

EXODUS 20:8-11—REMEMBER THE SABBATH

We continue with our study of the 10 Commandments. Today, we resume with the fourth commandment. In the first three, we see that we haven't kept any of them and we are found guilty. We are aware of our sin and the fourth commandment shows our guilt once again. We know we fall short of the glory of God, but thanks to our Lord and Savior, we are forgiven and justified because of what Christ did for us. We are set free and now want to gratefully respond to God. Obeying the decalogue is not a way to gain acceptance before God, but we do desire to thank Him by being obedient to His will.

This fourth commandment has caused much controversy in the church all throughout its history. Even in the reformed movement among some of the best theologians there is much disagreement. What are we to make of this fourth commandment? How can we arrive at a solution for our conscience's sake? Should we observe this day as special or just as any other day? Is it for Christians and how is it to be applied? Is this command even in the New Testament? We need to look to the Word of God for the answers.

1. PRINCIPLE

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

This command in itself, is not hard to understand at all. It is a special, particular day to be holy. God established a fixed day of rest and worship. It is a special day of rest from our labors to enjoy the fruits from all our labors during the week. It is a day of thanksgiving for previous blessings. It is a day of worship, reverence, and thanksgiving.

A. REMEMBER

Keep it special in your thinking. Keep it in mind. This is to be preserved. Man is tempted to do other things, but this is to be distinct. As we know, mankind forgets. We always need to be reminded. That is a pattern all throughout the Bible. God knows we need to keep it in mind. If we don't do that, we will forget. In the book of Exodus, God uses this word often. They are to remember what He has done and He gives them special days to help them recall. Ex 12:14, 13:3, 8-9, 17:14

B. SABBATH

Shabbat—to cease, to rest

The principle is first seen in Genesis 2:1-3, dealing with creation. God rested from His works of creation on the seventh day Exodus 16:22-26 This is the first place we see the word Sabbath in the Bible. This is the time God introduced manna to the Israelites. They were to collect the manna each day of the week. On the sixth day, they were to collect enough for two days. The seventh day, or the Sabbath, they were not to collect the manna. They were to rest from the labor of gathering the manna, for they did that the day before. The Sabbath was starting to be established for them at that time.

C. HOLY

One day set apart—God is concerned with the sanctity of one day.

Sanctity—It is to be set apart from all other days.

Distinction—“The recognition of the *distinction* of the day is indispensable to its observance.” John Murray

We must be convicted of its distinction. There is significance of a day set apart to the Lord.

2. CONTROVERSY

With the clarity that is put forth in the command, why is there controversy?

There are extreme views and many in between.

A. STRICT SABBATARIANISM

This view is represented by Seventh Day Adventists who believe the church is commanded to worship on the Saturday Sabbath. That is the seventh day so they say we must do what the command says or we will have taken the mark of the beast if we worship on Sunday. There are other groups who believe in Sabbath worship, one being 7th Day Baptists. Some legalistic cults also use this law for the credence of Sabbath worship.

This sabbatarianism is legalism and flies in the face of NT teaching.

B. ANTINOMIANISM

At the other extreme are groups who don't see any relevance whatsoever in this 4th command. They take an antinomian view, in that they say this law has no binding on us. They are against this law. Those who believe this way would be Hyper-Calvinists and ultra dispensationalists.

C. CHRISTIAN SABBATARIANISM

This has become quite popular in reformed theology. They claim that the Christian Sabbath changed from the seventh day of the week to the first day of the week. They treat Sunday as the Sabbath and impose the same laws from the Sabbath. The Puritans practiced this religiously and in their writings, one will often witness what they call the Sunday Sabbath.

But there is no NT texts to prove the transfer to a Christian Sabbath.

Romans 14 and Colossians 2 would argue against that, in fact.

Lord's day is not about rest, but is about worship. That is the central point.

It's about what we do, rather than what we are not to do.

D. LORD'S DAY OBSERVANCE

Another view and the last view we will look at, is what we know as the Lord's Day. This actually was the view of the early reformers of the 16th century. Calvin and Luther and others of that era took this position.

Here is what Calvin believed about this 4th commandment. “There is an eternal, moral principle contained in the commandment but also a ceremonial law which was abolished under the new covenant and the specific restrictions pertain to ceremonial laws which were abrogated by Christ....With the 7th day of rest, the Lord wished to give to the people of Israel an image of spiritual rest as the reason, there is no doubt that it ceased in Christ and He is the truth in which all images vanish, hence, superstitious observance of days must remain far from Christians. To us truth must remain without shadows.” This is saying that the weekly Sabbath is a picture of perfect Sabbath rest. The Old Testament foreshadowed the perfect rest. All of the ceremonial law was that way. All the holidays were symbolic of the reality.

Col 2:13-17 This speaks of the finished work of Christ and as a result of that, we are not bound by new moons, festivals and Sabbaths. They were just shadows of the substance to come, namely Christ. Because of Him, we now have entered the Sabbath rest.

3. PATTERN

A. THE SABBATH LOOKED BACK TO CREATION

Gen 2:1-3- Creation is the foundation of the Sabbath

The pattern is from creation. There were seven literal days. There is no reason to believe that each day is a thousand or million years. Was Sunday 10,000 years? No, each day was a 24 hour period as God worked six days and rested on the 7th day. He made it distinct from all other days. A blessing was put on it. After this, we see no mention of this idea until the word Sabbath was used in Exodus 16:22-23. There was no record of Sabbaths till Moses. Man was not under any command that we know of, to observe the Sabbath until the giving of the Law to the Israelites. Egypt had a ten day week. The Babylonians did not have a week. This set Israel and Israel's God apart from all other nations. Only Israel had a seven day week.

