

[Heb 4:1-11, 13-16 ESV] 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. 2 For 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, 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 For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." 5 And again in this passage he said, "They shall not enter my rest." 6 Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, 7 again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, 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 have spoken of another day later on. 9 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, 10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. 11 Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. ... 13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. 14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Let's start with a review.

The first sermon on the Sabbath focused on how difficult it is to support **Sunday being the new Saturday**.

The second sermon talked about the legitimacy of the **Seventh Day Sabbath argument**.

The third sermon talked about **7 ways** that the fourth commandment is different from the other 9.

I had planned to only add one more difference this morning, but it turns out that the longer I study, the more differences appear.

So the 8th difference-

The 4th commandment was referred to as a **sign** of a **covenant** to the Israelites. No other commandment was singled out as a covenant sign or referred to as such.

Exodus 31-12,13 And the LORD said to Moses, 13 “You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you.

16 Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. 17 It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.”

Every time in the Old Testament when a covenant was made by God, a sign of the covenant accompanied it. The rainbow was a sign for God’s covenant with Noah. The Sabbath is a sign for God’s covenant with Israel.

Moses tells his people that the commandments can be a sign on their hands. But He does not say it is a sign between them and God regarding a covenant. Ezekial tells us more.

[Eze 20:11-12 ESV] 11 I gave them my statutes and made known to them my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live. 12 Moreover, I gave them my Sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them.

Isn’t that interesting. Ezekial reveals that the Sabbath command is different than the rest of the statutes. God says in one sentence, I gave them **my statutes**. Then in a different sentence, I gave them **my Sabbaths**. I cannot think of a better evidence that the 4th commandment is different than the rest. God says it right out. And notice too how **Jewish** this is. This is a covenant, not with all mankind. It is between God and the Israelites.

Now a 9th difference.

Jesus proclaimed Himself the **Lord** of the Sabbath. He even claimed that He and His Father **do work** on the Sabbath.

[Jhn 5:16-18 ESV] 16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because Jesus 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.

Here is the Lord of the 4th commandment making a point that both He and His father do work on the Sabbath. So His **Lordship** over the Sabbath means he can **intend it** for **whatever He wants** to intend it for and **use it** however He **sees fit**. It has no hold over Him. It makes no demands that He cannot change for his own purposes. Notice that God cannot lie, God cannot break that law, because it is **morally impossible** for Him to be true and be lying at the same time. But He **can** break the Sabbath because that is not based on some **moral absolute**. It is based on **relationship**. So we see another difference in the 4th commandment. The Lord of this law can apply it as He sees fit. There is no other commandment we see **used** like this or **referred to** like this.

Today we will look at Hebrews 3 and 4 and look at the 10th way that the fourth commandment is different from the other 9.

10th Difference- The rest that the Sabbath was a shadow of is entered into by belief in Christ.

This means that Christ actually fulfilled this command. That does not mean that the Old Testament version of the Sabbath should or should not be kept. But the ultimate expression of the Sabbath day celebration, what it was pointing to, is something we receive by faith.

Remember what my point is. I am trying to show how the 4th commandment is different than the other 9. Hebrews 3 and 4 clearly shows a difference. What we **make of that** difference may vary. But the difference is spelled out.

To understand our text, we need to understand the purpose for the book of Hebrews.

First, Hebrews was written to **Hebrews**, and some of them seem to want to keep fully to their Judaism. That is why the writer seems very harsh in his warnings from time to time. We need to understand the writer is fighting a very destructive tendency in his listeners. They want to return to the Old Testament.

Second

Hebrews was written to show the superiority of the ministry of Christ over all the ministries that came before Him. He has already been shown in the book

to be superior to the angels. In our text this morning He is being shown to be superior to Moses. In our specific text he is proving that Christ offers a **superior rest** to anything provided in the law or Israel's history.

Understanding these two things makes our text much easier to understand. Remember, we must allow the New Testament to interpret the Old Testament. The writer of Hebrews in 3:7 is actually quoting David.

