

The Ten Commandments

Commandment #4: “Honor the Sabbath and keep it holy”

1. What is the Sabbath?
 - a. The Sabbath was instituted by God as a part of the 10 Commandments
 - i. It was intended as a mandatory day of rest and worship and it mimics the pattern of God in Creation
 - ii. For 6 days the Lord worked and on the 7th day He rested and He approved of all He had done
 1. Now, God needs no rest, He is inexhaustible but we, His creatures, are easily tired this means that the Sabbath is, in part, a demonstration of our neediness and an invitation to find our rest in Him
 2. Furthermore, as God commended all that He had done (to Himself) so His creatures were commanded to bring Him glory by exalting Him and trusting that He would provide even in spite of the break
 - a. Catch this... VERY important... The Sabbath was not “practical”, it was an exercise of faithful reliance
2. How does it apply today?
 - a. Readers of the New Testament would note that the story of Christ includes several “dustups” with the Pharisees over the issue of the Sabbath
 - b. When Jesus walked the planet, the Sabbath was still being observed but it had been “modified”
 - i. The religious tradition (partially encapsulated in texts like the Talmud) had added rules and regulations in an effort to “fence in” what it meant to observe the Sabbath
 1. There were regulations on how far one could walk (2,000 steps), how much one could lift and so forth
 2. The result was that the Sabbath had become a burden to the people, and the Pharisees were a large part of the problem!
 - c. This reality underscores the reason why Jesus would point this out and often pursue activities on the Sabbath... the Pharisees (as all legalists do) had turned what was beautiful into a monster
 - d. We see an example of this in Matthew 12:2 as the Pharisees condemn the disciples for doing what was “unlawful” on the Sabbath
 - i. MacArthur points out that there was nothing UNBIBLICAL about their actions. In fact, Deut. 23:25 expressly permits this kind of activity

- ii. What law were they talking about? Not the law of God, but the law of man
 - e. More to the point, Christ points out in v. 3-5 that the Sabbath was never intended to deprive people of sustenance... this would contradict the point!
 - i. Many people gather food to eat on the Sabbath
 - 1. Sometimes this was extraordinary (in the case of David)
 - 2. At other times, it is simply a matter of daily life (in the case of the Levites)
 - f. God's goal in providing and requiring a day of rest and worship was the wellbeing of His people... not an added burden
 - g. More directly, the Sabbath itself was not intended as an end in itself, instead the Sabbath was fashioned as a type, a harbinger of what was to come
3. The ground of the issue
- a. The Sabbath belonged to the entire sacrificial system
 - b. The people of God would gather on the Lord's Day (along with other days) to worship and sacrifice to their God but that worship, while genuine, was not sufficient for the rest they needed
 - i. The sacrifices were not sufficient
 - ii. The location was limited
 - iii. The rest for their souls was not fully satisfied
 - c. The Sabbath, was meant to point to something greater and, in Jesus, the greater has arrived
 - i. Note the connection here... the rest that the Sabbath anticipated only comes in Christ
 - ii. This explains why the 4th Commandment looks different in practice today
 - iii. Has it ever bothered you that we don't observe the Sabbath?
 - 1. Some well-meaning Christians would say, "well, we need to get back to it!" but even in their thinking the Sabbath would be transformed
 - a. The legalist among us would claim that the Sabbath has now just been "transferred" to Sunday but what text says such a thing
 - i. Romans 14 leaves our choice of observing "special days" up to our own conscience
 - ii. Galatians 4:10-11 records Paul's words of worry for those who would retreat to the Old Covenant system of observing "days and months and

years". What were these things? The answer must be the important days and months and years to the Judaizers

iii. The clear teaching is that the "Sabbath" as a Saturday of rest and worship is no longer binding on Christians

2. So, what has happened? The answer is that the shadow has given way to the substance!

iv. Jesus is the One who transforms the Sabbath

1. He lays down a sacrifice so that we no longer have to actively work to atone for our sins with that which would never fully cleanse us

2. His death, and the New Covenant it inaugurates, makes it possible for the Holy Spirit to indwell each believer, making us each the temple of God and making our location of worship anywhere we find ourselves!

3. He provides eternal rest from our labors of attempting to earn/keep God's favor. In Him there is now no condemnation

d. So, this is why we no longer meet on Saturday

e. However, there is another question that needs to be asked and answered: does this mean that there is no significance to the Lord's Day? Hardly!

i. There are clear commands not to neglect the assembly of ourselves (Hebrews 10:24-25) and Scripture clearly teaches that believers assemble on Sunday (the day of the resurrection)

1. B.B. Warfield once said, "Christ took the Sabbath into the grave with him and brought the Lord's Day out of the grave with him on the resurrection morn."

ii. John demonstrated his commitment to worshipping on the "Lord's Day" (not the OT Sabbath) even in isolation (Revelation 1:10), we know that the church gathered to worship on the Lord's Day (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)

iii. The purpose of our gathering, however, is not to add to what Jesus has done with a list of rules

1. We are not required to cease from our earthly labors from sun up to sundown (although there is wisdom in the Created order to physically rest weekly), instead, we gather to declare that we have, once and for all, ceased from our labors to earn God's

favor and praise Him for all that He has provided, and will provide in the future

iv. We gather to marvel, collectively, at what He has done and to spill out into the streets to declare that Christ is indeed the “Lord of the Sabbath”... stated differently, He is the Lord who gives us rest!

1. This constitutes the ground of the problem between Christ and the Pharisees in the New Testament. The Pharisees had prioritized a ritual instead of seeing the One that the ordinance pointed to!

a. The Sabbath was not meant to be binding, it was meant to be illuminating

b. Jesus was not to surrender to their Sabbath rules, the Sabbath was meant to give way to the One who provides better rest and greater cause to worship

4. Points of application:

a. We must be careful that we do not do what the Pharisees were guilty of... namely adding to the Word of God

i. These additions might seem noble, but they will inevitably burden us and skew God’s purpose

b. Second, we must constantly seek to enter the rest that Christ has bought for us

i. If you are here today, and you are constantly trying to take that worldly yoke back upon yourself, remember that Lord of the Sabbath... there is no reason for you to labor for your approval, He has given it to you

c. Third, we must remember that Christ is the key to the entire Old Testament

i. Any text that God has given must be interpreted through His Words and Being