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The 4th Commandment

The Issue of the 4th Commandment

1.

Put Simply

1.

Krabbendam: Love God on the ***DAY*** He has set apart

2.

More generally:

1.

Our calendar needs to be brought into accord with *God's*

1.

What are the most significant events on God's calendar?

The Text of the 4th Commandment
Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15

1.

Outline

Command

8 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

*[**Deut. 5:12** Observe/keep/preserve the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God co mmanded
you
.]*

Means of keeping the command

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.

*[**Deut. 5:14** ...that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.]*

Reason to keep the command

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.

*[**Deut. 5:15** You shall remember that you were a slave 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.]*

1.

Differences between Exodus & Deuteronomy

1.

Exodus: Right after exiting Egypt; looks back to creation week – "Remember...rested the seventh day"

2.

Deuteronomy: Right before entering Canaan; looks back to God's act of redemption in Exodus & God's subsequent command at Sinai – "Observe...commanded...remember...Egypt...brought you out...commanded"

The Reason for Keeping the 4th Commandment

1.

Its reasoning proceeds from the reason to the command to the means

1.

Central questions

1.

Perpetually binding? Creation ordinance or Exodus-ordinance?

1.
1.
1.

Change & continuity from Saturday to Sunday legitimate? To what extent?

1.

Reason: "The relationship within the rest"

1.

God's calendar sets our calendar – we cannot forget our anniversary!

1.

The 4 greatest events in history: creation, Exodus, resurrection, 2nd coming.

1.
1.
1.
1.

Deuteronomy 4:32: *For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you,* ***since the day that God created man***
on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether
such a great thing as this has ever happened
or was ever heard of.

Event

Results in a change of day

The covenant relationship...

For this reason...

1

begun on the 7th day of **creation**

we celebrate the day that relationship **began**,

2

was restored historically, nationally, & experientially in the **Exodus**,

3

and definitively, once-for-all in **Christ's resurrection**,

the day on which it was definitively **restored** in Christ's resurrection

4

and will be	perfected at the	**2**	**nd**	**coming**

and we will	celebrate the	**endless**	day after Christ return

1.
1.

God did not rest because He was *tired*, or in order to depart from creation, but in order to *enj oy*
and be “refreshed” in His newly-made creation, in
covenant
relationship
with it. This forms the pattern for man—man should enjoy and be “refreshed” in his covenant relationship with God on the Sabbath.

1.

Gen. 1:31: *And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was* ***very good****.*

2.

Gen. 2:2-3: *2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he* ***reste d*** *on*
the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3
So
God
blessed
the seventh day and
made it holy
,

because
on it God
rested
from all his work that he had done in creation.

3.

Ex. 31:17: *in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he* ***reste d*** *and was*
refreshed
.

4.

Ex. 23:12: *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.

5.

Prov. 8:22-23: *22 "****The LORD possessed me*** *at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. 23 Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.*

6.

Prov. 8:29-31: *29 when he marked out the foundations of the earth, 30 then I was beside him, like a master workman, and* ***I was daily his delight****, rejoicing before him always, 31* ***rejo icing***
in his inhabited world and
delighting in
the children of
man
.

The Biblical Commentary on the 4th Commandment

1.

Gen. 2:2-3 – origin must be traced back to creation

1.

God made the seventh day...

1.

“Rested”: a day with a pattern to follow

2.

“Blessed”: a day of spiritual fruitfulness & growth

3.

“Set apart”: a day dedicated to fellowship with & service to Him

4.

Ex. 20:11 underscores its Edenic institution

5.

Mark 2:27-28 says “the Sabbath was made for man;” this refers to creation & man in general, not just Israelites

6.

Absence from creation to the wilderness journey

1.

But obligation could still have remained – parallel in creation ordinance of monogamous marriage not observed by patriarchs in Genesis. Cf. Matt. 19:4-8

1.

Mosaic legislation

1.

Ex. 16:22-31 – the Sabbath was nothing new at this stage!