David said this quote in Psalm 95:7-11 to his contemporaries.

So Moses tells us in Exodus regarding God not letting Israel enter the promised land God that said- Today if you hear His voice and rebel, you will not enter into the rest.

Then David speaking to his contemporaries years later says to them- Today if you hear His voice and rebel, you will not enter into the rest.

The writer of Hebrews can say one thing is clear. The Israelites had not yet entered into the promised rest.

That is why the writer of Hebrews says in 4:8 that Joshua **had not given them** the promised rest. He couldn't have or David could not have said the same thing to His contemporaries.

Keep this question in your mind. How was Christ's rest superior?

Hebrews 3:7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, 9 where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. 10 Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' 11 As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.

David refers to a promise of entering the land of Canaan. It looked like a **literal** promise for a **literal** journey. They were to enter the promised land and have a period of **literal** physical rest from their enemies. That was the expectation. That is how they would have received the words.

God was angry with them and said none of you will **enter** that rest. So you would think that this was only talking about the physical rest of entering the promised land.

But sometimes God is making a bigger point than what we would initially understand.

Let's move on.

12 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

A warning is given. Notice that the warning is not- Now don't you hold back in obeying God in an **observance** of one form or another. Don't hold back in doing a **valiant conquest** for the Lord. Don't hold back in a **difficult observance** for the Lord.

No. The issue is **belief**. Do not have an **unbelieving heart**. Do not allow yourself to **not believe Christ**. No. Talk to each other every day, as long as life persists. Do this so no one gets deceived by sin. In the context of Hebrews the writer is probably fearing his readers will go back to Judaism and minimalize Christ.

What is he talking about? We need to continue to find out.

14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. 15 As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." 16 For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? 17 And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? 19 So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

This has nothing to do with any **physical obedience** of a **physical activity** of any kind. This whole thing is talking about **sharing in Christ**. Look at verse 14. The writer is taking the **concept of rest** and pointing the whole concept of rest to that which comes through Christ. Where **is** the rest? How do we **enter** the rest? What **was** the rest in Exodus they were looking forward to? What was it **all about**? It was about **finding rest in Christ**. We have come to **share in Christ** if we hold our **confidence in Christ**. This is talking about **salvation rest**. **That** was the rest that the Jews in the dessert needed to enter but did not. And they did not because they did not have faith in God. The ones who **did not enter the rest** were the ones that **did not believe in God**. They resisted. They found another way. They did not enter because they did not believe.

Now the writer of Hebrews moves on.

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. 2 For 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, 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.

So the promise of entering God's rest still stands. How can that be if the rest was to be obtained by **entering the promised land**? Oh, it still stands because the promised land was not the **ultimate** rest. The rest was something bigger and something future. Entering the land was a **tangible expression** of a **deeper reality**. It was an **earthly symbol** of a **greater reality**.

Then the writer of Hebrews makes it clear. What is the rest and who enters it? **For we who have believed enter that rest.**

There it is. That is the core point. That is what the promised land was pointing to. God's rest has been since the creation of the world. But the Jews did not **enter** the **Canaan** rest. We must assume that this is not a **literal** rest on a **literal** day. Nothing in the context would lead us to think of it this way. The rest that is entered into is entered into **by faith**, not observance.

4 For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." 5 And again in this passage he said, "They shall not enter my rest."

It is impossible at this point to make this rest that is crucial to enter into a rest of **keeping a day** where we do not work. The writer of Hebrews has made it bigger than this. The same rest that the Jews **did not enter into** is the same rest that the Sabbath day **pointed towards**. This means it is not a rest of keeping a Sabbath rule on a 7th day. It means believing in Christ and entering into the rest He provides, just like Hebrews 3:14 says

14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

All of the rest is about this single thing. We enter into all of the rest that is available to us by God **through belief**. The rest in Canaan, the rest in the Sabbath, it is all pointing toward the rest we have through belief in Christ. And it is all lost if we do not believe in Christ.

