

Notice that the largest difference between the record given in Exodus and that given in Deuteronomy is that the Exodus version grounds the sabbath-observance in the original creation of the world, whereas the Deuteronomy version grounds the command in the creation of Israel as a nation by the Exodus from Egypt. This anticipates many of the later differences in understanding how to apply the fourth command. In what degree is the command a reflection of creational realities, and in what degree does it reflect the distinctive purposes for covenant Israel?

The data of the Westminster standards summarized.

1. The Sabbath command is a "creation ordinance," instituted at creation, and enfolded into the natural order, therefore binding all people at all times.

WCF 21.7 As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in his Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a sabbath, to be kept holy unto him

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Question 20

Q What was the providence of God toward man in the estate in which he was created?

A The providence of God toward man in the estate in which he was created, was the placing him in paradise, appointing him to dress it, giving him liberty to eat of the fruit of the earth; putting the creatures under his dominion, and ordaining marriage for his help; affording him communion with himself; instituting the sabbath;

2. The Sabbath command requires an observance of "one day in seven".

WCF 21.7 As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in his Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a sabbath, to be kept holy unto him

Question 116

Q What is required in the fourth commandment?

A The fourth commandment requireth of all men the sanctifying or keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his Word, expressly one whole day in seven;

3. The particular day to be observed has changed with the resurrection of Christ from the seventh day to the first day of the week.

WCF 21.7 As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in his Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a sabbath, to be kept holy unto him: which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which, in Scripture, is called the Lord's day, and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian sabbath.

Question 116

Q What is required in the fourth commandment?

A The fourth commandment requireth of all men the sanctifying or keeping holy to God such set times as he hath 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.

4. The entirety of the day is to be expended in private and public exercises of religion, and in deeds of necessity and mercy.

WCF 21.8 This sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest, *all the day*, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are taken up, *the whole time*, in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

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Question 117

Q How is the sabbath or the Lord's day to be sanctified?

A 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:

#### B. The Augustinian/Calvinistic View (The "Continental" View)

Both Luther and Calvin rejected *all* observance of days (even that of the Lord's Day), arguing that such observance was levitical. For expediency, they permitted such first-day meetings, and Calvin even encouraged people (on occasion, and somewhat inconsistently), "to lay aside our earthly affairs and occupations, so that we may be entirely free to mediate the works of God" in its observance. Nevertheless, Paul K. Jewett's comment is adequately descriptive of their position: "Neither he nor Luther looked upon observance of the Lord's Day as a moral imperative based on the fourth commandment" (*The Lord's Day*, 106).

**Calvin** understood the fourth commandment to be a moral law, but he understood it typologically, of our resting in Christ for our justification and salvation. Thus, its observance was entirely different in Israel than it is for Christians.

**Luther**, in his typically outspoken fashion, summarised his view this way: "If anywhere the day is made holy for the mere day's sake, if anywhere anyone sets up its observance on a Jewish foundation, then I order you to work on it, to ride on it, to dance on it, to feast on it, to do anything that will remove this encroachment on Christian liberty" (Luther's *Larger Catechism*, on the fourth commandment).

#### Calvin:

Besides, we must know that this is to be the common employment not of one age or people only, but of the whole human race. Afterwards, in the Law, a new precept concerning the Sabbath was given, which should be peculiar to the Jews, and but for a season; because it was a legal ceremony shadowing forth a spiritual rest, the truth of which was manifested in Christ... therefore, when we hear that the sabbath was abrogated by the coming of Christ, we must distinguish between what belongs to the perpetual government of human life, and what properly belongs to the ancient figures, the use of which was abolished when the truth was fulfilled. Spiritual rest is the mortification of the flesh, so that the sons of God should no longer live unto themselves or indulge their own inclination. So far as the sabbath was a figure of this rest, I say it was but for a season; but in as much as it was commanded to men from the beginning that they might employ themselves to the worship of God, it is right that it should continue to the end of the world.

