

# END-TIMES ISSUES



**#85** Commandment #4 – Without the word "Sabbath"

GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO BE READY.

A N D B E Y O N D I

## THE SABBATH CONCEPT

It is present in passages that *don't* use the word "Sabbath."

**The Sabbath concept is *much greater than an issue of specific days and rituals!***

- Under the *Old Covenant*, these were important. But there are *timeless* aspects of the Sabbath concept that exist in *all* ages, and can be found in *both* Old and New Testaments.
- *Before* and *after* the Old Covenant era (which was from Moses to Jesus), we see evidence of the Fourth Commandment principles – Sabbath concepts without the word "sabbath."
- Yet some people shy away from any reference to the word "Sabbath," because of the Old Covenant connection to Saturday (they forget the non-Saturday occurrences) and certain Jewish rituals.

### The Early Church knew about the Sabbath concept.

- They relied on the **Old Testament (the only written Scripture the early church had)**, which it tells us much about the Sabbath. [The church also had the apostle's *verbal* accounts about Jesus and how he fulfilled Old Testament prophecy about the coming Messiah.]
- They relied on the **New Testament historical books** (the Gospels and Acts), and these also tell us about the Sabbath. But these didn't start getting written down until 20-30 years *after* the church was formed.  
 >> However <<
- **Most of the other New Testament books don't mention the Sabbath.**
  - ✓ In some cases, it wouldn't be expected (because of the book's focus).
  - ✓ The apostle Paul, who wrote to Gentiles, almost never used the word "Sabbath" (only in Colossians 2:16). Yet his writings include many Fourth Commandment principles (dependency on God, worship, prayer, etc.).
  - ✓ The book of Hebrews mentions the *eternal* Sabbath (Hebrews 4:9).

- What would the **Gentile Christians (taught by Paul)** know about the "Sabbath"?

- ✓ Whatever the Old Testament taught about it (since the Old Testament was their Bible). This would include the Sabbath's origin, its significance, etc.
- ✓ Whatever the Gospels and Acts taught about it.
- ✓ Whatever Paul taught them in his epistles. This would include many statements that were expressions of Fourth Commandment principles, but *without the word "Sabbath."* (We don't know what he may have *verbally* communicated to them.)

- Why might the apostle Paul NOT use the word "Sabbath"? (After all, he *did* mention many Fourth Commandment *principles*.)

#### SUGGESTIONS:

- ✓ To minimize confusion with the Jewish practices.
- ✓ Because of the changes that occurred with the New Covenant – changes that Jesus himself said would happen. As Jesus said to the Samaritan woman...

### Changes were coming!

"... a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain [in Samaria] nor in Jerusalem. ... **a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth**, for the Father is seeking such as these to worship Him. God is Spirit, and His worshipers must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

John 4:21b, 23-24 (BSB)

- **The New Covenant concept would be different:** The Fourth Commandment principles (in this passage, represented by the word "worship") would continue to apply; but the "techniques" involved in that worship would change.
- **This shouldn't surprise us.** The two covenants had different focuses!
  - Ⓢ **The Old** was an *external* law ("written on stone"), given to a nation. It attempted to regulate and restrain the conduct of people, both saved and unsaved.
  - Ⓢ **The New** is an *internal* law ("written on the heart"), given to people who are saved. It gives them the *desire* to do what is right, as well as a willingness to *learn* (from Scripture) what is right.

### Regarding the "Method" – the time, technique, etc.

(We've already looked at this issue in greater detail.)

- **The location is no longer an issue.** Under the Old Covenant, the temple at Jerusalem would have been the central location for worship. But because of the Jew's ongoing refusal to repent, God has providentially *removed* this option (during Israel's judgment in AD 70).
- **The specific day of worship is no longer an issue** (Romans 14:5-6a). We can consider a specific *one day* as special (which would need agreed upon by the group that is meeting together), or we could consider *every day* as special (as seen in Acts 2:42-47). Also, we do not have to follow the various "non-Saturday Sabbaths" that were a part of Jewish life (Colossians 2:16).
  - ✓ Time *not* set apart for focusing on God is *still* to be lived with the goal of honoring God in all that we do (Matthew 6:33; 1 Corinthians 10:31; etc.).
- **Certain methods are no longer an issue.** Though many things remain the same (such as the need for worship, prayer, singing, study of Scripture), specific Old Testament rituals are no longer relevant.

### Something to consider...

- In the beginning, God created people (and everything else). His job was complete on the seventh day.
- Jesus' death and resurrection made it possible for people to become new creations. His job was complete on the first day.
- Some people may consider this a good reason to worship God on the first day of the week (instead of the seventh).\*
- After all, we are now celebrating *as new creations!*

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**. The **old has passed away**. Behold, **the new has come!**

2 Corinthians 5:17 (BSB)

\* (This doesn't make it a *command*, though.)

