

# Sabbath Rest

*Exodus 20:8-11*

## SABBATH TODAY

In the *Bible Answer Book* (p. 70), the question is asked, “Why Do Christians Worship on Sunday Rather than on the Sabbath Day?” A lot of people today ask this question, but I think the question is incoherent. If you ask, “Why do Christians worship on Sunday rather than *Saturday*,” this would be logical, because you are comparing days of the week—apples to apples. But to ask it the first way is to assume that “Sabbath” means “Saturday” or “seventh day,” and it presupposes that our worship is not Sabbath worship. But Sabbath does not mean “Saturday” or seventh day. “Sabbath” (Heb: *shabbath*; Gk: *sabbaton*) means “rest.” That’s all it means. And so to compare Sunday to the Sabbath day is to compare apples to oranges. Therefore, the question is a false question that cannot be answered as an either/or. We do worship on Sunday, and we worship on the Sabbath Day, for Sunday is our “day of rest.”

The question also betrays a lack of knowledge in that it misunderstands the OT calendar. The first day of the ceremonial year for Israel is called the month of **Nisan**.<sup>1</sup> 1 Nisan celebrates the beginning of the Exodus, when God delivered Israel out of Egypt. The thing is, like our own Roman year, Nisan does not begin on the same day of the week.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the Jewish calendar week does not always equate with a Roman calendar week. Some years, the Sabbath would be on a **Saturday** (according to the Roman calendar). But some years it will occur on a Roman **Tuesday**! Yet, it **always occurs on the Jewish seventh day** of the week, because Passover is always on a Sabbath (14<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Nissan).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nisan is the Babylonian name (**Neh 2:1; Est 3:7**). Before the captivity, it was called Aviv.

<sup>2</sup> For example, 1 Nisan 5770 starts on **Tuesday** 16 March 2010; 1 Nisan 5771 starts on **Tuesday** 5 April 2011, but 1 Nisan 5772 starts on **Saturday** 24 March 2012. So, if we were to take Exodus 12’s “calendar” and line it up according to the modern Jewish calendar you would have the lamb slaughtered on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month in preparation for the Passover done on **Thursday** in 2010 and 2011, but on **Monday** in 2012 (cf. Ex 12:3). Likewise, the Passover which is killed on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month would occur on **Monday** in 2010 and 2011, but on **Friday** in 2012 (cf. Ex 12:6). The point is, the Jewish calendar is not the Roman Calendar. We always have Maundy-Thursday on a Thursday, Good Friday on a Friday, and Easter on a Sunday (according to the Roman 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week).

<sup>3</sup> An interesting discussion of this is in Rushdoony (citing Curtis Clair Ewing), *Institutes of Biblical Law*, 134-36.

With this in mind, I hope to diffuse some of the nagging questions about the relevance of the Sabbath in the NT era in a way that most people have not thought about. If comparing Sabbath to Sunday is illogical because “sabbath” is not “Saturday,” and the Jewish calendar operates differently than the Gregorian calendar, then many of the issues about worshipping on Saturday vs. Sunday are simply irrelevant. Thus, we are free to look at the fourth commandment with non-jaundiced eyes. Thus, seeing clearly, we are able to consider the commandment without presupposing that it is irrelevant to Christians in the first place, something far too many people today do. Indeed, far from being irrelevant, the fourth commandment is an eternal ordinance, lasting “throughout the generations. . . forever” (Ex 31:16; Lev 16:31).

### “SABBATH”

The fourth commandment according to Exodus 20 states, “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 word *shabbath* is used three times in the commandment, but this is not the first time it is used in Exodus (this will be important later). In Exodus 16, before God ever descended upon Sinai, he told Israel, “Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD” (16:23). The phrase used here is *sabbaton shabbath* or “Sabbath [day] of complete and solemn rest.” The same idea occurs later in relation to the seventh day of the week (Ex 32:5; Lev 23:3), the seventh year (Lev 25:4), the annual Day of Atonement, which was on the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev 16:31; 23:32), the annual Feast of Trumpets, which occurs on the first day of the seventh month (Lev 23:24). Do not miss the significance of this. Sabbath, in the OT, could occur on the seventh day, the tenth day, and even the first day, depending upon which Sabbath command was in view. There is no such thing as “the Sabbath day.” This will also be important later.

