



[Matthew 5:18-19](#)

(18) 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. (19) 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.

[James 2:8-12](#)

(8) If you really fulfill *the* royal law according to the Scripture, "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*," you do well; (9) but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. (10) For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all. (11) For He who said, "*Do not commit adultery*," also said, "*Do not murder*." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. (12) So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

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In [Matthew 5:19](#), [Jesus Christ](#) mentions "the least commandment." It is parallel to verse 18 where it says, "not one jot or one tittle," the least things that are part of the [law of God](#). Using this principle, consider that there can be no doubt that, of all the [Ten Commandments](#) held in respect and honor by the people of [the world](#), the [Sabbath](#) commandment is the least of the ten. It is the least in terms of the world's regard and respect when compared with the other nine.

The Catholic Church thinks so little of it that it believes it has the authority to disregard it altogether. Even though officially admitting that the day is commanded in the Bible, the Catholic Church thinks it has the authority to change it. The Protestant churches' justification is to argue around it on twisted technical, legal grounds, but they ultimately reduce it to being merely ceremonial in nature.

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Now we must add [James 2:8](#) to our thinking. The [fourth commandment](#) is just as much a part of the royal law, the Ten Commandments. If not one jot or tittle, not even the least commandment, is done away until everything is fulfilled, the conclusion has to be that the Sabbath is still in effect—regardless of what men say—and to break it is immoral. It is just as immoral as adultery or fornication, lust, or lying.

The world does not think of immorality in terms of the Sabbath commandment, nor in terms of breaking the first, the second, the third, or the fourth commandment. How many people *in the church* think of breaking the fourth commandment in terms of immorality? Nevertheless, it is immoral to break the fourth commandment.

James also refers to the royal law as being the law of liberty. Clearly, if people keep the [seventh commandment](#), it keeps the world free from adultery and fornication. If people keep the [eighth commandment](#), it keeps the world free of stealing. If people keep the [ninth commandment](#), it keeps the world free of deceit. Keeping God's commandments keeps people free. If one keeps the Sabbath, like the other commandments, it leads to freedom. It produces freedom. God's is a law that liberates.

In our carnality, human nature tends to make us think that keeping the Sabbath constrains us, holds us in, and keeps us from doing things. In some cases, we feel almost imprisoned by it. That is human nature's thinking, not God's thinking. It helps us to understand what our thinking has to become. The Sabbath is a day, the breaking of which is immoral, the keeping of which will produce liberty.

There was a time that a group of people, the Pharisees, contrary to most of the rest of the world, believed that the keeping of the Sabbath was the most important of the commandments. They produced hundreds of laws in a vain attempt to try to keep people from breaking it, but they missed the point altogether. Because they understood Ezekiel 20, and other sections of the Bible as well, they knew that a reason for the Jews' captivity was Sabbath-breaking. So the reforms that were begun under Ezra were taken to radical extremes by people after he died. Their conclusions, though begun with good intentions, were worldly, and their keeping of the Sabbath, in that way, was just as wrong as the liberal tendencies that most of the world has toward the Sabbath.

Neither the Pharisees nor most of the people who have lived on this planet have ever grasped God's intent for the Sabbath. Because so much of this world's thinking carries right on into the church, some of us are thinking in much the same way the world does.

The Ten Commandments are a unity. To break one breaks them all, regardless of what level men think each commandment is on. To break the fourth commandment makes us

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Matthew 5:18-19 (<http://www.theberean.org>) just as guilty and worthy of death as breaking any of the others. This is where we have to begin. This is not a commandment that can be just shoved aside; it cannot be taken for granted any more than any of the other nine. God's intent for it is very important to our lives.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:
[Sabbathkeeping \(Part 1\)](#)



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