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### Does the New Testament command us to obey the Fourth Commandment?

- There are many commands, instructions and examples related to worship and other Fourth Commandment concepts – especially to Gentiles, who were still learning how to live as followers of Jesus. But there are *no commands* telling us to "obey the Fourth Commandment." After all, if the desire to do this is *embedded* in one's heart... why would it need to be constantly commanded?
- In addition to *teaching* new believers, certain "commands" might be necessary for those who are discouraged or fearful. In this case, it's more like an *encouragement* to resist the temptations that the devil brings our way.

**Let us not neglect meeting together**, as some have made a habit, but let us **encourage one another**, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:23-25 (BSB); see vs. 23-24, other things that might require encouragement.

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### The issue of a "God-focus" vs. a "people-focus."

- The early Christians would have learned about this from the many "Sabbath" passages in the Old Testament. Later, they had the New Testament, which provides many instructions and examples (often without the word "Sabbath").
- By its very nature, the Fourth Commandment concept involves a focus on *God*; but "love for *neighbor*" would not be ignored, when there was a serious need.

✓ **EXAMPLE:** Providing for Christians in need:

Now about **the collection for the saints**, ... On the first day of every week, each of you should set aside a portion of his income, ...

1 Corinthians 16:1a, 2a (BSB)

If anyone with earthly possessions sees his **brother in need**, but withholds his compassion from him, how can the love of God abide in him?

1 John 3:17 (BSB)

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### What types of things would be included in this "God-focus"?

(Looking at concepts found in Psalm 92, the "Sabbath" song.)

Psalm 92 is dedicated to the Sabbath. It starts out this way:

>> **"A psalm. A song. For the Sabbath day."** <<

- This Psalm was apparently sung on the Sabbath. In it, we see many of the same concepts that are found in the New Testament:
  - ✓ God is worthy of our worship.
  - ✓ An awareness of our dependency on him.
  - ✓ Praise and thankfulness for God's works and moral character.
  - ✓ Music/singing, rejoicing in God – who he is, and what he does.
  - ✓ Recognition that God, *because he is morally upright*, will put an end to the wicked, and will bless the righteous.
- All of these themes are expressions of Fourth Commandment concepts. They are found in both Old and New Testaments, often *without* any connection to the word "Sabbath."

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### How are we going to explore this issue?

- There are *many* expressions of Fourth Commandment concepts found throughout the *Old Testament* (not always connected to the word "Sabbath").
- We are going to show (with random examples) that the *same* concepts are present in the *New Testament* era. There are often *dozens* of New Testament passages we could choose from; but we will focus on those that don't use the word "Sabbath."
- We will start with concepts that are found in Psalm 92; then look at some others.

### When applying these things, don't forget the "Group context"!

- Though it's possible for a person to do many of these things as an individual, the main focus in Scripture is doing them as a group.
- The New Covenant works in the hearts of *individuals*. But that doesn't mean isolating ourselves from others. *Ignoring other Christians is not considered an option!*

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### Worship.

- We express our entire loyalty and submission – and awe – to the God who made us. This is expressed in many ways, using our *minds* and *hearts* (i.e., both mentally and emotionally), and perhaps even our *bodies* (such as, bowing down or hands raised). We acknowledge God's greatness in who he is and what he does.
- This is an *all-encompassing* concept that includes, or is strongly related to, all of the other Fourth Commandment concepts we will be observing. Everything we do – even our willingness to honor God in our daily work activities – could be described as expressions of worship. *Everything we do in life is an expression of how much we value (or don't value) God.*

He had gone to Jerusalem to **worship**... While they were **worshipping** the Lord and fasting... ... a **worshiper** of God. ...I **worship** the God of our fathers... ...we who **worship** by the Spirit of God...

From Acts 8:27; 13:2; 18:7; 24:14; Philippians 3:3 (BSB)

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### An awareness of our dependency on God, who is both *Creator and Redeemer*.

- These were the two reasons given for the Fourth Commandment. We are dependent on God for our very existence. Even the *unsaved* cannot exist without God!
- Because of sin, we have an even greater dependence, if we desire to have the righteousness we were originally created to have.

'For **in Him** we **live** and **move** and **have our being**.'

Acts 17:28a (BSB)

**Through Him all things were made**, and without Him nothing was made that has been made.

John 1:3 (BSB)

We were created in God's "image," for the purpose of genuine fellowship with God, and so that we could live in a way that reflects his glory and goodness throughout creation.