This alone should make it plain that “Sabbath” does not mean “seven.”<sup>4</sup> The idea is always the same in the law. When there is Sabbath, on whatever day the law happens to fall, you are to rest.<sup>5</sup> When you rest, you “cease and desist.” You stop. Thus, one of the earliest uses of the word in Genesis (8:22) says, “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not *shabbath* (cease).” They will continue to “work,” because God will not destroy the entire earth with a flood again.

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<sup>4</sup> Scholars have noted that there is a possible connection between the Akkadian word for seventh (*sibbitim*) and the Hebrew noun *shabbat* (see *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, “Sabbath,” p. 849). This, of course, assumes that Akkadian is the root language. No such connection between the words can be proved conclusively, though even if it could (I’m not against it), it doesn’t prove that the word *shabbath* retained this meaning. More likely in my mind, the relation between the Akkadian “seventh” and Hebrew “sabbath” (if there even is one) would be poetic, placing to similar words together to impress a point, since it is clear that the word does not have to mean “seven” as we see in these other *sabbaton* laws.

<sup>5</sup> As mentioned in a sermon on Chapter 16, early scholars believed *shabbath* was related to the Akkadian term *sab/pattu(m)*, and that the later must mean “to rest.” Most scholars today do not agree, seeing no possible etymological relationship between the two words. They brought *sab/pattu(m)* into relationship with evil (taboo) days, which occur on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 28<sup>th</sup> days of the month (demonstrating that the Babylonians viewed the seventh day as an evil day). The idea seemed natural. Until, they discovered that *sab/pattu(m)* was actually on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month (which in a “weekly” calendar where sevens are viewed as evil, would end up being the first day of a week! See *ABD*, “Sabbath,” 850.

## REST

It is important to see that resting is the primary purpose of Sabbath, though it is not the only purpose. This is good news! And who would not want good news as far as this law is concerned? Who does not like to rest after a hard day of on the job, at school, dealing with the kids? The commandment itself reinforces this idea. Notice, the day is not only given to man, but to animals (“livestock”)! As the commandment is given in Deuteronomy it specifies, “your ox or donkey or any of your livestock” (Deut 5:14). Since donkeys can’t go to church, it should be clear that religious activities are a secondary (albeit very important) purpose of sabbath. This is made even clearer in the command not to grow your crops in the seventh year. For it says, the land needs to enjoy its rest (2 Chron 36:21; cf. Lev 25:4; 26:34-35, 43). Even the land gets Sabbath!

## You Shall Not Work

This “rest” is not about napping in the afternoon (God was not tired after six days). Rather, your rest is to refrain from something while you engage in something else. Thus, there is both something required and forbidden in the commandment. That which is forbidden is talked about in the negative. Of the commandments, this is the first one where the negative is not put right up front. But it is there. Notice what is forbidden, “on it you shall not do any work.”

After doing a search of the word “Sabbath,” I discovered that at least these things are forbidden in the OT: picking and cooking Manna on the Sabbath (Ex 16:23, 26), leaving your house (presumably to pick Manna) (Ex 16:29), Buying goods and grain (Neh 10:31), Selling goods and grain (Neh 13:15), carrying a burden (of food on your back) to the city in order to sell it (Jer 17:21-27), kindling a fire (Ex 35:3), which I believe is the background of the man who was gathering sticks on the Sabbath (Num 15:32), sowing your field or harvesting it in the seventh year (Lev 25:4-5).

One of the most interesting things about this list is that each of these things involves in one way or another: food. We do not have the context, and so we can’t be sure, but even kindling a fire may have been done in order to cook the Manna on the Sabbath.<sup>6</sup> God tells Israel back in Exodus 16 that the whole Manna-miracle was a test, to prove to Israel that God will provide for them, that they do not have to work for this provision, but only have faith and trust God’s promise. The test is, will you believe or will you work. Will you live by law or gospel? In the NT, that Jesus is the bread come down out of heaven, and that he is our provision, the word of God upon which we feed. Will you trust him alone, or your ability to keep the law?