6 Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience,

How is the rest entered into? By observance of a day? By marching into a territory? No. It is entered into **by faith**. It is entered into by the obedience of **responding to Christ's salvation call**.

7 again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, 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 have spoken of another day later on.

This is extremely important. The Jews thought that the rest came by entering the **literal** promised land and obeying what they were told to enter the land and conquer it. But did that give them the rest they hoped for? Did they understand that keeping the instructions given to them would **give them rest**? That is probably what they thought. They probably thought that obeying what they were told was the path to rest. But look at what this says. Either the writer of Hebrews was right or wrong.

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.

Look at this. The rest is **bigger** than they thought. It is not an **earthly** rest. It is not something they would obtain by some kind of observance. **Going into** Canaan did not give them rest, even though that was their understanding. So what is this rest? What is the rest all about?

9 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, 10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. 11 Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. ...

OK, at this point in this process are we to assume that suddenly we are to enter a rest by literally keeping the rules for a Sabbath day? Has this been a big push for Christians to keep the Sabbath with all its rules? I think that is impossible in this context. Just as the rest given by entering Canaan was **spiritualized**, so is the rest by having a Sabbath day rest **spiritualized**. One has to work hard to say that even though the rest in entering Canaan **was not** literal and earthly, now the Sabbath rest **is** literal and earthly. No. The writer is pointing to something spiritual that both of those events were pointing to. We would have no idea about this if the writer of Hebrews did not give us this insight. We would not know this by reading the law of Moses. This rest is entered into **by faith**. And it is clearly talking about the rest we receive when

we come to Christ. Today is the day of salvation. **Salvation** is the method of receiving the promised rest.

All of God's people **receive the rest** that the fourth commandment pointed to. When we enter into God's rest, salvation, we have rested from our works in the most wonderful ultimate way. It is a million times better than keeping a day of rest. It is the fulfillment of **all** rest. It is saying to all time and eternity that even though all of my works could not obtain my salvation, I can trust in Christ and **His works** have **obtained** my rest. I now need to do **nothing to earn** that which I could never earn from God. I can rest in the purist, most necessary way. I can rest from my labors and trust the labors of Christ.

I think this is the point.

I think this is what **all** of the **Sabbath day keeping** was pointing toward from the **giving of the commandment** until **now**. It was a little gem hiding in the 10 commandments pointing to **Christ** as the **fulfillment of rest**. All through history people have longed for that rest. The Sabbath rest was a little **oasis** for the Jewish people to whet their appetites for the rest to come. But all the while they were **not lighting fires** or **cooking foods** and **resting their bodies**, they were to be longing for **something better**. They were to be longing for the **Shalom of their souls** that would only come by the expected Messiah coming and dying for their sins. They were to be transported by the schoolmaster of **Sabbath-keeping to faith in Christ**.

They wanted rest when they came out of Egypt. They got some respite, but not the ultimate rest they wanted. They wanted rest when they kept their Sabbaths. They got some respite, but not the ultimate rest they wanted. The ultimate rest came when Christ said, **Come unto me all you who are weary and I will give you rest**. This was no longer a **shadow** of things that were to come. It was the **fulfillment** of things that were to come.

If this is true, this truth **AT LEAST** opens up the possibility that there is no longer a day that we must keep as a Sabbath. Just like there is no longer a **sheep** that must be **sacrificed** on an altar. Just like there is no longer a need for a **scape goat**. We have experienced fulfillment of the Canaan rest. We have experienced the fulfillment of the Sabbath rest. What point would the **shadow** hold when we have the **ultimate reality**?

Christ said Matt 5:17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to **fulfill them**. 18 For truly, I

say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is **accomplished**.