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He is before all things, and **in Him** all things hold together.

Colossians 1:17 (BSB)

"It is written:

'Man shall **not live** on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

Matthew 4:4b (BSB)

And you were **dead** in your trespasses and sins, ...

Ephesians 2:1 (BSB)

... while we were still **powerless**, Christ died for the ungodly.

Romans 5:6b (BSB)

For apart from Me you **can do nothing**.

John 15:5b (BSB)

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### Praise and thanksgiving.

- Praise and thanksgiving are related. But *thanksgiving* (or gratitude) tends to focus on what God *does* – his gifts, etc.; while *praise* has a greater focus on who God *is* – the qualities/attributes/character of the giver. Both are expressions of worship.
- [In some New Testament passages, one translation may use the word "praise," while another uses the word "blessed." This is because the Greek concepts have to do with speaking or observing good in someone. When we praise/bless God, we are *acknowledging his goodness*.]

**Blessed** be [or "**praise** be to"] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

1 Peter 1:3a (BSB); also 2 Corinthians 1:3a; Ephesians 1:3a.

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of **praise**, the fruit of lips that confess His name.

Hebrews 13:15 (BSB)

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...to the **praise** of His glory. ...to the glory and **praise** of God.

From Ephesians 1:14; Philippians 1:11 (BSB)

Is anyone cheerful? He should sing **praises**.

James 5:13b (BSB)

Give **thanks** in every circumstance, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (BSB)

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and **thankful**...

Colossians 4:2 (BSB)

**Thanks** be to God for His indescribable gift!

2 Corinthians 9:15 (BSB)

We always **thank** God for all of you, ...

1 Thessalonians 1:2a (BSB)

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### Music/singing.

- **The purpose for this singing** is *not* mere entertainment. It is a part of the other expressions of worship, and may be found linked to thanksgiving and praise, etc.
- **The words** involved in singing are important. They express *values*. They are to express *truth* (about God, his Word, his works, etc.). They can be used to *teach* something that needs to be learned or remembered.
- **The use of musical instruments** is not mentioned in the New Testament, *within the context of worship*, except in the book of Revelation. This "silence" does not imply a prohibition, anymore than it implies approval. It's simply not an issue. (The greater issue involves *what* we are singing, not *how* we are doing it.) [This might also apply to the matter of *dancing*. The Old Testament shows us that at least *some* types of dancing can honor God.]
- Since the early church relied on the Old Testament to instruct them (as we also ought to), they had plenty of information about how to sing. They even had a "songbook" – the Psalms!

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Speak to one another with **psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs**. **Sing and make music** in your hearts to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:19-20 (BSB)

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and **singing hymns** to God ...

Acts 16:25a (BSB)

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you ... as you **sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs** with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Colossians 3:16 (BSB)

"Therefore I will praise You among the Gentiles; I will **sing hymns** to Your name."

Romans 15:9b (BSB), a quote of Psalms 18:49.

**HEIGHTENED EMOTIONS IS NOT THE MAIN PURPOSE!**

I will **sing** with my spirit, but I will also **sing with my mind**.

1 Corinthians 14:15b (BSB)

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**A recognition of God's morally upright character, and its significance for the righteous and the wicked.**

- This involves the **content (or theme)** of worship/praise/thanks/songs to God. These various expressions of worship are *fact-based*, not based on emotional fantasies or pretensions about who God is.
- "What God is like" – his nature – must influence *our* conduct. There is a coming Day of Judgment; and how we live *now* will have consequences *forever*. [Note: The Old Covenant often mentioned blessings that could occur in this *present* life; the New Covenant has a greater focus on the *eternal* consequences of how we live.]
- Many modern "churches" get offended by the God of the Bible. They select certain characteristics that suite their fancy (which they tend to distort), and they downplay (or totally reject) all other characteristics that are part of God's nature (who he *is* and what he *does*). They may claim God is "loving and forgiving," but refuse to accept that he is also "holy, righteous, and ready to judge the unrepentant." This results in a *false* god – an idol – not the God of the Bible.

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But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do, for it is written: "**Be holy, because I am holy.**"

1 Peter 1:15-16 (BSB)

Do you not know that **the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?**

1 Corinthians 6:9a (BSB); examples of sins in vs. 9b-11.

**God is light**, and in Him there is **no darkness at all**.

1 John 1:5b (BSB); this refers to God's absolute moral perfection.

... Christ Jesus, who will **judge** the living and the dead ...

2 Timothy 4:1b (BSB)

... when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in blazing fire, inflicting **vengeance** on those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 (BSB)

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**More things that are included in a New Covenant "God-focus."**  
(These are not mentioned in Psalm 92, but are found elsewhere, throughout the Old Testament.)