[Calvin basically argues-- Lord's Day... in order to overcome superstition still aimed at Jewish practice, even though no day is now better than another day, the Christians changed the day from 7 to first in order to distinguish from the superstitions... Sunday was chosen for good reason-- for church order and because the first day was resurrection day of the week... ]

To sum up... was re to meditate throughout life upon an everlasting Sabbath rest from all our works, that the Lord may work in us through his spirit. secondly, each one of us privately whenever he has leisure is to exercise himself diligently in pious meditation upon God's works. Also we should all observe together the lawful order set by the church for the hearing of the word the administration of the sacraments and for public prayers. In the third place, we should not inhumanly oppress those subject to us. (i.e. give our workers a rest...)

#### C. The Vosian, Gaffin, Klinian view...

Geerhardus Vos argued that God's seventh-day "rest" was not to recuperate from fatigue, but was to celebrate the completion of his creation of a royal dwelling, to enjoy his own enthronement. Had Adam obeyed, he would have also entered such a glorious rest/celebration (and the NT, especially Hebrews, teaches that we, through Christ, will do this very thing). **Vos calls attention to "the eternity-typifying value" of the sabbath, as a day which**

**anticipates the Day of our rest/celebration.** He argues that the particular ordinance by which this eternal rest was typified in the Sinai covenant is different from the ordinance in the New Covenant. Since the Sinai covenant depended upon the obedience of the people, and their enjoyment of the eternity-typifying "land flowing with milk and honey" was dependent upon their obedience, they could not enter that land, nor the typical ordinance, at the *beginning* of their week/existence, but at its *end*.

In the New Covenant, our federal and representative Head has already, by his resurrection, entered his rest and guaranteed ours, "sitting down" at the right hand of God. The ordinance moves to the *beginning* of our week/existence. **It still typifies our everlasting rest, and its position at the beginning of the week signifies that the fulfilment of our covenant and its blessings has already been accomplished in Christ:**

"Inasmuch as the Old Covenant was still looking forward to the performance of the Messianic work, naturally the days of labour to it came first, the day of rest falls at the end of the week. We, under the New Covenant, look back upon the accomplished work of Christ. We, therefore, first celebrate the rest in principle procured by Christ, although the Sabbath also still remains a sign looking forward to the final eschatological rest" (Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 141).

In Hebrews 4:9 then, the "sabbath rest" which "remains for the people of God," is a reference to the rest not achieved by Moses' and Joshua's generations, but which, achieved by Christ in his resurrection, **is still typified by a weekly rest.** Gaffin's point is that, throughout Hebrews 3:7-4:10, the word "rest" (katavpausi) is a different word from that in 4:9 (sabbatismov). In these other places, it is a reference to that heavenly rest which Christ has entered but which we have not entered. Thus, sabbath-rest is still future for us, as it was for the Israelites. Yet the determinative event which guarantees our enjoyment of that rest, the resurrection of Christ (the obedient Servant/Son), a first-day occurrence, warrants our moving the typical ordinance to the first day, and calling it by a different term than that employed for either the Jewish seventh-day ordinance (sabbaton) or the heavenly reality (katavpausi).

5. Notice Meredith Klines description of the Sabbath. What are some implications?

*In part, the blessing sanction of the Edenic arrangement was expressed in the sign of the Sabbath, and this may be singled out as of particular interest for the covenantal identity of the original kingdom order. For one thing, the setting of man's kingdom labors in a sabbatical framework imitative of the pattern of God's work of creation was an expression of man's identity as image of God and as such the sabbatical ordinance also served to identify man as a creature in covenant with God.... Also, the Sabbath ordinance appointed for man's observance celebrated the reality of the archetypal Sabbath of the Creator's seventh day, and in doing so highlighted aspects of the creation order that were distinctly covenantal. God's entrance upon his sabbath rest was an enthronement of the Creator, an assumption by him of his rightful position as Lord of the world, of all lands and peoples.*

6. Why do you think the concept of "sabbath" has been lost by many modern Christians?

- a. No eschatology which transcends creation in modern consciousness.
- b. No theology of time and place
- c. No real "holy" concept of life such that if we lose the one, we substitute with the many...