At the time of Moses, the giving of the Sabbath was for Israel and ceremonial. The moral aspect was a creation ordinance for all men all time, resting from our works.

Nevertheless, creation was the foundation of the Sabbath. The Sabbath looked back at creation.

B. THE SABBATH LOOKED TO REDEMPTION

Redemption is also the foundation of the Sabbath. Redemption from Egypt makes one look back and see what God did in redeeming them from their captivity. It then makes you look to the actual redemption by Christ.

At this time of the giving of the law, they were to reflect on the work of God and say thanks. They thought on the power of God.

Deut 5:15---The past is seen here in their deliverance. They are reminded of what happened. Redemption from Egypt previews of what Christ would do on the cross.

Psalm 95:11-Future event because they hadn't entered the rest, yet. It was to come in the future. In the Psalm which was 500 years later, and 1,000 years before that ultimate redemption would happen, the redemption would take place in the future. The Old Testament people looked forward to this redemption. A lamb was sacrificed, the Lamb was slain for us who redeemed us from bondage. Christ's blood redeemed us.

C. THE SABBATH FULFILLED BY LORD OF THE SABBATH

Matthew 12:7-9

Jesus, Himself is the Lord of the Sabbath. He is the fulfillment of it. It is not a matter of legalism where it is a drudgery and man made for the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for man.

D. THE SABBATH IS THE REST OF GOD

The Sabbath is a reminder that God rested because His work was finished. It is a rest that celebrates a finished work. It is a work graciously given to us by Christ in His finished work. The Sabbath was given as a picture of God's rest. We don't need Sabbaths.

Hebrews 4:3-10-Present Today, because of Christ's finished work of redemption We have entered the rest. We have entered the rest of God. That was what the Sabbath was to picture. The rest is perfectly accomplished by the atonement of

the Lord Jesus Christ.

We cease from our labors to save ourselves.

E. THE LORD'S DAY

The early church at first, worshipped at the Temple, but later worshipped at homes on the first day of the week. That was to celebrate the resurrection. We don't know when the worship transferred to Sunday, but that is what happened. The resurrection gave sanction to observance on the first day of the week. It is inferred in these NT passages.

Acts 20:7, 1 Cor 16:2, Rev 1:10

F. THE SABBATH, UNIQUE TO THE NATION OF ISRAEL

We have established that the ceremonial law was fulfilled by Christ.

1. Sign of the covenant

The 4th command was a sign of the covenant

The sign of the covenant with Noah was the rainbow. The sign of the covenant with Abraham was circumcision. God's sign with Moses was the Sabbath.

Exodus 31:16-17

Signs were always linked to covenants. If the sign was broken, then the covenant was broken. There was forgiveness if the commands were broken, but not for breaking the sign.

This covenant was made with Israel. It was ceremonial. Even strict Sabbatarians don't follow those ceremonial laws of the Sabbath, such as forbidding picking up stones, or abiding by the sacrifices and offerings.

2. Ceremonial for Israelites, not for the church

The NT never tells us to have ceremonial observances.

Acts 15:28-29, Romans 14:5-6, Gal 4:10-11, Col 2:16-17

There is no mention of observing the Sabbath here. Actually, it is quite the opposite. We are not to go back to those Sabbaths.

4. PRACTICAL APPLICATION—MORAL PRINCIPLES

Relevancy to the church---Alistair Begg gives some illumination

He says that many are disregarding this day. We are losing it

We need to have a deep conviction for keeping this day soecial in our minds.

We need to have a deep impression of the importance.

We need to see it as a true day of rest.

We need to see it as a day of improvement

John Calvin did see moral principles in the Sabbath that are very significant to the church, so we don't ignore this commandment. These are some principles that he stressed.

A. SPIRITUAL REST

We must be committed to it's distinction. It's about resting in the Lord and being set apart to Him. God is in charge of my time. It is not my time.

It is not a rest of idleness but the privilege to worship, pray, fellowship, edification, and contemplation. Get a glimpse of what heaven may be.

B. A DAY OF ASSEMBLING

Hebrews tells us not to forsake our assembling.

"All men who revere God will sanctify this day." Dabney

We are to enjoy this day together talking of things of God, not the everyday conversations we have with talking of the things of the world.

C. A REST FROM TOIL

Avoid work, enjoy the rest. Don't let the everyday work interfere with your worship of God. It is a rest from our works, words, unnecessary thoughts.

D. WORSHIP AND REFRESHMENT

Isa 58:13-14 There is great blessing in celebrating the Lord's Day.

We can delight in God in the rest. We can meditate, worship, fellowship. It is a day to rejoice together. We sing, listen, read aloud those things of the Lord. We break bread together and are refreshed.

We rest in our work that we did through the week and reflect upon the employment God gave us. We are dependent upon Him. The Sabbath shows our dependence on Him and we don't depend on a first day of the week work for our livelihoods. He meets our needs.

If we can only survive the week, if we can only arrive at the Lord's day, we shall be with God's people together we can survive the drudgery of labor, persecution, trial, oppression, sickness, and death. Al Mohler Don't let anything take away from our worship.