Here Hebrews tells us about one thing that **was** fulfilled. The promise of **rest** is fulfilled in Christ. Our rest is **accomplished**. When Christ said, It is finished, now **we** can say "it is finished." Our justification is complete. We are as good as home. Our rest is **assured** now and will be **complete** when we die. My belief is that the rest we receive through being brought into God's family through the blood of Christ should shine a million times brighter than any **daily** observance. We have hit the jackpot rest. We have received both our **current rest** and a **promise of future** rest that is all that rest was intended to be. The **shadow** was a **physical** rest. The **fulfillment** is **spiritual** rest. And our hearts daily reorienting to this moment-by-moment reality will accomplish more spiritually in our hearts than physically keeping a day of the week to break from our labor **would ever do**. Centuries of God's people keeping a **Sabbath rest** found its fulfillment in the rest that every single believer in Christ receives at his **point of salvation**.

We cannot help but conclude from our text that at least, at the very least, the **rest we receive in salvation** is far superior to the **keeping of a Sabbath day** rest.

We wake up to a **Sabbath rest** from our spiritual attempts **to win favor from God** every day because of Christ. We come to Christ. Christ gives us the rest that was pointed to throughout all history.

I don't know how to say this strongly enough. A Christian is not against a day dedicated to God any more than a person who owns a jet is against someone who rides a bike. But we relish in **the superiority of the jet** for getting to far away destinations. The jet can go where a bike never could. We may now ride the bike for our enjoyment. But to get where we want to go, we use the jet. The bike **whets our appetite** for travel. The jet **delivers** us there.

The person who really gets in his heart of hearts that Christ has provided His rest **now** and **into eternity**, the person who understands that no one can **take that from us**, the person who **wakens** to that reality and **goes to sleep** with that comfort, **that** person has rest that those who were only keeping a **literal physical Sabbath** could only dream of. Our rest is almost too good to be true. I really believe **that** is how we are to regard the Sabbath rest for the people of God now that Christ has completed His work on the cross for us.

That is my position.

Now, Hebrews does not make the point one way or the other as to whether a Gentile believer should **keep** the Sabbath **or not**. To use this text in either direction is to twist it. But it shows us how **the shadow** is the Sabbath weekly day of rest. The **greater reality** it points us to is the **ultimate spiritual rest** we have in Christ. That rest is not entered by keeping a day. It is entered into wholly by **faith** in Christ. And **today** is the day we can enter into it, no matter what day of the week today is.

I have no reservations at all in saying that Christ fulfilled the 4th commandment. The Sabbath day was a day to **memorialize** entering into our Creator's physical rest. In Christ we do one better. We enter **spiritual** rest. **Christ's rest** is superior to the **rest found in the law**.

Since Christ fulfilled this commandment, might that not mean that this is one of those Old Testament requirements that were pointing to Christ and now we adjust **how we see** it through **Christ's completed work**?

I think that is why Colossians isn't definitive on which way we view the Sabbath. Some will still want to keep the day. Some will see it differently. And there is room for both in the kingdom of Christ. Christ said "This is my commandment that you love one another that your joy may be full."

Other observations and rebuttals:

First I wanted to address the Sabbatarian teaching that emphasizes the descriptive references to the Jewish people who kept the Sabbath in the New Testament, all the references about people going to the synagogues and things like that. I want to make 2 points.

First, Paul always made a point to go first to where he thought the spiritually minded people gathered in a city. So where would he go first? He would go to their equivalent of church today. He went to the Synagogue. Does that prove he was keeping the Sabbath? No. It proves he used what was most likely to succeed. I don't believe scripture ever says he went there to worship. He went there to present truths. So it does not make a point in regard to **his view** of the Sabbath.

Second, if you grew up keeping the Sabbath, do you really think you would abandon it just because you believed it was no longer required. I don't know this for sure, but I think there are many who grew up with the Sabbath and learned to love it, that, if Christ visited them and told them that they were no longer required to keep the Sabbath as they do but they are allowed to if they

want, I think it would be likely that many would say, yeah, I want to keep doing it. Because from how some talk about it, they **love** the Sabbath. They see it as a gift from God. So why give it up?

I think the references in the New Testament are similar. I would not expect that the Jewish people who grew up with the Sabbath would suddenly abandon it just because they could. It was a very positive part of their lives. So where we see portions of scripture where it describes that some New Testament believers might have been keeping the Sabbath, that proves absolutely nothing about what they **believed** about the Sabbath. We tend to do what we have always done.

