

Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them. Yet the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, ‘which, if a man does, he shall live by them’; and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out My fury on them in the wilderness, to consume them” (Ezekiel 20:12-13). An important point to note from this passage is that God included Sabbath breaking as part of this generation’s great rebellion.

Sabbath rest

The word *rest* (*katapauo*) is also used in this section of Scripture to describe keeping the Sabbath. As Hebrews 4:4 says, “For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: ‘And God rested on the seventh day from all His works.’”

Spiritual rest

The writer of the book of Hebrews also uses the word *rest* (*katapausis*) in the sense of a future relationship with God saying, “We who have believed do enter that rest” (Hebrews 4:3). He further states of this rest that “it remains that some must enter it” (verse 6).

Recognizing this rest as a future relationship with God, some have mistakenly assumed that the *rest* (*sabbatismos*) of Hebrews 4:9 has no connection to the Sabbath. As we’ve seen, such an interpretation overlooks the author’s explicit reference to this command.

While making the point that there is a future rest Christians can have with God, the author also connects the Sabbath to this rest, noting: “For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: ‘So I swore in My wrath, “They shall not enter My rest,”’ although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in

this way: ‘And God rested on the seventh day from all His works’” (Hebrews 4:3-4).

Adam Clarke, in his commentary on Exodus 20:8, says regarding the Sabbath: “It typifies the rest which remains for the people of God, and in this light it evidently appears to have been understood by the apostle, Hebrews 4. ... Some have presumptuously inferred that there is no Sabbath under the Christian dispensation. The truth is, the Sabbath is considered as a type. All types are of full force till the thing signified by them takes

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place. But the thing signified by the Sabbath is that rest in glory which remains for the people of God, therefore the moral obligation of the Sabbath must continue till time be swallowed up in eternity” (*Adam Clarke’s Commentary*).

The meaning of sabbatismos

In his notes on Hebrews 4:9, Albert Barnes says *sabbatismos* means “Sabbatism” or “keeping of a Sabbath,” as it is rendered in the margin of the King James Version of the Bible. The meaning of Hebrews 4:9 then is, “So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God” (English Standard Version). Sabbath-keeping continues for Christians today who look forward to being in God’s Kingdom. This weekly act of keeping the Sabbath reminds us of this glorious hope.

Verse 10 also infers Sabbath-keeping: “For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased

from his works as God did from His.” The point is that if we want to have a relationship with God, we need to imitate Him. Christ kept the Sabbath (Luke 4:16), and we are told that we ought to “walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6).

Because *sabbatismos* is not found in any other passage in the New Testament, some have mistakenly suggested that the author of the book of Hebrews made up this word and that it has a spiritualized meaning other than keeping the Sabbath. However, secular writings of the first century confirm its usage and its meaning as noted above.

Professor Andrew T. Lincoln states, “The use of *sabbatismos* elsewhere in extant Greek literature gives an indication of its more exact shade of meaning. It is used in Plutarch, *De Superstitione* 3 (*Moralia* 166A) of Sabbath observance. There are also four occurrences in post canonical literature that are independent of Hebrews 4:9. They are Justin, *Dialogue With Trypho* 23:3; Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses* 30:2:2; *Martyrium Petri et Pauli* 1; *Apostolic Constitutions* 2:36:2. In each of these places the term denotes the observance or celebration of the Sabbath. This usage corresponds to the Septuagint usage of the cognate verb *sabbatizo* (cf. Exodus 16:30; Leviticus. 23:32; 26:34; 2 Chronicles. 36:21), which also has reference to Sabbath observance. Thus the writer to the Hebrews is saying that since the time of Joshua an observance of the Sabbath rest has been outstanding” (“Sabbath, Rest and Eschatology in the New Testament,” *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day*, ed. D.A. Carson, 1982, p. 213).

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Are the Ten Commandments Upheld in the New Testament?

Does God expect Christians today to keep His law? Does He expect Christians to obey even the commandment to worship on the seventh-day Sabbath?