But why food? It seems to me that it is because food is the most basic of human needs. And, unlike air or (in those days) water, you often had to buy it. Here is where “work” comes into it. Picking manna is *work*. Cooking manna is *work*. Buying and selling grain, wine, grapes, and figs is *work*. Jeremiah uses the apt term “burden” to get at what is going on here. Any mother who raises children and then also has to cook three meals on top of that every day feels the burden of such work, at least from time to time. Yet, it has to be done, because we have to eat. Likewise, how many of those who leave the house every day to go to work feel the burden of knowing that what they are doing is very often done simply so you can survive and eat? And so the commandment’s relation to buying, selling, and cooking *food* gets at the most basic reason for why we work in the first place. The commandment was given in order to relieve you or your burden, not to make it worse! But many people are so addicted to material things that they actually see resting in Christ as a burden, and working to get ahead as a joy. Brothers and sisters,

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<sup>6</sup> Or perhaps, more sinisterly, to prepare a fire to a god/idol, where upon food might have been offered.

this must not be! If this is your leaning, then you need to seriously think about what is important to you.

Nehemiah makes an application of this, telling Israel, who was engaging in commerce (particularly, but not limited to food), to stop profaning the Sabbath. Not only did he order Israel to stop buying and selling (engaging in their weekly jobs on the Sabbath), but he closed the gates on the Gentiles who were engaging in it as well ([Neh 13:19](#)). He allowed them to do their thing on that day, but he forbade the Jews who returned from the captivity from engaging in commerce with them. The reason seems clear. [They were doing what the pagans around them were doing, and they did it in order to “get ahead” in life.](#) Why else work that extra day of the week, than to make more money so that you might have a little extra for the luxuries of life? This is not a trusting in God for your provision, and it is burning you out!

There are endless [applications](#) of this today. And even Christians who *do* believe that Sabbath principles are still for the church disagree over many applications ranging from going to restaurants or ball games to filling up the car with gas or turning on the air conditioner (in that all are engaging in commerce). I'm not convinced that these are all matters of conscience and Christian liberty, because Nehemiah seems to make some specific applications that touch on the relationship of the Christian to commercial activities. And you must take seriously, not only your own desire to work on the Sabbath in light of the commandment forbidding it, but even your own involvement in commercial activities, in light of specific biblical applications which are forbidden. Will you trust God to provide for you without working on this day? That is really at the heart of forbidding work.

With that said, I do believe that [several factors need to be considered](#) when coming to conclusions on application. Even this is not totally clear-cut, as our own catechisms and confessions teach. For example, you need to consider work in light of “works of necessity” and “[works of mercy.](#)” Jesus is our example of this. Remember, he healed a man on the Sabbath because it is lawful to “do good” on the Sabbath ([Mark 3:4](#)). Today, this can fall in the realm of commercial activity, since we are not miracle workers like he was, and many “healers” today work in hospitals for money. Healing is a work of mercy, as would be visiting the sick or helping the widow next door to you.

There are also [works of necessity](#). Plowing the streets on a snowy Sunday morning is a work of necessity, not only to keep the roads open for those who really need to go somewhere, but so that you can go to church! And there are many other works of necessity as well. Perhaps your work sometimes fits into that category.

Also, you need to consider Jesus' words about hunger. Remember, the disciples were *hungry* and picked grain and ate it on the Sabbath. While eating here was not a necessity (they could have lived without food), and they weren't engaging in commerce, hunger is a basic fact of human existence, and Jesus acknowledges as much. Humans are more important than rules, as Jesus says, “[the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.](#)” But the Pharisees were furious, because Jesus broke their law, which I believe was based upon a reasonable application of [Ex 16](#), where the Israelites were not to gather manna on the Sabbath. But [Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath](#), not in terms of being able to overthrow it, but in terms of [knowing how to apply it perfectly](#). Their strict law did not account for the fact that human needs are of more importance to God than legalistic adherence to a human interpretation of God's law. We, like the Pharisees, fall short of perfect interpretation and application, and this is very important to remember. [You need to be humble in how you teach others your convictions](#), because you may not have it all perfect yourself. I have seen more than once a severe lack of humility and love from some

brothers when addressing this topic. You do not want to be guilty of adding a different kind of burden: not the burden of work, but the burden of legalism that goes beyond what God has says.

### **Recreation?**

I want to make a brief observation about something else here. This is not related to work, but to “recreation.” It is common to say that the commandment forbids recreation, and the proof-text is “doing your pleasure” as Isaiah (58:13) puts it. To this it is added, as he puts it again, that we are not to speak “idle words” (which sometimes is interpreted as you can only talk about God and religion on the Sabbath). My observation, based upon a sermon I did a few years ago on this chapter is that we must read Isaiah’s words in the context of the whole chapter. This, I have rarely seen done.