**A focus on God's Word.**

- In the **Old Testament era**, they were to *learn* what Scripture taught, to *meditate* on it (= carefully think about it), and to *live* by it.  
[This meditation was focused mostly on God and his deeds – things now recorded in Scripture. (It has *nothing* to do with the *world's* idea of "meditating," which tells us to *stop* thinking.)]
- Under the **New Covenant**, *this hasn't changed!* The difference is:  
① They had the Law and the prophets. ② We have these, but we also have Jesus (in the gospels) and the apostles. And though the New Testament doesn't use the word "meditate," it uses the equivalent concept: "think about it!"
- **People need God's Word**, in order to live! It needs to be *embedded* in our hearts, so that it will influence our values and conduct.

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**All Scripture is God-breathed** and is **useful** for instruction, for conviction, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (BSB)

And we continually thank God because, when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as **the true word of God**—the word which is now **at work in you who believe**.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (BSB)

[God] chose to give us **birth** through **the word of truth**, ...  
... humbly accept **the word planted in you**, which **can save your souls**.

**Be doers of the word**, and not hearers only. Otherwise, you are deceiving yourselves.

James 1:18a, 21b-22 (BSB)

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**Prayer.**

- This was also a common theme in the Old Testament – not only on the Sabbath, but *at all times*. It's the same today.

**Pray** without ceasing.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (BSB)

**Pray** in the Spirit at all times, with every kind of **prayer and petition**.

Ephesians 6:18a (BSB)

"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are inclined to their **prayer**. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

1 Peter 3:12 (BSB); quoting Psalm 34:15-16a.

The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear-minded and sober, so that you can **pray**.

1 Peter 4:7 (BSB)

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**Having the right attitude.**

- **Both Old and New Testaments** tell us that we need to approach God with the right attitude. Also, our attitude toward *God* will influence our attitude toward *life*.
- **Some of these characteristics** include: adoration, reverence, fear and awe, trust, patiently waiting (when needed), confidence in God, longing for God, etc.

**There will be consequences.**

- **Both Old and New Testaments** describe the consequences of having such a God-focus. At times, the Old Covenant focus may have a greater emphasis on the *present-life* consequences (without denying the eternal); and the New Covenant focus may have a greater emphasis on the *eternal* consequences.
- **Some of these consequences** include: obedience, joy, recognizing Jesus' lordship over us, being blessed, glorifying God by the way we live, guidance, God's presence among us, boldness in witnessing, etc.

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### Practices not found in the Old Testament.

#### The "Lord's Table" and baptism.

- **These are specifically for us**, as followers of Jesus; they are not found in the Old Testament. [These are often done on the day of worship, but are *not* an every-week requirement, and aren't restricted to just the day of worship.]

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.

Matthew 28:19-20a (BSB); see v. 18-20.

The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took **bread**, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; **do this in remembrance of Me**." In the same way, after supper He took **the cup**, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; **do this**, as often as you drink it, **in remembrance of Me**."

1 Corinthians 11:23b-25 (BSB)

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### What should we conclude?

- **Some people shy away from the use of the word "Sabbath."** They might even consider passages that mention the "Sabbath" as being *not relevant* to Christians (since we are under the New Covenant).
- **Yet the Fourth Commandment represents a *category*** of commands, instructions and examples, all centered around our need to focus on God – and these concepts are relevant to us, whether or not attached to the word "Sabbath."
- **Our response to such people** would be:
  - ✓ If we ignore the passages that use the word "Sabbath," we won't learn certain details about why it exists.
  - ✓ But there are so many Scripture passages that contain Fourth Commandment concepts *without the word "Sabbath,"* that we would still end up with a perspective that was similar to those who accept the word "Sabbath."
  - ✓ The issue becomes whether or not we are willing to *obey* those "non-Sabbath" verses. If we *ignore* them, we will have *no excuse* at the Day of Judgment.

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## Our Mission:

Seek God and his righteousness!

Regardless of how you view of the word  
"Sabbath"...

**You need God!**

**Base your life on the Fourth Commandment principles!**

They can be found throughout Scripture,  
in both Old and New Testaments!

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Our focus has been on the day of worship.  
But the Fourth Commandment principles  
apply *all week*.

Regardless of what day of the week it is ...

**We need God!**

An attitude of  
worship,  
praise and  
thankfulness!

We can base our lives on  
these principles  
**every day of the week!**

A desire to  
obey and apply  
Scripture!

Willingness to grow  
in obedience!

Prayer; thinking  
about God's Word!

Wanting to honor  
God in all that  
we do!

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