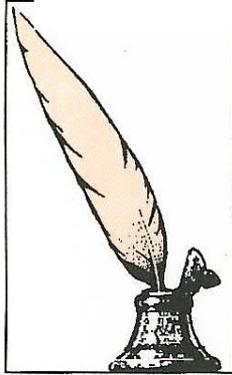
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*“Study to show thyself
approved unto God”
2 Timothy 2:15*

Published by

The Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America

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