

Commandment 4: The SabbathIV. The fourth commandment (Exodus 20:9-11):

"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."

A. Like the other nine commandments, this commandment is a summary of many other specific laws in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy

1. No other gods	summary of →	Exod. 22:20, 29-30 (not sacrifice to other gods) erings)
4. Remember sabbath	summary of →	what?
5. Honor father and mother	summary of →	Exod. 21:15, 17 (not strike, curse father or mother)
6. Not murder	summary of →	Exod. 21:12-14 (if lie in wait or not), 18-19 (if fight, payment for injury), 22-24 (if strike pregnant woman), 28-32 (if ox gores man to death)
8. Not steal	summary of →	Exod. 22:1-15, 25-27 (if steal ox or sheep, if harm neighbor's grain, if lose stored item, if borrow something and damaged)

→ It is best to understand Sabbath commandment as a summary representing all the laws about special days, years, festivals; also sacrifices and food laws (all "ceremonial" laws)

B. Therefore obeying the 4th commandment also implied obeying laws about:

1. Sabbath year Exod. 23:10-11, 14-17 (Lev. 25:1-7)
2. Jubilee year (Lev. 25:8-17, 28, 40-41, 54)
3. All ceremonial laws (laws with symbolic purpose):
 - a. Three yearly feasts from Mosaic law, plus other special days:
 - (1) Feast of Unleavened Bread (or Passover/ 7 days) (Ex 23:15; Lev. 23:5)
 - (2) Feast of Weeks (or Harvest, or First Fruits, or Pentecost) (Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Num. 28:26)
 - (3) Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths, or Ingathering/ 8 days) (Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:34; Deut 16:13)
 - (4) Day of Blowing of Trumpets (Lev. 23:24; Num. 29:1)
 - (5) Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:26-31)
 - b. All other "ceremonial" laws: about sacrifices, food, clothing, crops, etc.
 - c. No other commandment in 10 Commandments represents all of these laws

C. The 4th commandment is not binding on Christians in the New Covenant age, because it is part of the "ceremonial laws"

1. Therefore unlike the other 9 commandments
also different: does not reflect an aspect of God's character
2. It is like laws about Jewish feasts, sacrifices, and unclean foods, etc. (abolished):

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. (Col 2:16 ESV)

When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), 9 then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second. (Heb 10:8 ESV)

And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, 19 since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) 20 And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him.

(Mar 7:18 ESV)

3. The 4th commandment looked forward to our "rest" in Christ:

Matthew 11:28 "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."

Colossians 2:16 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.

Hebrews 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. ... (vs. 3) For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest,'" although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.

4. Jubilee Year also fulfilled in Christ (Luke 4:18)

5. Jesus in his conduct seems to indicate that he is bringing a change regarding the 4th commandment:

Matt. 12:1-14: Healing, approving disciples' plucking of grain

Matthew 12:7 And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. 8 For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath." (– would not say that about breaking other commandments)

John 5:15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. 16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." 18 This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. 19 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.

(Matt. 24:20 probably predicted the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., when many Jews would still be observing the Sabbath)

6. The Sabbath commandment is never repeated or affirmed for NT believers after Pentecost (after Acts 2), but many other commands are repeated or affirmed (see Eph. 4-6 for example)

7. Conclusion: It is not disobeying God (it is not sin) to work on Saturday (or on Sunday! - for day change see below): the NT gives Christians considerable freedom on this matter.

Romans 14:5 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. 6 The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

Galatians 4:10 You observe days and months and seasons and years! 11 I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

Colossians 2:16 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.

8. A problem then: do we ever get to rest?

Do we have to work all the time?

Are we ever free just to worship and enjoy the presence of God?

Are we ever free just to enjoy the fellowship of each other?

Answers: see section D. below:

D. Even the ceremonial laws teach us some things about what is wise, what pleases God

1. Example: OT sacrifices teach us about offering ourselves to God (Rom. 12:1) and offering praise and good deeds to God (Heb. 13:15-16)

2. The Sabbath commandment still teaches us that it is wise, and God is pleased, when we have:

a. Regular times of worship

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Application → go to church regularly! (meet with other believers to worship, pray, encourage each other, learn from Scripture)

b. Regular times of rest from work

(1) even Jesus got tired: John 4:6

(2) we do not yet have resurrection bodies (Rom 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:23)

(3) God himself established a pattern of work followed by rest from work and enjoyment of his work:

Exod 20:11 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." (see also Gen. 2:1-3; also Gen. 1:31: enjoyment of his work)

Application → rest from your work regularly! (God gives you a gift: you can take Sunday off, or another day, for fellowship, worship, rest)

Mark 2:27: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

Note: The ability to rest is often an issue of trusting God.

Ps. 127:2; Ex. 16:27-30; Ex 31.13; Lev 25:20-22; Isa. 57:20-21

→ will you trust him for this?

c. Jewish feasts and Jubilee year teach us that some longer vacations are also good

Mark 6:30, The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. 31 And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 32 And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves.

Application → take vacations sometimes! (count it another gift from God!)

d. We should also provide times of rest, of vacation, for family members, employees (Exod. 20:10)

Application → care for your family, your employees

e. And this command also teaches us that work is good, and we need a life pattern of regular, productive work (whether paid or unpaid):

Exod 20:9: Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God

Application → have a regular pattern of productive work!

(I think this applies for your whole life, but it may involve less work, and may involve more voluntary service for others, at some periods of life)

E. Which day should we gather to worship?

1. Any day is OK, since 4th Commandment is no longer binding

- some early Christians worshiped every day! (Acts 2:46)

2. Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday (Matt 28.1-6)

3. The early Christians started a pattern of meeting on Sunday

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 16:2 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.

Worship on Saturday gives the week a 6 + 1 pattern: looking forward to Messiah

Worship on Sunday gives the week a 1 + 6 pattern: looking backward to Christ's finished work, and enjoying its benefits

4. What is "the Lord's Day"? Not Saturday, but Sunday:

Revelation 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, *Epistle to the Magnesians* 9.1 (110 A.D.) clearly makes this = Sunday: "no longer living for the Sabbath, but for the Lord's Day"

5. Other early Christian writers show a pattern of Sunday worship

Didache (50-100 A.D.?) 14:1

Justin Martyr, *First Apology* (about 152 A.D.), chap. 67

F. Related questions

1. Should we advocate and support Sunday closing laws for stores, businesses? Probably a wise pattern (for many offices, businesses, schools) but not required.

- a wisdom issue, not a "sin" issue (God allows us much freedom here, but we should take thought for employees, those in our care)

Mark 2:27: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

→ some stores should stay open! (like Home Depot! ☺)

2. Why do we have a five-day work week rather than six-day?

→ people have other work to do on the sixth day (so this is good, wise)

3. An alternative position: Some Christians disagree with my view. They see Sunday as = OT Sabbath (English Puritans; Westminster Confession of Faith). Reasons:

a. 10 Commandments are special, abiding (answer: this is a ceremonial law)

b. God established a pattern at Creation (answer: God is still working, John 5:17, and we have entered his rest, Heb. 4:3, and NT evidence of change is strong)

All of the class lessons and outlines are posted on the class website <http://www.christianessentialsbc.com>.