1.

v. 22 – “automatically” gathering extra on 6th day

2.

vv. 28-29 – not a new law

3.

Ex. 20:8-11

1.

“Remember” - points to creation ordinance

2.

"Six days" uses a numeral, not an ordinal (ordinals are "first, second...sixth"). "Seventh" is an ordinal. Numerals are used to count; ordinals are used to order. So, the "seventh" day is not literally the "seventh" in the order of the week, but rather is only the 7th in the order of *counting*.

The creation week, not the commandment, made the 7th day of the week the Sabbath. So the day was free to change to the 1st day of the week upon Christ's resurrection.

3.

The 4th commandment is the capstone of the first 3:

1.

1st: Love God for who He IS: rest before & delight in God

2.

2nd: Love God for what He SAYS: communicate with God in Word & prayer

3.

3rd: Love God for what He DOES: perform works of necessity & mercy

4.

Mosaic case law

1.

Ex. 23:12 – Sabbath is for the refreshment of man

2.

Ex. 31:12-17 – Sabbath a sign that God owns & sanctifies us. Is holy for us, requires solemn rest, holy to the Lord. Death penalty for breaking it! Don't build tabernacle without resting to worship!

3.

Ex. 35:1-3 – No fires on Sabbath = no work

4.

Lev. 23-25 – Cycle of sabbaths patterned after weekly Sabbath: seven feasts: Passover, Pentecost, trumpets (seventh new moon feast), Day of Atonement, Tabernacles, sabbath (7^{th}) year, year of Jubilee.

1.

Rest remains central, but work only absolutely prohibited on Day of Atonement

2.

Rest always involves joy & rejoicing in every area of life: forgiveness, freedom from debt, slavery, labor.

3.

Rest remains *spiritual* (not merely humanitarian or agrarian) at its core; it is rest *in the LORD*

4.

Num. 15:32-36 – gathering sticks constitutes rejection of covenant; death penalty

5.

Deut. 15:1-16:17

1.

Resting one year out of seven expressed trust in God's providence by... 15:1-18

-

Forgiving debts 1-6

-

Lending to the poor 7-11

-

Setting slaves free 12-18

-

The Sabbath is about delighting in God as seen in... 15:19-16:17

-

Giving the firstlings of the flock to the Lord & eating meat before Him, because of His absolute ownership 15:19-23

-

The feast of Passover & Unleavened Bread, because sin is removed through blood 16:1-8

-

The Feast of Pentecost because firstfruits symbolize holy devotion to God 16:9-12

-

The Feast of Tabernacles because of God's numerous blessings 16:13-15

-

The freewill offerings at these feasts 16:16-17

-

Historical Books

1.

Neh. 10:31; 13:15-22 – no *buying* on Sabbath, "the Sabbath" distinct from "the Sabbaths, the new moons, the appointed feasts." Levites worked on Sabbath – guarded gates!

2.

Prophetical Books

1.

Is. 1:13-14 – Hypocrisy, formalism, ritualism condemned

2.

Is. 56:2-6 – Sabbath-keeping brings blessing, honor, God's presence, joy, God's acceptance

3.

Is. 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.

4.

Is. 66:23 – NT & New Earth worship will be from Sabbath to Sabbath

5.

Jer. 17:19-27 – Not keeping Sabbath brought punishment of Exile. Cf. 2 Chron. 36:20-21

6.

Ezek. 20:12-24; 22:8, 26; 23:38; 36:25-27 – Polluting Sabbaths brings punishment; New Covenant blessings described in terms of obedience to Mosaic law

7.

Ezek. 44:24; 45:17 – New Covenant worship will include rest that does not exclude a cycle of 7 days.

8.

In the New Testament

1.

Pharisees' view of 4th Commandment

1.

Sought to earn salvation thereby

2.

It was a legalistic burden. Matt. 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-11; John 5:1-15

3.

When Jesus rejected their legalistic resting in favor of a rest that involved delight, worship, & deeds of necessity & mercy, they sought the death penalty. Matt. 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:11; John 5:16-18

4.

