

HEBREWS – LEVITICUS
“Sabbath in Christ”
Leviticus 23:3 & Hebrews 4:1-11
May 7, 2023

Leviticus 23:3

³ “Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to the LORD in all your dwelling places. ¹

“This is the Word of God” – “Thanks be to God.”

This Old Testament passage highlights one of the Ten Commandments and the expectations, actually the law, as given to the children of God, the nation of Israel, at the time.

It was a unique work statement of a people, as no other contemporary group of people known at the time was collectively taking the same day off each week. There’s really no modern-day comparison to this as being odd for the masses, other than perhaps Chick-fil-A being closed on Sundays due to the founder’s religious convictions, but even that does not compare.

We are a community who live for leisure. This is evidenced as a cultural shift over the centuries. As Loverboy stated in the early 1980s, everybody’s working for the weekend. And a quick Google search comes up with dozens of songs celebrating the party that comes every Friday evening and lasts until Monday morning.

Whether a party, or a weekly camping trip with the family, a journey to the theme park of choice to justify the cost of season passes, a day at the beach, a trip to the mountains, or even traveling across the state to cheer

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Le 23:3). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

on children playing travel ball...the weekend wins and becomes the goal of work.

And work is thus seen as a necessary evil or even a curse that allows the freedom of Friday night to exist.

Not throwing stones, just saying what we all know to be true here.

We have so confused the concept of work, family, fun, rest, and worship that often the way we find peace is to swing the pendulum way too far one way or the other – becoming workaholics, religious fanatics, or even me-time/family-fun weekend lovers.

So, today, we look back. For looking back at inerrant truths, God’s spoken and written Word, gives not only insight, but hope, and truly provides life as it points the way.

Many have heard the ten commandments repeated throughout their lives. Though most may have a hard time remembering all ten. Yet, once heard, the “oh yeah, I remember that” light comes on.

THE SEVENTH DAY

In the book of Leviticus, Moses reaffirms one of the commands here in verse 3 of chapter 23. In this passage, the Lord is giving clear instructions on the feasts of remembrance and worship the people are to experience. There is no option for removing these from the calendar.

The Sabbaths (the seventh day of the week) and the feasts of God were not the property of the Israelites.² These were God’s feasts. These were God’s Sabbaths. He was the creator, appointer, and owner. This is significant especially in the self-centric worldview that has permeated creation since the expulsion from Eden.

² Mathews, Kenneth A. *Leviticus: Holy God, Holy People. Preaching the Word Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 194.

The Sabbath was the sign of the covenant between God and the people of Israel as his covenant people. The failure to observe this weekly day of rest and worship was a frontal attack on the rule of God in a person's life.³ When the Sabbath day began (sundown on Friday) the cessation of work occurred. This was radical and unheard of among the other nations of the day. This was not a working for the weekend philosophy as work was not considered evil or a drudgery, but a gift from God as well. Yet, the weekend...not two days, but one...beginning weekly on Friday was not a moment to celebrate freedom from the chains of employment and work so that life could really be experienced through organized or unorganized rest. It was a time to look forward to, where life could truly be experienced as the creation behaved like the Creator and took the day to cease work.

The day of rest was not a day of laziness.

The day of rest was a commemoration of two momentous events in the lives of God's people. First, the celebration of the creation of all that is by God and his rest on day seven. Second, the celebration of redemption by God as the Israelite slaves were rescued from Egypt.

Deuteronomy 5:15

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. ⁴

This day of rest is unique and yet, it became routine for the Israelites. Routine is good, as it keeps us on track and focused. Routine can be bad as human nature kicks in and the meaning of the moment, in this case the Sabbath day, becomes rote and forgotten. Thus, the command to Moses and God's people in Leviticus.

³ Mathews, 195.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Dt 5:15). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

THE MOMENTARY REST

The rest experienced on the Sabbath, every seven days, was followed by the next day.

The rest was needed, respectful, reverent, and holy.

But...there was always a next day. There was always the work to begin again on Sunday (or Saturday evening in their case.) The remembrance was commanded. The celebration and worship was expected. It was called a “solemn rest” by God in Leviticus.