In fact, “doing your pleasure” is a phrase used only in Isaiah 58, and it is used twice. The other time regards fasting (58:3), probably fasting on the Day of Atonement (the only mandatory fast day in the Torah), which was also a Sabbath. In the context, it is quite clear that the phrase means oppressing workers, quarreling and fighting, pointing fingers at one another, speaking wickedly, and other things that are generally common practice when people go to work! In other words, the people were delighting in commerce, this was their pleasure: ripping people off (ever been to a third world market?), quarreling about money, fighting over things in the workplace to get ahead, forcing others to go to work, belittling them, slandering them, berating them, and so on. These were their idle words. Those of you who live in this kind of world know exactly what I’m talking about.

So again, we are right back to working, quite literally working in commercial activities, on the Sabbath. Those of you who do this, or who feel compelled to do this, I want to challenge you to consider the commandment and search your own hearts. As I said, God gave us a day of rest, so that we might rest. This is good news. And it is given so that you might have a break from your regular work, for God knows that you need it. Also, you must see that this command is every bit as much a violation of God’s law as is taking God’s name in vain or committing idolatry or worshipping other gods. In fact, if you love work and getting ahead, or even if you don’t but are a slave to it, then you serve another master and you are not only violating this command, but the first. And if you call yourself a Christian, you are also taking God’s name in vain. And so, again we see how breaking one is breaking them all. You cannot have eternal life by keeping the Sabbath, because you are incapable of keeping it perfectly!

### **Sabbath as Freedom and Liberty**

But God has called you to freedom and liberty from your work, and the commandment shows you as much. Liberty is a key component of the meaning of Sabbath. The year of Jubilee (Lev 25:10) was The Sabbath year of sabbath years (and by the way, in the numbering scheme of “7” it would have been on the number “1” or the first of a new series of sevens). And chief among its purposes was to free people from their debts and to release slaves from their servitude. When Jesus came, he ushered in the final Jubilee by reading from Isaiah and saying, “The LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of [Jubilee]” (Luke 4:18; cf. Isa 61:1-2; Lev 25). Is this how you view Sabbath? If it isn’t, you need to reorient your thinking and learn to rest rather than rebel against it.

### **Sabbath Origins**

Now, even though I gave you a short introduction on this, I feel it is important at this point to take a step backwards. Because so many people feel that the Sabbath is no longer

relevant to Christians (as if somehow Jesus overthrew this command while picking heads of grain with the disciples), it is important to address a fundamental question about the **origin of Sabbath**. Please note as I said earlier: Sabbath did not originate on Sinai with Israel. Rather, it has its origins at creation. The reason annexed to the Sabbath commandment in Exodus says, “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.” This means what it says. The principle of Sabbath rest is **rooted in creation**. God ceased from his work, and so we are to cease from ours. As such, all people have been bound to it since that day.

To demonstrate this, consider Cain. God’s punishment of Cain was that he would be a “restless” (NIV, NJB) **wanderer upon the earth** (Gen 4:12). The word is *nua’* (נוֹעַ), and I believe when read in light of the Sabbath in Genesis 2 and the story of Noah, it becomes clear that Cain was originally given rest, but as punishment, it was taken away. The word **Noah** (נֹחַ) is poetically similar to Cain’s punishment. Consider: *nua’*, *Noah*. Noah means “rest.” Thus, when he was born his father called him Noah saying, “This one shall give us **rest** (*nacham*, נָחַם NAS) from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the LORD has cursed” (Gen 5:29). This theme of “rest” continues throughout the flood narrative. Besides Noah’s name which is found 38 times (b/w Gen 5:29 and 10:1), we read that “in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to **rest** (*nuach*, נָוַח) on the mountains of Ararat” (Gen 8:4). We read that the “dove found no **resting place** (*manoach*, מָנוַח) for the sole of her foot” (Gen 8:9). And we read that after the flood, the regular seasons of the earth “shall not shabbath” (שַׁבַּת) (Gen 8:22). Indeed, God brought mankind rest through Noah.<sup>7</sup>

The cultures of the world had Sabbath, though it was different than that of Israel. In the ancient Sumerian city of **Lagash**, a seven day feast was held after completing the temple of the god Ningirsu. In the **Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh**, the flood hero (Utnapishtim) builds his ark in seven days. The rain comes for six days, but ceases on the seventh. At **Ugarit**, the Ba’lu Myth describes a six-day cleansing by fire of Baal’s palace, which stops on the seventh day.<sup>8</sup> Besides these, which all have religious significance, you find days of rest throughout all ancient cultures of the world.<sup>9</sup> God built in the need for rest and its association with religious significance into the heart of mankind, and even when we distort it, it remains visible.