Jesus kept the 4th Commandment

1.

He rested, delighted in His Father, attended worship & read Scripture/taught on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16, 31, 44), and did works of fellowship & service (above; Luke 14:1-24).

2.

He kept the Sabbath by doing His Father's work. John 5:36

3.

In His rest, He gave saving rest to others on the Sabbath. Luke 4:17-21

4.

He did not end the seven-day cycle! Matt. 24:20: "Pray that your flight may not be in winter

or on a **Sabbath**." The cycle would continue until at least 70 AD. Cf. Acts 13:14, 27, 42, 44; 15:21; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4

5.

After Christ's resurrection

1.

Normal practices of Sabbath observance began to take place on the first day of the week rather than the seventh.

1.

In John 20:19-23 Christ leads the first church service. He meets with them again eight days later in 20:24-29. The Lord of the Sabbath had changed the day by rising from the dead and sanctifying a greater day. Just as He changed circumcision to baptism, and the Passover to the Lord's Supper, without explicitly stating the change was taking place, He made the change.

2.

On the first day of Pentecost, the first day of the week, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church.

3.

Acts 20:7 – first day of week, worship service

4.

1 Cor. 16:2 – offerings collected on 1st day of week

5.

Rev. 1:10 – John calls this day the "Day of the Lord."

6.

Paul's epistles combat Judaizers' works righteousness & retention of OT Sabbatical system

1.

Col. 2:16-17; Gal. 4:9-11

1.

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

2.

"Sabbaths" is *plural*. This refers to the whole OT *sabbatical system*, including all of the feasts & holy days, and does not directly call the weekly Sabbath into question. (Lev. 23-25; 1 Chron. 23:31; Neh. 10:33; Ps. 81:3; Is. 1:13; Ezek. 45:17; 46:1-3; Amos 8:5) The sabbatical system was built to express the point of the weekly Sabbath, and as such is less central to, and less the substance of, the Old Covenant than was the weekly Sabbath. The parts of the system were shadows, symbols, meant to no longer be practiced when the substance came in Christ.

3.

Col. 2:14 does not mean God's moral law does not bind us, but that we are no longer condemned by it. The "record of debt" has rightful authority; the authorities in v. 15 are shamed because they did not have rightful authority. So the authorities in v. 15 are not God's law! Are the items in v. 16 this rightful record or these spurious authorities? They are a combination of both! They are the good ceremonies of the law, used in an evil way.

4.

Hand & fingers: The fingers of obedience to the law have no power or unity without the hand of love to move them. No Judaizing legalism! But to the same degree, the hand of love has no grip if not through the fingers of obedience. No antinomianism!

5.

Note that Paul certainly honored the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2) and Pentecost (Acts 20:16).

6.

Rom. 14:5-6

1.

Rom. 14:5-6: *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.*

2.

A strong argument: V. 5 could seem to destroy the uniqueness of the one day out of seven.

3.

Convincing counter-arguments:

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It is difficult to see how a person observing the first day of the week as a memorial of Christ's resurrection would be called "weak!"

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The weekly Sabbath is a creation ordinance, not part of the Levitical/Mosaic Sabbatical system of feasts & holy days

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The NT itself gives the first day of the week special importance, as seen above.

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Hebrews 10:23-29

1.

Heb. 10:23-25: *23 Let us hold fast the* ***confession*** *of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 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.*

2.

Gathering to take part in the special acts of worship is still commanded.

3.

Breaking this command brings God's vengeance (vv. 26-31) akin to the death penalty in Ex. 31:13-15 for breaking the 4th Commandment. Likely Heb. 25 is intentionally reiterating the obligation of the 4th Commandment, with the significance, but not the practice, of its death penalty, in full view.

4.

Hebrews 3:7-4:11

1.

