

The Ten Commandments

The Fourth Commandment

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.”
Exodus 20:8

The Foundation

- The foundation for this command is in vs. 2, *Who* God is and *what* He had done.
- The word *sabbath* is a transliteration of a Hebrew word (Strong’s H7676) that means “to cease from work”.
- We find three separate reasons for the sabbath day.
 - God’s Creation – Exodus 20:11
 - God’s Deliverance – Deuteronomy 5:15
 - God’s Supply – Exodus 16:22-30
- In the first commandments we have seen how we should worship God should be marked by singularity, straightforwardness, and sincerity, and in the fourth commandment we see the sanctity of worship.

The Commandment

- The command begins by referring to an example that has already been set (Genesis 2:1-3), but it is unclear if or how it was observed before Moses.
- This command speaks specifically to a weekly Sabbath, not the various feast days observed as sabbaths (Exodus 12:16, etc.) or sabbatical years (Deuteronomy 15).
- There are three principal duties in this commandment:
 - The duty of work – Exodus 20:9, 23:12
 - The duty of rest – Exodus 20:10
 - The duty of worship – “to keep it holy” – Exodus 20:8,11

Historical Application for Israel

- The observance of the weekly Sabbath was a “sign” of the covenant relationship between Israel and God – Exodus 31:13-17, Ezekiel 20:12
- The Jews have observed a Sabbath on the seventh day of the weeks.
 - Rome had an 8-day cycle and Egypt a 10-day cycle, though they are somewhat different than our week.
- This was observed as Ceremonial Law but enforced as Civil Law before the Diaspora – Numbers 15:32-36
- The Jewish rabbis made a list of 39 types of labor (called *Melachot*) that were forbidden on the Sabbath.

Christ and the Sabbath

- Christ came to fulfill the Law, not destroy it (Matthew 5:17). By His example we can see how the Sabbath should have been observed.
- Christ “violated” the Sabbath when He:
 - ate grain from the field with His disciples – Matthew 12:1-8
 - healed a man with a withered hand – Matthew 12:9-4
 - healed a woman with a crippling spirit – Luke 13:10-17
 - healed a man with dropsy – Luke 14:1-6
 - healed a lame man – John 5:1-18, 7:21-24
- In these, He taught three great truths about the Sabbath:
 - The law of love and compassion supersedes the Sabbath – Matthew 12:11-12
 - Christ is greater than the observance of the Sabbath – Matthew 12:8
 - The Sabbath existed for the benefit of man – Mark 2:27
 - Boardman – “...the sabbath, like any other divine institution of ordinance, whether in nature or in morals, was appointed on man’s account, for man’s benefit, and not the converse.”

Practical Application for Today

- The observance of the Jewish Sabbath is stated to be something that pointed to Christ and that we are no longer obligated to observe – Colossians 2:14-17
- The day dedicated to worship shifted from Saturday to Sunday after Christ’s Resurrection – John 20:19, Acts 20:7, I Corinthians 16:2.
 - A clear distinction must be made: the Sabbath is not Sunday and Sunday is not the Sabbath.
 - In the 1st Century A.D., the first day of the week would have been a regular workday (excluding holidays, etc.). The early churches met in the early morning or at night on that day.
- How it is observed is an area of Christian liberty that we are not to judge each other on, so long as it is observed with conviction of faith - Romans 14:5-6
 - This approach is directly opposite of the civil enforcement of the Jewish Sabbath – Exodus 31:14
- There are positive aspects of the Sabbath that are beneficial to continue, even if we are not explicitly commanded to.
 - Observing a weekly day of physical rest amongst our labor.
 - Sanctifying (setting apart) one day to worship God.
 - Somewhat like a tithe – we give a part as an expression of dedicating all.
 - It also serves as reminder to us that all things, including time, are His.
 - Displaying our faith by our faithful observance.
 - In a spiritual sense, our rest in labor shows faith in God – Matthew 11:28-30