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“RESTING” IN GENESIS 4-9			
Verse	Heb	Eng	Translation
Gen 4:12	נוֹעַ	<i>nua’</i>	“restless,” “vagrant”
Gen 5:29	נֹחַ	<i>noah</i>	“rest”
Gen 5:29	נָחַם	<i>nacham</i>	“rest,” “relief,” “comfort”
Gen 8:4	נָוַח	<i>nuach</i>	“rest”
Gen 8:9	מָנוַח	<i>manoach</i>	“resting place”
Gen 8:22	שַׁבַּת	<i>shabbath</i>	“rest,” “cease”

<sup>8</sup> See John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament) Volume 1: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 233.

<sup>9</sup> See *ABD* references in notes 5 and 6.

## Worship and Purpose

Now, if Sabbath is rooted in creation, then this means that the commandment is not primarily for purposes of curbing sin. For, there was no sin at creation! And, if Sabbath is patterned after creation, then it is inextricably linked to the rest of the week, and only makes sense in light of it. And so, in the positive sense, what kind of resting is this? To put it another way, [what does the commandment require?](#)

The main thing is that it requires corporate worship of God. Worship is not something we do primarily because we sin and God has saved us. It is something we do because we are creatures and God has made us. The fact that he saves us allows us to worship him and rest in him, for no unconverted person can ever truly rest or ever give thanks to God. Let me explore this a bit more with you.

You find throughout Scripture that on any Sabbath, the people worshipped. During the weekly Sabbath you find people gathering together in a “[holy convocation](#)” ([Lev 23:3](#)). [Isaiah 66:23](#) calls this corporate worship something that even in heaven will take place “from sabbath to sabbath” where “[all mankind will come to bow down before the LORD.](#)” In the OT, the corporate worship included [firstfruit wave offerings](#) ([Lev 23:11](#)), [grain offerings](#) ([23:16](#)), [food offerings](#) ([24:7](#)), [burnt offerings](#) and [drink offerings](#) ([Num 28:9-10](#)). It included “[singing](#)” to the LORD ([Ps 92:1](#)) throughout the day. We see [Scripture being read](#) ([Neh 8:3](#); [Luke 4:16/ Acts 13:27](#)) and [preached/explained](#) ([Neh 8:7](#)). In the NT, they [fellowshipped](#), [broke bread](#), and [prayed](#) ([Acts 2:42](#)) as well as these other things (our “sacrifices” are of a different kind). In other words, we see everything we do in our own worship.

Corporate worship involves the recognition of what [Meredith Kline](#) calls “[Divine Enthronement](#).” What God was creating in Genesis 1, according to [Isaiah](#), was a footstool for his throne. To put it another way, God was creating [a temple](#) which mirrors the one in heaven. Human beings were the priests. God is High King of this palace, and his resting is a sort of ceremonial enthronement. Listen to the connection in [Isaiah 66:1](#), “[Thus says the LORD: ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?’](#)” You can see how the ancients picked upon the idea of [enthronement of the god](#) after the completion of his house in the above reference to the city of [Lachish](#). This is why the Psalm exhorts us to “[go to his dwelling place and worship at his footstool. Arise O LORD, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might](#)” ([Ps 132:7-8](#)). And so we come to the resting place of God on the day of rest in order to give praise to the one enthroned above the waters. The commandment requires the praise and worship of God by his people together. This has never been voluntary (“I’ll do it if I feel like it”). It is mandatory.

But creation also helps us understand why we are not to work. For, God’s Enthronement Sabbath was done in the context of the entire work week. While I almost always agree with the catechisms, I think they make a mistake here. They teach that what is forbidden on the Sabbath is “[all needless. . . words, and thoughts, about our worldly employments](#)” (Larger Q. 119).<sup>10</sup> But this is to see work as something originally separate from worship, not to mention probably sinful (for only sins are forbidden in the commandments). But you can separate your work from worship no more than a priest could separate his work from the temple, because the command is to subdue, serve, and guard God’s earthly temple! This means that all lawful work is holy to the

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<sup>10</sup> It adds, “and recreations,” which I addressed earlier as being an exegetically unwarranted definition from [Isaiah 58](#), the only place I know of that supposedly forbids “recreation.”