Because of Israel's rebellion, at the border of Canaan God said "They shall not enter my rest." (3:11) Yet He allowed those who believed to enter later. (4:7) This was possible because He had been resting from His creative work from the foundation of the world in order to delight in covenant fellowship with man (4:3). This rest initially denied to Israel was not merely the political, civil, worldly rest from enemies in the land of Canaan which God gave the people through Joshua, but is a greater rest—a spiritual rest; the *covenant relationship* within the outward rest—else it would have been fully given under Joshua and not offered again later. (4:8) Because God is still resting in order to delight in covenant fellowship with man, "there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God" to enter into "today." What is required to enter this rest is to turn away from and rest from our works (4:10), not harden our hearts, but delight in God (3:8, 10; 4:7), and enter into covenant fellowship with Him (3:14) through faith (3:12, 19; 4:2-3) and obedience (3:12, 13, 15-18; 4:1, 6, 11).

2.

Conclusion

1.

There is no reason to believe the Sabbath institution is anything but a creation ordinance.

2.

There is every reason to believe the 4th Commandment is still in force today, with the understanding that the seventh day of the week was replaced by the first day of the week following the resurrection of Christ.

3.

Again, neither Judaistic legalism nor antinomianism will suffice! Observance of this day must be written on our hearts, and be the culmination of our cheerful and heartfelt obedience to the first three commandments.

1.

Negatively, this means abstinence from normal, everyday work, in order to worship God.

2.

Positively, this means:

1.

worshipful fellowship with God (1st C!)

2.

intent listening to God in His word (2nd C!)

3.

and cheerful labor for God in works of necessity & mercy (3rd C!)

4.

Calvin strikes this balance well

1.

No legalism: Genevan Catechism & Institutes 2.8.32-34 – ceremonial sabbath system has been abolished; Lord's day observance must not be Judaism

2.

No antinomianism: Sermon on Deut. 5 – "shop windows are shut on the Lord's Day," people "travel not after the common order and fashion of men," and "If we employ the Lord's Day to make good cheer, to sport ourselves, to go to the same games and pastimes, shall God in this be honored? Is this not the unhallowing of His name?"

The Application of the 4th Commandment

1.

Command: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy"

2.

Means: Rest in order to worship: "the seventh...you shall not do any work"

1.

Work

1.

Encompasses all activities of the 6 days

2.

Is productive & reigning - "be fruitful, and multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Have dominion..."

3.

Is completely ceased on the 7th day

4.

Worship

1.

Special, not general, acts of worship

2.

Is implicitly what the whole 7th day is for, since it is not for work

3.

The relation between 6-day work & 7th day worship: It's necessary to "rest in order to worship"

1.

Certainly integrated:

1.

Worshipful work: Rom. 12:1 implies that our 6 day work must be full of worship; it must be worship-ful.

2.

Work-full worship

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Required:

-

Activity: "Keep" in the 4th commandment

-

Return whole of life to God: Our resting from labor in order in worship to return that labor and its fruits (note the offering) wholly and completely to God who gave it to us (Gen. 4:3-5; 22; Ex. 29:18; 31:17--God was refreshed in His creation, cf. Prov. 8:31; Ps. 103:1-5; 116; 2 Chron. 32:25; Rom. 11:36; 2 Cor. 8-9; 8:5; Phi. 4:18-20; Rev. 4:9-11)

-

Permitted:

-

Works of necessity & mercy: Christ's harvesting (Matt. 12:1-6 - necessity) and healing (Matt. 12:7-13 - mercy) on the Sabbath

-

Tiring effort: Paul's 24 hours of no sleep on the Sabbath in Acts 20:7-11

-

But also distinct:

1.

Work enables worship. This remains the goal of works of necessity & mercy. Ex. 16:23-30; Josh. 6:3-4, 2 Kings 11:5, 7, 9; 1 Chron. 9:25; 2 Chron. 23:4, 8; Neh. 4:9, 16; 7:3; 13:22; Matt. 12:1-13 and 1 Cor. 11:33-34.

2.

Work is presented in worship. See "work-full worship" above.

3.

Worship enables work. Is. 58:13-14 (with Ex. 31:14-15; Lev. 25; Is. 56:2; Jer. 17:24-27); Eph. 4:11-16.

