

ANCIENT LAW | TIMELESS TRUTH

A Study of the Ten Commandments

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

THE BIBLICAL TEXT

- Two Versions of the second commandment.
 - Exodus 20:8–11
 - Deuteronomy 5

Exodus 20:8–11

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 on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Deuteronomy 5:12–15

¹² “Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ You shall remember that you were a slave^[c] 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.

ANCIENT PRECEDENT AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 2ND COMMANDMENT

- There is no cultural precedent for the Sabbath command in *any* Ancient Near Eastern culture.
- Hebrew שָׁבַת means "to rest" or "cease"
- The seven-day work week and the "day of rest" are perhaps the most influential and enduring influences of Jewish people on Western culture.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO ON THE SABBATH?

- The Sabbath is “holy,” meaning it is set apart from normal, everyday use.
 - The way the Sabbath is set apart is in regard to *not* working.
- The emphasis is not on what we do on the Sabbath, but what we do not do.
- Many people have argued that the Sabbath, and the day of rest is primarily about religious observance and worship. I would argue that this is not the case.



ARE CHRISTIANS BOUND BY THE SABBATH COMMAND?

- Short answer: No.
- The Sabbath became associated with the cultural identity of Judaism.
- Part of the glory of the New Covenant is that Gentiles (like us) *do not* have to become Jewish in order to be right with God.

ARE CHRISTIANS BOUND BY THE SABBATH COMMAND?

- Second Short answer: Yes.
 - Like all of the Ten Commandments, the principles of the fourth commandment remain for all of God's people.
 - The fourth commandment is not abrogated in the New Testament
- Seventh Day Adventists advocate for strict Sabbath observance.
- For Israel, the Sabbath was a social, legal, even ritualistic structure. For Christians (I would argue) it is not.



THE FIRST SABBATH PRINCIPLE (EXODUS TEXT)

- Humans were not created to work all the time.
- God did not want monotony to rule our lives.
- God himself models this in his mode of creation.

APPLICATION OF THE FIRST SABBATH PRINCIPLE

- It does not honor God when we work *constantly*.
 - (Neither does it honor God when we are lazy and do not work enough.)
- In a workaholic culture such as ours, this is very important to remember.
- The biblical summary of work: Work very hard while you're working, but do not work all the time.
- Take time for relaxation, recreation, and rest. **AND DO NOT FEEL GUILTY ABOUT IT.**

DO WE NEED TO WORSHIP ON THE SABBATH?

- I would argue: No.
- The Bible is very vague about what we are to do on the Sabbath.
 - Do something other than what you do for the rest of the week.
- We are not to saddle ourselves (or others) with obligations on the Sabbath. This would violate the principle of rest built into the Sabbath itself.
- Regulation of the Sabbath had become a tool of oppression by the time of Jesus



THE SECOND SABBATH PRINCIPLE (DEUTERONOMY TEXT)

- Those in power ought not abuse the vulnerable.
- The Sabbath command is about the right of everyone to humane treatment.
- This command was not good news for the powerful. It was good news for the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized.



APPLICATION OF THE SECOND SABBATH PRINCIPLE

- The Sabbath is not just about taking time for ourselves to rest. It is about ensuring the same for others.
- The Chic-fil-a example
- Aliens, slaves, and foreigners (immigrants, the poor) are vulnerable, and their needs are easily overlooked.
- Keeping the Sabbath means working toward a society that guards the rights of all people to humane treatment, reasonable hours, and fair pay.