God! And so more recent Reformed people have noticed that Sabbath is actually for [reflecting upon your work week](#),<sup>11</sup> not the absent minded discarding of all thoughts pertaining to it.

This reflection needs to keep in mind a couple of things. First, [work is good](#)! It does not originate in the curse, but in a non-sinful almighty good God who worked for six days. Sabbath allows you to reflect upon the goodness of your work (assuming that you are not doing something immoral), by standing back from a distance and surveying it. Furthermore, Sabbath allows you to reflect upon [the goal of your work](#), which is the completion of God's created temple. It does this by interrupting the daily cycle of work and [inserting a pause](#). This pause causes you to see that there is a God, that he has created work, and that your work has purpose and a goal. You must use the Sabbath for this purpose, if you ever hope to come to a place where you actually enjoy what you are doing, which I believe is possible no matter what you are doing. In these two ways primarily, you observe the main requirement of the command as it is stated in Exodus: [Remember](#) the Sabbath.

### **Goal of the Sabbath**

But the goal of work was interrupted by sin. And so, the restatement of this commandment in [Deuteronomy 5:15](#) provides a second reason for observing the commandment. This reason is [redemption](#). The command is identical in every respect but two. First it tells you not to remember (*zakar*), but to [observe/guard](#) (*shamar*). Observing the Sabbath has to do with redemption. Because you sin, you need to be told to observe it. But because of sin, God has redeemed his people. So, Deuteronomy says, [“You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.”](#)

God is saying that he liberated (remember this is a function of Sabbath) Israel from Egypt, and this is why they were to have weekly Sabbath on the seventh day. But as I said earlier, Sabbath does not mean “seven.” The number [seven is actually anticipatory](#) of the number 8 or of the number 1, the first day of the new week! Thus, there were Sabbaths on the first day (or the first year of a new cycle).

As such, when Christ [rose from the dead on the first day of the week](#), and so brought out the firstfruits of liberation for his chosen people, and when the Holy Spirit came [on the first day of the week at Pentecost](#) 40 days later, the church understood that the Christian Sabbath was the first day, not the seventh. Christ is the fulfillment of the OT Sabbath! This is perfectly in line with OT first-day Sabbaths, as well as the reason of redemption annexed in Deuteronomy. For, God has not redeemed us from Pharaoh as Gentiles, but from sin and death and the devil, much worse enemies in every respect. So, this whole idea of abrogating the Sabbath is just ridiculous.

Even though Jesus has ushered in a new exodus and liberated his people from sin and death, he has not done away with the present evil age. Therefore, we still need a similar kind of Sabbath to that of Israel. For, we are very much like them, in the desert, between two homes. Our rest is [different](#), for we have come to heaven in a spiritual and very real sense. Our rest is different even while the food we enjoy is different, for in both cases, we rest and eat of the finished work and manna from heaven which is Christ.

But it is the [same](#) too. Hebrews calls it [the same day: Today](#). This “today” is the seventh day of creation, the day of God's rest, the day he offered to Israel, the day he offers you. For, you still work in a fallen world and need rest from it. You still anticipate the consummation and goal of our work. You still come together as God's people to hear the law so that we might observe

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<sup>11</sup> Cf., Richard Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath*, 154-156; Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 157; Rushdoony, *Institutes*, 145-49.

God's commandments, because we have not yet come to the point where we want to do that totally perfectly as we will one day. This is why Christ asks us to pray to the Father, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." This is Jubilee, *Sabbath* language! And the prayer asks God to finally release us even as we have released others in obedience to the Sabbath commandment. This is why Hebrews says "there remains a Sabbath for the people of God" (Heb 4:9). Let me leave you with the words of Hebrews immediately after this verse, "Whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience [as Israel did in the wilderness, when they hardened their hearts and refused his Sabbaths]." Rather, come to Christ, beloved. Without faith in him alone, you can never truly know rest. See! His load is easy and his burden is light. Rest in Christ, giving all your cares to him, repenting of all your sins, and trusting in him alone who promises, "Come to me all you who labor (work) and heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28).

