

Bringing Jesus Back

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Deuteronomy 5:12-15 ¹² ` Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. ¹⁵ And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

I once read a comic strip where a woman brought her car to a mechanic. She said, "There was a bump in the road, and the car stopped." The mechanic opened the hood and it was completely empty. There was absolutely nothing inside.

A car without an engine might have some use, but for the most part, it's pointless. In the same way, a church without Jesus is useless. As we celebrate the Reformation today, we are reminded of the emptiness and futility of a church without Christ. We rejoice that God, through Martin Luther, brought Jesus back into the church and into our hearts.

There's a reason Luther is called a reformer and not a revolutionary. He didn't seek to create something new but to restore something old. He wanted the church to be as it should be with Jesus at its heart and center. Not Mary, not the pope, not our works, nor the relics of saints, but Jesus alone at the center of the church and the lives of those who belong to it.

The Third Commandment and Its True Meaning

This is also what the Third Commandment teaches us: to put Jesus at the heart and center not just of our worship but of our lives.

The Third Commandment is probably the most misunderstood of all the commandments. Some insist that "remember the Sabbath" means we must worship on Saturday. Others claim Sunday is the new Sabbath, so we must worship then. Still others teach that we can worship any day, as long as we pick one and call it our Sabbath.

All of these teachings are wrong. They miss what the New Testament clearly teaches: **Jesus is the Sabbath**. We keep the Sabbath when we keep Jesus in our worship and in our lives.

Matthew 11:28

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

The word “Sabbath” means rest. Jesus tells us plainly that He is the rest God promised. He is the Sabbath.

Colossians 2:16–17

“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.”

The seventh day, Saturday, was only an empty shell, a placeholder, until the coming of the substance: the true Sabbath, which is Jesus.

Hebrews 4:8

“For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.”

The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that those who received the promised land and the Ten Commandments did not receive God’s rest. These things were only symbols of a greater rest to come. Therefore, God spoke of a different day:

Hebrews 4:7

“Today, if you will hear His voice...”

Who has received rest and therefore kept the Sabbath?

Those who hear His voice.

To remember the Sabbath means to remember Jesus and keep Him in your life and worship. Whoever does this has kept the Sabbath, even if they never worship on a Saturday.

This is what the Roman Catholic Church forgot, and why the Reformation was necessary. Even though they worshiped on Sunday rather than Saturday, they returned to the Old Testament. Their Sabbath was not Jesus but the day and the outward acts of going to church, prayer, and penance. They did not have Jesus, and therefore they had no rest. Paul warns about such people:

2 Timothy 3:5

“...having a form of godliness but denying its power.”

The car looks good on the outside, but there’s no engine under the hood—because there’s no Jesus.

Rest Is God’s Gift, Not Our Work

God makes it clear that the Sabbath is not about our work but about what Jesus has done for us:

Deuteronomy 5:13–14

“Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work...”

The things of this life require work, but the things of God are freely given without work.

Consider Orville and Wilbur Wright. After their first flights in 1903 at Kitty Hawk, they spent years in court fighting legal battles. In the U.S. alone, they were involved in twelve major lawsuits. Eventually, in 1916, Orville retired, selling his rights just to escape the legal struggles. It was hard work to invent the airplane but even harder to maintain their rights.

Everything in this life requires work, not only to get it but to keep it. Putting food on the table requires work. Getting good grades requires work. Staying healthy requires work and the older we get, the harder it becomes. Even our marriages and friendships require effort.

God acknowledges this when he says, “six days you must work.” Those six days represent our life on earth. For earthly things, we must work. But the seventh day is rest, a reminder that what God gives requires no work. It is His gift.

Matthew 20:28

“...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Jesus is the true Sabbath because He removes the demands of the law. Salvation is no longer something we must work for. It is a free gift given through Jesus' death and resurrection.

In this way, the Catholic Church fails to keep the Sabbath. They replace Jesus' work with ours. Worship becomes about what we do instead of the rest we have in Christ. Works like repeating the Hail Mary, confessing our sins, doing penance, touching relics, become the purpose of worship. They teach if you do all these things and then spend thousands of years in purgatory, you might eventually earn heaven.

But worship isn't about our work for God. It's about Jesus' work for us so that we might have rest:

Romans 3:24

“...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

In Jesus, we receive Sabbath rest. There is nothing more for us to do, no floor to mop, no supper to cook, no toys to put away. Jesus has done it all. Though we still work hard for earthly things, salvation is freely given by His grace. This is the rest we have in Jesus.

Remembering Our Freedom

Deuteronomy 5:15

“And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.”

They did not work for their freedom. God set them free when they were slaves in Egypt. He gave them rest from back-breaking labor.

Jesus has set us free from slavery to sin. We no longer have to work to earn forgiveness and salvation. We have received rest in Jesus. Jesus is our Sabbath. He is our rest. We remember the Sabbath day when we keep Jesus in our hearts and in our lives.