Most people acknowledge that Christians should obey most of the Ten Commandments, including those that prohibit worshipping other gods, murder, stealing, adultery and lying—just to name a few of the instructions spoken by God to the ancient Israelites from Mt. Sinai. It is only the Fourth Commandment to keep the seventh-day Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11) that some claim is not repeated in the New Testament and therefore is no longer required of Christians.

Are *all* of the Ten Commandments upheld in the New Testament? To answer this question, consider what Christ taught concerning the commandments and the following chart showing the repetition of the commandments in the New Testament.

Christ consistently upheld the Ten Commandments as given in the Old Testament. In His Sermon on the Mount, He very pointedly stated: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or

the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17).

Although some mistakenly think that “fulfill” in this passage means to complete and therefore *abolish*, what Jesus said afterwards shows this could not be the case. Continuing, Jesus said: “For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (verses 18-19).

Realizing that Jesus consistently upheld all of the commandments, including observing the seventh-day Sabbath (Matthew 19:17-19; Luke 4:16), some wrongly suggest that it was the apostle Paul, with Jesus’ personal approval, who introduced grace and the abolishment of the law.

The truth is that Jesus did not change His mind about the importance of keeping all of the Ten Commandments. As Hebrews 13:8 states: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

Toward the end of the first century—some 60 years after His death and resurrection—Jesus revealed end-time instructions through John in the book of Revelation. In this book He identifies faithful members of His Church as those “who keep the commandments of God” (Revelation 12:17). Some of the final words of the Bible and this revelation of Jesus Christ likewise state: “Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14).

The Ten Commandments given by God in the Old Testament continue to be God’s expectations of Christians today.

The following chart identifies references to the Ten Commandments in both the Old and New Testaments.

	Old Testament	New Testament
First Commandment	Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7	Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8; Revelation 14:7
Second Commandment	Exodus 20:4-6; Deuteronomy 5:8-10	Acts 15:20; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-20; Ephesians 5:5
Third Commandment	Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11	Matthew 5:33-37; 1 Timothy 6:1; James 2:7
Fourth Commandment	Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15	Luke 4:16; 23:55-56; Acts 17:1-2; 18:4; Hebrews 4:9; 1 John 2:6
Fifth Commandment	Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16	Matthew 15:4-9; 19:19; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; Romans 1:29-30; Ephesians 6:1-3
Sixth Commandment	Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17	Matthew 5:21-22; 19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; Romans 1:29-30; 13:9
Seventh Commandment	Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18	Matthew 5:27-28; 19:18; Mark 10:11-12, 19; Luke 16:18; 18:20; Romans 7:2-3; 13:9
Eighth Commandment	Exodus 20:15; Deuteronomy 5:19	Matthew 19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; Romans 13:9; Ephesians 4:28; 1 Peter 4:15; Revelation 9:21
Ninth Commandment	Exodus 20:16; Deuteronomy 5:20	Matthew 19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; Acts 5:3-4; Romans 13:9; Ephesians 4:25
Tenth Commandment	Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21	Luke 12:15; Romans 1:29; 7:7; 13:9; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3, 5

Does Hebrews 4:9 Refer to Sabbath Observance?

Can a rare Greek word help us understand what God wants for us now and in the future?

Some have been puzzled as to the meaning of Hebrews 4:9, which says, “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.” The confusion generally arises over the Greek word *sabbatismos*, which is translated “rest” in the New King James Version of the Bible. Other translations, such as the American Standard Version and English Standard Version, translate this word as “Sabbath rest.” The Bible in Basic English translates it “Sabbath-keeping.”

Physical rest
The writer of Hebrews uses the concept of rest in several different ways in chapters 3 and 4. First, rest (*katapausis*) is spoken of in the sense of the physical rest from wandering that the ancient Israelites would receive when they entered the Promised Land (Hebrews 3:7-11). The reason the first generation of Israelites who left Egypt did not experience this rest is because of their great rebellion against God. This rebellion—termed “the rebellion” (verses 8 and 15) and “the day of trial in the wilderness” (verse 8)—was their refusal to go into the land after 10 of the 12 men who spied out the Promised Land gave negative reports (Numbers 14:1-38).

Reflecting back on this dark time in Israel’s history, God said, “Moreover I also gave them My