Peck, vol. 1, 97-98: So the resurrection of Christ was the only event of his history which God required to be commemorated by the observance of a day; but the church has gone on multiplying days, until the Sabbath and its peculiar significance has been lost sight of.

7. In practical terms, how do we "keep the sabbath holy" under the NC?

1. To receive Christ is to be admitted into the Great and consummate Sabbath rest!

REST IN CHRIST!

**Heb. 4:8**

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later about another day. **9** So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; **10** for those who enter God's rest **also cease from their labors as God did from his.** **11** Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such disobedience as theirs.

WHAT LABORS? THOSE RELATED TO A WORK DONE IN ORDER TO GAIN GOD'S FORGIVENESS AND ACCEPTANCE...

IRONICALLY, THIS MIGHT INCLUDE WORKING THE WORKS OF THE SINAI COVENANT AS PERTAINING TO THE SABBATH EVEN AS A BASIS FOR RELATING TO GOD...

So, then, according to Heb. 4:11, what does "disobedience" refer?  
Note vs. 6.

**Heb. 4:1**

Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest is still open, let us take care that none of you should seem to have failed to reach it. **2** For indeed the good news came to us just as to them; but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. **3** For we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said,

"As in my anger I swore,  
"They shall not enter my rest,"

though his works were finished at the foundation of the world. **4** For in one place it speaks about the seventh day as follows, "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." **5** And again in this place it says, "They shall not enter my rest." **6** **Since therefore it remains open for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience,** **7** again he sets a certain day—"today"—saying through David much later, in the words already quoted,

"Today, if you hear his voice,  
do not harden your hearts."

**8** For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later about another day. **9** So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; **10** **for those who enter God's rest also cease from their labors as God did from his.** **11** Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such **disobedience** as theirs.

E.g., "disobedience" = failure to receive the good news (vs.6) = rejection of Christ (vs. 14ff)

How then do we remember the Sabbath?

**Under the OC**—Remember creation/redemption as accomplished by God.. and under a temporal covenant, this involved cessation from manual labor.

Likewise, to break the Sabbath was punishable by physical death even!!! (typoloical) (Neh... see above)

**Under the NC**—the "labor" that was typologically revealed by manual labor in the OC is shown to be the ultimate and and spiritual labor of thinking we can usher in the new creation/salvation/forgiveness of God by means of our own works rightouesness.

E.g. we are to cease "striving" to gain God's approval..

To break the Sabbath by not receiving Christ—is punishable by spiritual death and eternal judgment...

Again, the principle is this—what was mere typology and shadows in the OC, becomes reality as fulfilled in chrrist...listen to Paul on this again!

**Col. 2:16**

Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. **17** **These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.**

Remember the Sabbath therefore remember Christ by putting our faith in him, not ourselves!!

To rest means “believe in Christ!!!!

Therefore, If we could describe all of humanity as in an odd way suffering from Sabbath nearosis and the problem of from self-sensorship!

Rest = finding rest from guilt and sensorship by faith in Christ wherein *the machinery of self-censorship is truly shut down by Him!*  
*stilling the eternal inner murmur of self-reproach.*

When Christ said, “I am the Lord of the Sabbath” he meant not ‘I can do what I want’ as some have I think falsely assumed—but that the Sabbath was ultimately for the purpose of directing all of humanity to that perfect rest that is gained by faith in Christ.

*We desperately need a day such as this—and yet no day will accomplish this apart from the ultimate “day of the Lord” wherein God overcame the penalty of sin and the curse of guilt associated with it by the cross of Christ!*

2. The Lord's Day is a weekly reminder that our Lord has already left earth for heaven, preparing for us there a place for us to rest from our labors and to enter into the eternal. It is provision in that it bring the finished work of Christ to us in a provisional way, awaiting the consumation of this kingdom when Christ comes again.

**Heb. 4:9** There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.

Reminds you that this life is not the end-- there is more and this should impact the way we live now

Rev. 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may **rest** from their labors, **for their deeds follow them!**" Assembly with saints Thoughts on our everlasting rest.