But this solemn rest was never complete. Why? Because it was always followed by six days of work.

It was a pause. A temporal rest. A needed moment...but a moment. A momentary rest.

Thus, when we look to the book of Hebrews, we see this referenced, but completed.

Hebrews 4:1-11

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.⁵

In verse 4 it states that God rested on the seventh day of creation. How do we know this? We only know this because God told us. And he told us because this is important. God doesn’t waste his breath.⁶

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH?

Before we look at this in depth, let’s address something that has been part of Christianity, especially western Christianity for decades, if not centuries. It is this concept of the Christian Sabbath. You likely have heard it referenced. If you grew up in church you may have heard sermons refer to Sunday as the Sabbath. You may have even taught such. It’s a common misnomer.

But let’s clear the air here and get our words right. Under the new covenant in Christ, we see no commands to worship or restrict work on Sundays. Since the resurrection of Christ, the church has gathered on the Lord’s Day – Sunday, the first day of the week. This is the day of resurrection, of celebration, of worship, of being together and of not forsaking the coming together as the church. This is not the baptizing of

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Heb 4:1–11). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁶ Mohler, R. Albert, Jr. Hebrews 4:1-11. <https://albertmohler.com/2010/11/14/hebrews-41-11>

an Old Testament law into the New Testament framework and thus, turning Sundays into a Christian Sabbath. Biblically speaking, Sunday is NOT the Christian Sabbath. Sunday is the Lord's Day and not out of legalism, but out of love, should be a priority moment on the believer's calendar.

We should abandon the gathering together as the church on the Lord's Day.

Not having a Christian Sabbath does not mean we are to work like dogs seven days in a row with no rest. It does not mean we are to elevate workaholism or even weekend leisure to unhealthy and ungodly places as both tend to leave us as the center of our universes and creates little gods who are made in our image, for our pleasure, and for our recreation and focus.

ETERNAL REST

Likewise, we as Christians know that Christ's death on the cross perfectly fulfilled the law (as he stated he came to do.) Thus, Christians who become Seventh-day adherents or have wrongly chosen to go back to the old covenant to prove their spirituality and faithfulness have done exactly what the Hebrew believers were doing in the time this letter to them was written. Persecution and confusion led to backtracking. Remembering the past is essential. Living in the past is deadly.

When Christians speak of eternal rest, they often are using that as a euphemism to death – something said at a believer's funeral. "Uncle Joe has entered into eternal rest." While that is not wrong, that is not fully correct.

The Hebrews writer addresses this in chapter four. Just look back at how many times he states the word "rest" in this portion of Scripture. It is no accident.

As Christians our rest is found IN CHRIST. In other words, Jesus Christ IS the personification of Sabbath. He is the Lord of the Sabbath, as he stated in the gospels. He is the one where we find our eternal rest.

In the OT, resting from works means that human beings stop working because their works are completed, just as God ceased working during the week of creation because the work of creation was completed.⁷

Rest in Christ is offered. Not rest as in “be lazy, do nothing, lounge around and scroll through your social media feed looking for memes” rest. Rest as in peace, contentedness, wholeness, hopefulness, security, fearfulness, redemption, clarity, and more. Rest because the work is complete. Your work is complete because works do not get you saved, get you to heaven, fill any of those holes in your heart and identity. Rest because Christ did the work. He did the heavy lifting. He did what you and I could not do, but should have to do. He died, paid the penalty for all that we have done. He died. And rose again on what we call the Lord’s Day. Our rest is found in Christ because HE IS.

In this age of messed up religion, deconstruction, broken evangelicalism, prosperity-tinged fake gospels, celebrity pastors and heretical worship bands, comes a message of hope. Rest is found in the only one who can offer that eternal rest (beginning now and continuing forever.)

Hebrews 4:7

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

Human nature is to deal with hard stuff tomorrow, but TODAY is the day.

⁷ Schriener, Thomas R. *Hebrews: Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 145.

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 4:7). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.