4.

Worship is lived-out in work. Rom. 12:1's "therefore."

5.

Work glorifies God indirectly; worship glorifies God directly.

6.

So, you can't work and worship at the same time. If the sabbath requirement is still binding today as argued above, we must rest the *whole* day in order to worship the *whole* day.

7.

Works of necessity and mercy

1.

Biblical data

1.

OT examples:

1.

Army marched around Jericho 7 days – Josh. 6:15

2.

Levites worked to support worship – 1 Chron. 9:32

3.

David ate showbread – 1 Sam. 21:6

4.

Guards guarded the temple gates 7 days – 2 Kings 11:5, 7, 9

5.

Jesus' example & teaching: harvesting & healing: Matthew 12:1-14; Mark 2:23-3:6; Luke 6:1-11; 13:10-17; 14:5; John 5:9-11; 7:22-24; 9:14-17

6.

Defined

1.

Works of necessity: tasks necessary to enable you or someone else to take part in public & private Sabbath worship

2.

Works of mercy: tasks merciful toward someone in dire need such that it would make you a hypocrite to neglect helping the person on the Sabbath, because your neglect would be out of accord with the nature of the worship of that day; it is more in accord with worship to help the person than to let them suffer.

3.

These works are worship-centered and worship-enabling

4.

What Activities Are Appropriate?

1.
1.

Public worship

1.

The word, prayer, and the sacraments

2.

Private worship

1.

Group & individual times in word, prayer, songs, edifying conversation

2.

Rest

1.

“Keep” implies activity is at the core. Sleeping *all day* is not an option.

2.

“Rest” implies work would prevent worship; the sleep necessary to enable worship is allowed.

3.

“Marathon” Sundays? No, if beyond a person’s capacity (“rest!”). Yes, as God grants the ability (“keep!”)

4.

“Worldly employments?”

1.

Allowable: Police, firefighters, utilities, hospitals, gas stations, milking, phone calls

2.

Not allowable: vocational, public, educational works

3.

Gray areas: Harvesting, public transportation, mail, 24/7 industries - steel, chemical, laboratories

4.

“Worldly recreations?”

1.

Not allowable: Sports, restaurants; profit, pleasure, prattle

2.

Gray areas: Garden, pool, park, games, TV, radio

3.

Sports:

1.

Fellowship is commanded on the Lord's Day, so games that promote fellowship are allowed

2.

It must be *Christian* fellowship. Fellowship centering in God's word, prayer, & praise is central; fellowship utilizing games is peripheral

3.

Paul does not condemn sports, but treats them as a good profession or occupation

4.

So, sports: unorganized sports qualify as fellowship; organized sports qualify as weekday work

5.

Watching sports? If truly Christian fellowship, yes; if merely your own pleasure, no. Is. 58:13!

6.

Buying/dining out

1.

Deut. 5:14 - “that your male servant...may rest”

2.

Neh. 10:31; 13:15-22 implies that not only selling, but buying, was wrong because opposed to keeping the Sabbath holy.

1.

Larger Catechism

1.

Duties Required – WLC 116

1.

The fourth commandment requireth of all men

1.

the sanctifying or keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his word, expressly one whole day in seven;

2.

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;

3.

which is the Christian sabbath, and in the New Testament called The Lord's Day.

4.

How sanctified? WLC 117

1.

The sabbath or Lord's day is to be sanctified by

1.

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;

2.

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:

3.

and, to that end, we are to prepare our hearts, and with such foresight, diligence, and moderation, to dispose and seasonably dispatch our worldly business, that we may be the more free and fit for the duties of that day.

4.

Sins forbidden – WLC 119

1.

The sins forbidden in the fourth commandment are,

1.

all omissions of the duties required, all careless, negligent, and unprofitable performing of them, and being weary of them;

2.

all profaning the day by idleness, and doing that which is in itself sinful;

3.

and by all needless works, words, and thoughts, about our worldly employments and recreations.