Saturday-- that all this activity IS kingdom activity-- intended to be for the glory of God..

a. this teaches us to order our time so as to accomplish all three aspects of our weekly calling-- church, family and public service...

b. this teaches us to do our work as unto the lord-- so then, if we would lie to the lord, we wouldn't lie in our business. etc.

Question: Can you rightly celebrate your work as unto God on the seventh day? Did you make the world of your calling productive and accountable to God in every way possible? Is what you did worth celebrating!

4. Sabbath as "sign" to us all and to the world-- that there is a higher principle for life than merely survival-- perhaps this is what makes modern darwinianism/naturalism so horrible-- it reduces life to merely survival... when we all know in our hearts that life is somehow more than this... indeed-- our "Sabbath" is a reminder that we must at times stop and take note that life is more than survival.. our relationships, our work, our time-- they all count for something higher than mere existence-- they count for heaven!

Exodus 31:13-14, 16-17; Ezekiel 20:12

#### 4. What about Sunday's

Does “remembering” the Sabbath have anything to do with what we do then on a particular day of the week?? So, the million dollar question—what should we be doing/not doing on Sunday?

**On the one hand**, clearly there remains a “sabbath rest” in so far as this is according to the NC terms!

Is there a day set apart from other in the Scripture under the NC?

YES!

**Heb 10:21** and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **(reference to church) 22** let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. **(reference to baptism rite and its spiritual meaning) 23** Let us hold fast to

the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. **24** And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, **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 approaching.

Evidently, for the writer to even reference their “meeting together” assumes that there was already a general consensus formed that there was such a “day of meeting.”

Note as well.. the term in 4:9 is a different word for “rest” that is used elsewhere in Heb. To describe our spiritual rest in Christ!

In Hebrews 4:9 then, the “sabbath rest” which “remains for the people of God,” is a reference to the rest not achieved by Moses’ and Joshua’s generations, but which, achieved by Christ in his resurrection, **is still typified by a weekly rest**. Gaffin’s point is that, throughout Hebrews 3:7-4:10, the word “rest” (katavpausi) is a different word from that in 4:9 (sabbatismov). In these other places, it is a reference to that heavenly rest which Christ has entered but which we have not entered. Thus, sabbath-rest is still future for us, as it was for the Israelites. Yet the determinative event which guarantees our enjoyment of that rest, the resurrection of Christ (the obedient Servant/Son), a first-day occurrence, warrants our moving the typical ordinance to the first day, and calling it by a different term than that employed for either the Jewish seventh-day ordinance (savbbaton) or the heavenly reality (katavpausi”).

And so,

*Inasmuch as the Old Covenant was still looking forward to the performance of the Messianic work, naturally the days of labour to it came first, the day of rest falls at the end of the week. We, under the New Covenant, look back upon the accomplished work of Christ. We, therefore, first celebrate the rest in principle procured by Christ, although the Sabbath also still remains a sign looking forward to the final eschatological rest.*

Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 141.

*The Sabbath sign remains in effect for the church until the parousia, signifying that we live as pilgrims (Heb.11:11-16; 1 Pet. 2:11) in this semi-eschatological age while we wait for the consummation, our eternal rest with Christ in glory (John 14:1-4; 17:24; 1 Thess. 4:17; Rev. 21:3).*

Lee Irons

*The Lord's Day has been given to us as a means of grace, an opportunity to reflect upon our present spiritual rest in Christ, and in the future consummation of that rest in heaven, when all our earthly toil will be over. The primary thing that we do on the Lord's Day in order to enjoy this already/not-yet rest is to attend corporate worship with the saints, in order to enter into the heavenly sanctuary and fellowship with Christ. Weekly worship is a foretaste of our eternal worship. The early church gathered together on the first day of the week for the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments (Acts 2:42; 20:7), because Jesus had first established the pattern during his post-resurrection appearances with his disciples.*

Lee Irons

**On the other hand however,**

We should beware of “sabbath superstition” as Calvin called it-- where we continue in rigid practices and abstentions..

Two qualifications in comparison to Old Covenant:

- a) The day itself is changed to reflect the completed work of new creation as accomplished by Christ on the Jewish 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week when he was raised from the dead... (John 20:19, Acts 20:7, 1Cor.16:2) But clearly there remained a day when the people of God were to “assemble” together... and that day when it is mentioned is always Sunday!!

