

The Fourth Word

⁸ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

– Exodus 20:8-11

(1) Is the Sabbath still in effect today? | 2 arguments against:

(a) Sabbath was part of ceremonial law for Israel, not moral law

Exodus 31:12-13

¹² And the LORD said to Moses, ¹³ “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.’”

(b) The New Testament declares the Sabbath obsolete

Colossians 2:16-17

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

Romans 14:4-5

⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? ⁵ One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

Positive arguments for continuing validity of Sabbath

- Sabbath is part of the Ten Commandments
- Sabbath was instituted at creation, not with Moses
- there is an absence of controversy in NT (we assume continuity)
- we see indications of Sabbath observance in NT
- Sabbath is for human flourishing (“Sabbath is made for man”)

(2) Why do we observe the Sabbath now on Sunday?

Luke 24:1-3

¹ But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. (See also Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:2, John 20:1)

Acts 20:7

On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.

1 Corinthians 16:1-3

¹ Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ² On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. ³ And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem.

Revelation 1:9-10

⁹ I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet

(3) How do we observe the Sabbath?

Isaiah 58:13-14

¹³ If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; 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.

Mark 2:27

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

For physical refreshment

Exodus 23:12

Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your servant woman, and the alien, may be refreshed.

For fellowship with God

Leviticus 23:3

Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to the LORD in all your dwelling places.

Psalms 92:1-4

A PSALM. A SONG FOR THE SABBATH.

It is good to give thanks to the LORD,

to sing praises to your name, O Most High;

² to declare your steadfast love in the morning,

and your faithfulness by night,

³ to the music of the lute and the harp,

to the melody of the lyre.

⁴ For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work;

at the works of your hands I sing for joy.

To point us to Jesus

Hebrews 3-4

^{3:11} As I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter my rest.”

^{4:1} Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.

^{4:8} For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. ⁹ So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰ for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Notes:

Fourth Word is on the Sabbath (*shabbat*)

- “shabbat” literally means “to cease” | day of rest
- goes back to Creation when God “rested” from his labors
- and in doing so, he made it “holy” | set apart

First Word – *love God above all*

Second Word – *honor his image*

Third Word – *honor his name*

Fourth Word – *honor his day*

Fourth Word is the longest of the commandments

- perhaps least intuitive, hardest to understand
- how is “resting” honoring God?
- also, very hard to rest, to stop | all-encompassing restriction
- 2nd Word our eyes, 3rd our tongues, but 4th is everything

(1) The Sabbath is contested | 2 arguments against

(a) Sabbath is part of ceremonial law

- organize OT laws into 3 categories: moral, ceremonial, civil
- ceremonial law set Israel distinct among nations
- clean laws (dietary, washings), feasts (Passover), circumcision
- that certainly true for Sabbath | Exodus 31, “covenant sign”

(b) NT designates Sabbath as part of obsolete ceremonial laws

Colossians 2:16

- “questions of food and drink, festival or new moon”
- all refer to ceremonial laws of Israel | included is Sabbath
- all are shadows to Christ | shadow precedes reality

Romans 14:4-5 – supports Col. 2, not pass judgment | not moral issue

Positive arguments:

(1) Sabbath is part of Ten Commandments

- seem strange to include ceremonial law here
- strange conclusion that only 9 of 10 hold true today
- should cause us to pause | need very strong argument dislodge

(2) Sabbath was instituted at creation, not Mosaic Covenant

- many of rules and regulations are part Mosaic Covenant
- but essential principle given at Creation, precedes Israel
- part of moral fabric of universe | woven into reality itself
- reflects character of God

(3) Absence of controversy in New Testament

- this is one of basic disagreements b/w Baptists and Reformed
- issue of continuity between Old and New Testament
- Reformed theology assumes continuity | clear cancelation
- when circumcision was no longer required, huge controversy
- Sabbath is as important to Jewish identity as circumcision

What about Colossians 2:16?

- first, single verse in New Testament | we need more
- not clear Paul is talking about Sabbath as moral principle
- but Sabbath as a Jewish practice, with all attendant rituals

(4) We see indications of Sabbath observance in NT

- spoken of as the “Lord’s Day” | obviously, day set apart

(5) Jesus said, “Sabbath is made for man”

- therefore, Sabbath is for human flourishing, as are all moral laws
- why cancel something that is for human flourishing?

(2) Why Saturday and not Sunday?

- moved from 7th day to 1st day

Answer is Resurrection | Luke 24

- Jesus was crucified on Friday (6th day)
- women did not visit tomb on Saturday (Sabbath)
- early Sunday morning, women went – witnessed Resurrection

From that point forward, church celebrates R on Sunday

- Acts 20:7 – church gathers on “first day”
- 1 Cor. 16 – church offering collected on “first day”
- Rev. 1:10 – John refers to “the Lord’s day”

That’s all biblical evidence we have

- you might say, that seems pretty sparse
- importance of church history | universal practice
- only with Seventh Day Adventists in mid-1800s

(3) How do we observe the Sabbath?

Isaiah 58

- there is temptation to do our own thing
- but Sabbath says stop | stop being productive, own pleasure
- a life of self-gratification, self-development
- and directs our attention to God – feels onerous

- Sabbath is called a delight | “ride on heights,” exhilarating
- we give up on idolatry of productivity or entertainment
- trust God will supply our every need, orient our life around him
- “then you shall take delight in the Lord”

Mark 2 – Sabbath is for our flourishing

- can we trust God on this?

Three purposes of Sabbath:

(1) For physical refreshment | Exodus 23:12

- human body needs to rest and recharge

(2) For fellowship with God

Leviticus 23:3 – holy convocation

- for corporate worship, to gather as people of God

Psalms 92

- a day of praising God, meditating on his goodness, delighting in his salvation

(3) To point us to Jesus

Sabbath day is unique in creation because there is no end

- all other days, “there was evening and morning”
- Sabbath points us to the age to come | eternal bliss

- Promised Land is described as a “land of rest”
- rest from enemies, rest from wandering and labors, enjoy fruits

- we’re still waiting to enter The Rest
- we’re not there yet | which is why Sabbath still is in effect
- we’re still longing to be with Jesus
- every Sabbath makes us long for final Rest – fall into arms of Jesus