Next

Isaiah 66 is often used to say that the Sabbath is forever. I really don't know what to make of Isaiah 66 but I do not think when we are in the new earth that we will be able to go outside of where we are and see all the dead bodies of the rebellious. I think that passage is a weak one to prove the eternity of the Sabbath. That is a passage that has more questions than answers.

Also the fact that **Jesus kept the Sabbath** is used to say that **we** must keep the Sabbath like Him. He also went to the temple to worship. Must we? Jesus was a Jew and it was His will to keep the Jewish law perfectly. That is not our mission.

Another passage to prove that Christians should keep the Sabbath is the passage in Matt 24 that warns people to pray that your flight might not be on a Sabbath. Well the Old Testament law, I believe it is in Leviticus, tells us that the city gates should be closed on the Sabbath. That would certainly be inconvenient if you wanted to exit the city.

Next, the point that the fourth commandment was based on God's resting in Creation does not necessarily mean that God had instituted this commandment from the Garden until Exodus. It may just be that God chose to **issue this command** when He finally **chose a people** who He was going to identify with. We know for sure it was clearly a covenantal sign with a specific group of people. We do not know if it was more than that. There are no scriptural references that tell us that God had given the Sabbath day command to anyone but the Jews. Any statement saying so is an assumption. There is nothing that scripture says that would keep God from first revealing God's resting on the seventh day to Moses. There is nothing that would keep God from restricting that commandment to the Jewish people.

In fact, in the New Testament Jesus supported his view of marriage by referring to creation. Paul reasoned that women were not to teach based on creation. Homosexuality is wrong because it is contrary to nature. Those who ban certain foods and marriage are wrong because of creation. So it isn't like New Testament writers were slow to appeal to creation for their authority. But oddly, no one in the NT thinks to do that regarding the Sabbath.

I say all **that** to say **this**. I find the desire to obey God a compelling way of living the Christian life. I also see it as a good thing to keep it as simple as possible. But transitioning from the Old Testament to the New Testament has its challenges. It requires careful study or we will inadvertently add burdens onto New Testament believers that Christ would **oppose**.

Paul regarded Judiazers as his most dangerous opponents and I think it is easy to see why. They were saying, "But didn't God say this and didn't God say that?" "If you are any kind of a believer shouldn't you do what God said?" And Paul would step in with great force and send these people packing. Being too simple at this point would not have been a good thing. A person would need to **seriously study** to know what **still applied** and what **did not**. That is what we must do too. It is not intuitive. It takes study. Things that **seem** obvious are not always how things **really are**.

Given what I have said in this whole study, I do not care if you still believe that you should treat **Sunday like the Old Testament Saturday**. I do not care if you believe that you should keep the **Seventh Day Sabbath**. I do not care if you believe that we **have in Christ what the Sabbath pointed to** so we have no Sabbath requirements upon us. And I don't care if you agree with me about what I have concluded. There is an arrogant part of me that thinks that if you have any sense at all you **will agree** with me. But I know that is not true.

But what I care **very very deeply about** is that love should cover the differences on what each of us believe about this issue. You should not view any of these positions as core issues. They are preferences. They are convictions. They are personal beliefs. Some of us are probably more right than others. That is common. But Colossians very clearly tells us that we should not **divide** on this issue. Discussion on the topic is open at any time. People who love each other talk. But there is no reason that we cannot **break bread and fellowship** with each other without hesitation, even when we apply all of this very differently.

I hope that the effect of this study has given you a sigh of relief. No matter who you are you can fit in here if you hold to the core belief in Christ.

We will meet this Thursday to hold an open discussion on this topic. I hope if I have said anything that is not true from scripture you will point it out. I also hope you can add things from your study to the discussion. 7pm here.

I also was surprised to have one more sermon on the topic based on Matt 5. I was surprised to find one more thing that adds to the understanding of the topic. That will be next Sunday, Lord willing.