

Exodus 20:8-11 – The fourth commandment (the Sabbath)

We are studying the ten commandments. The first told us that the true and living God must be our God. The second told us that he must be worshipped, according to his word alone. The third told us about the heart of worship: the glorifying of his name. Now we are studying the fourth.

1. God's World

Whose world are we living in? God's. We are here because he created us – he created all things (v11). He made time, space and everything. So, as the maker and owner, he has an absolute right to order us how to live in his world. Like the potter with the clay, he can do as he pleases. Here is one of his commands, about our use of time. He made the sun and the moon, which mark out time for us. It all belongs to him. It is not for us to decide. Are you living joyfully under God's commandment, or are you in rebellion against him? These are the only two choices!

2. God's Day

The command tells us to work for six days. Work is a blessing (not a curse), and idleness is a sin. Sinless Adam in the garden, and sinless Jesus at the carpenter's shop, worked. God gave us a world to fill and develop (Genesis 1:28). We must all find our gifts and our opportunities, and God expects us to use them. Some have callings in the home, some outside; some are paid callings, some are not; but we must all work. Then, after six days, we rest for one day. This follows God's pattern in creation (v11). So, we join in God's rest – this should be a delight (Isaiah 58:13-14). We are to seek him, praise him and serve him on this day. We are to rejoice in our and God's works. At the beginning of the world, the rest was on the seventh day. But now, Christ has risen on the first day (Sunday); he appeared to his disciples on this day, and the church met on this day (e.g. Acts 20:7). The seventh day is never mentioned as special in the New Testament. This command is for everyone – even animals. It is a matter of faith; is God really God, or a liar? If he is God and it is his world, then we can trust him to look after us, and not say “I must work today”.

3. God's Son

The Sabbath is about rest, together with God. But if we are unsaved, we cannot truly do this. Sin spoils rest and makes us restless. God says, “there is no rest for the wicked”. This creation is spoiled by sin. We cannot find ultimate rest here. Even when Joshua brought Israel into the land, and after David defeated his enemies, the true rest was not reached (Psalm 95, Hebrews 3:7-4:10). The true rest comes through Jesus Christ. He has done the great work and finished it, and now entered into a glorious and eternal rest. The true Sabbath is found by resting by faith in Jesus Christ. We rest from sin and delight in him. Heaven is an eternal joyful Sabbath rest with God. Jesus said “Come to me and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Have you done that? It is free. Come today!