**John 20:19**

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

**Acts 20:7**

On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread, Paul was holding a discussion with them; since he intended to leave the next day, he continued speaking until midnight.

**1Cor. 16:2**

On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come.

There can hardly be any dispute that for the early church at least—they gathered on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week and did things that were previously done on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, albeit with NC expressions and meanings..

And to be sure, Puritan Thomas Watson is right... six days are for work but the seventh day is for worship...

E.g. IT IS NOT A DAY FOR BUSINESS AS USUAL

It is, again in the words of the puritans, "a market day of the soul..." (quoted in Ryken p.105)

Does a Sabbath rest remain for us today: YES

What is non-negotiable—Corporate Worship!!!

- b) What we do on the day is also different.. and from what we can tell from the NT, the only sure requirement if you will was to set the day apart for the purpose of corporate worship especially at the Lord's table—where we remember by faith the works of God for our salvation!!!

**Col. 2:16**

**Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths.** 17 These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

Calvin: "for we are not celebrating it as a ceremony with the most rigid scrupulousness, supposing a spiritual mystery to be figured thereby. Rather we are using it as a remedy needed to keep order in the church. Yet Paul teaches that no one ought to pass judgment on Christians over the observance of this day, for it is only a "shadow of what is to come." Col.2:17

Lee Irons:

*"Is it okay to do X on the Lord's Day?" Instead of answering the question directly, I offer two tests which correspond to and flow from the two above-mentioned principles.*

*In the first test I teach people to ask themselves, Will the activity in question hinder me from participation in the corporate worship of God's people? Anything that interferes with my ability to worship the Lord with God's people and to benefit from the ministry of the Word and sacraments, is obviously unacceptable (with exceptions for emergencies, sickness, etc.).*

So when is it acceptable to "miss worship"

Works of necessity—what is this..?

Here we have a great problem living in modernity—

E.g. there are many vocations that are in themselves appropriate, but would ordinarily be inappropriate in themselves such as to require that we miss Worship. And yet, for you to remain in that job—you will need to work lest you are fired..

So. Work of necessity:

- 1) Anything that is “necessary” and at the same time as corporate worship... (emergency, etc)
- 2) Anything that is “necessary” in order to keep an otherwise proper vocation, even if improperly governed by those who do not hold to the Sabbath. BUT—all attempts should be made to work around it.

Examples: Is “travel” during the corporate worship really a work of necessity—probably not! E.g even if you are traveling—what stops you from finding a church and going to it?

Etc. etc.

Vacations—not a vacation from Christ

Note as well—we underestimate the importance of corporate worship to be sure in so far as our own spiritual well being is concerned.

We say, what will one “meal” hurt us.. but after a time, like fasting.. we hardly notice that we are starving...

*The second test is to ask: Is the activity in question conducive to a spiritually restful frame of mind in which I am reminded that I am a pilgrim on the way to the eschatological Sabbath rest? There are many activities that we may engage in on the other six days, but if done on the Lord's Day might prove to be a spiritual hindrance. The new covenant Sabbath is to be observed not only by attending public worship, but by keeping a spiritually restful frame of mind throughout the day.*

Think again about Sunday neurosis—might it not be good for us, as an expression of our rest in Christ, to rest from our labors in so far as we have the opportunity to keep our various work idols in check?

Might it be good one day of the week, as an expression of our rest in Christ, to remember that we are completed not by what we do, but by who we are in Christ.

Might it be good one day in the week, to cease from the constant self-censorship that is associated with work.

I.e. if you suffer from Sunday neurosis—e.g. feeling guilty when you don't work, when you do relax and enjoy the fruits of Gods' creative labors, etc etc.—perhaps you need all the more to take the Sabbath!

Here, it is a bit more “gray” what you can and cannot do.

Notice however, I have said nothing about recreation, festivities, etc--- in fact, I suspect that of all days, this is the day to do it in so far as we are celebrating the freedom we have in Christ as to rightly participate in the joys of creation and redemption.