Ex 20:8-11	Deut 5:13-15	Ex 31:13-16	Ex 35:2-3	
		"You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you.		
<sup>9</sup> "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.	<sup>12</sup> "Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you.	<sup>14</sup> You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you.  Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.		
<sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor, and do all your work,	<sup>13</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work,	<sup>15</sup> Six days shall work be done,	<sup>2</sup> Six days work shall be done,	
<sup>10</sup> 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.	<sup>14</sup> 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 or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.	but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day  shall be put to death.	but on the seventh day you shall have a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on it  shall be put to death.	
<sup>11</sup> 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.	<sup>15</sup> You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.			
		<sup>16</sup> Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever.	<sup>3</sup> You shall kindle no fire in all your dwelling places on the Sabbath day."	

Q. 58. *What is required in the fourth commandment?*

A. The fourth commandment requireth the keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his word; expressly one whole day in seven, to be a holy sabbath to himself.

Q. 59. *Which day of the seven hath God appointed to be the weekly sabbath?*

A. From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly sabbath; and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian sabbath.

Q. 60. *How is the sabbath to be sanctified?*

A. The sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy.

Q. 61. *What is forbidden in the fourth commandment?*

A. The fourth commandment forbiddeth the omission or careless performance of the duties required, and the profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thoughts, words or works, about our worldly employments or recreations.

Q. 62. *What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment?*

A. The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment are, God's allowing us six days of the week for our own employments, his challenging a special propriety in the seventh, his own example, and his blessing the sabbath day.

Q. 63. *Which is the fifth commandment?*

**Question 115: Which is the fourth commandment?**

Answer: The fourth commandment is, Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

**Question 116: What is required in the fourth commandment?**

Answer: The fourth commandment requires of all men the sanctifying or keeping holy to God such set times as he has appointed in his Word, expressly one whole day in seven; which was the seventh from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, and the first day of the week ever since, and so to continue to the end of the world; which is the Christian sabbath, and in the New Testament called the Lord's day.

**Question 117: How is the sabbath or the Lord's day to be sanctified?**

Answer: The sabbath or Lord's day is to be sanctified by an holy resting all the day, not only from such works as are at all times sinful, but even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful; and making it our delight to spend the whole time (except so much of it as is to be taken up in works of necessity and mercy) in the public and private exercises of God's worship; and, to that end, we are to prepare our hearts, and with such foresight, diligence, and moderation, to dispose and seasonably dispatch our worldly business, that we may be the more free and fit for the duties of that day.

**Question 118: Why is the charge of keeping the sabbath more specially directed to governors of families, and other superiors?**

Answer: The charge of keeping the sabbath is more specially directed to governors of families, and other superiors, because they are bound not only to keep it themselves, but to see that it be observed by all those that are under their charge; and because they are prone oftentimes to hinder them by employments of their own.

**Question 119: What are the sins forbidden in the fourth commandment?**

Answer: The sins forbidden in the fourth commandment are, all omissions of the duties required, all careless, negligent, and unprofitable performing of them, and being weary of them; all profaning the day by idleness, and doing that which is in itself sinful; and by all needless works, words, and thoughts, about our worldly employments and recreations.

**Question 120: What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it?**

Answer: The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it, are taken from the equity of it, God allowing us six days of seven for our own affairs, and reserving but one for himself, in these words, Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: from God's challenging a special propriety in that day, The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: from the example of God, who in six days made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: and from that blessing which God put upon that day, not only in sanctifying it to be a day for his service, but in ordaining it to be a means of blessing to us in our sanctifying it; Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

**Question 121: Why is the word Remember set in the beginning of the fourth commandment?**

Answer: The word Remember is set in the beginning of the fourth commandment, partly, because of the great benefit of remembering it, we being thereby helped in our preparation to keep it, and, in keeping it, better to keep all the rest of the commandments, and to continue a thankful remembrance of the two great benefits of creation and redemption, which contain a short abridgment of religion; and partly, because we are very ready to forget it, for that there is less light of nature for it, and yet it restrains our natural liberty in things at other times lawful; that it comes but once in seven days, and many worldly businesses come between, and too often take off our minds from thinking of it, either to prepare for it, or to sanctify it; and that Satan with his instruments much labor to blot out the glory, and even the memory of it, to bring in all irreligion and impiety.