

Subject: *The Fourth Commandment*

Scripture: *Exodus 20:1-11*

We can describe the Ten Commandments as God's rules for how to live before Him and with each other. They tell us how to be faithful to the Lord. God gave these commandments after He delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage. Then Moses reviewed the commandments after they had wandered in the wilderness 40 years. The New Testament assumes that these commands remain in force to direct the spiritual life of Jewish and Gentile Christians in this age. Before we look at the 4th commandment, let's review:

1. God commands us not to have any other God. He is the one and only God.
2. God commands us not to misrepresent Him with any visible image.
3. God commands us not to use His name in an irreverent or unworthy manner.

In the fourth commandment God commands us to keep the Sabbath Day holy. This command begins with the word "Remember." God knows how easily we forget. We need to be reminded because it is so important. We will examine this commandment by asking four questions: 1) What is the Sabbath Day? 2) Who should keep the Sabbath Day holy? 3) Why should we keep the Sabbath Day holy? 4) How should we keep the Sabbath Day holy?

1. WHAT is the Sabbath Day?

The Sabbath is a day that God set apart from all other days to be a day of rest and worship. The word "Sabbath" means "rest." When God gave this commandment, He said the Sabbath was the 7th day, but what makes the Sabbath important is not its order in the week, but its purpose.

The Sabbath has to do with the pattern of life or the rhythm of life. God set up the rhythm of life into hours, days, weeks, months, and years. The pattern of God is set up with each week containing seven days, and of those seven days, He set up a pattern of six days for work and one day for rest and worship. It is "the Sabbath of the LORD thy God" (vs. 10). God made it and ordained it for a purpose. It is a day of physical and spiritual refreshing and renewal. The Sabbath is a day of rest and worship set apart for God's glory and our good.

Mark 2:27 And he (Jesus) said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.

Jesus said the Sabbath was made to be a blessing and not a burden. The Jews made the Sabbath day into something burdensome with all their restrictions ("a Sabbath day's journey").

2. WHO should keep the Sabbath Day?

Some think this command was given only to the Jews, God's chosen people. But that's not true. Did God give all the other Ten Commandments only to the Jews? Are Jews the only ones who are to worship the one true God? Are Jews the only ones who are not to misrepresent God with an image? Are Jews the only ones who are to respect God's name? Are Jews the only ones who are to honor their father and mother? And on we could go. This commandment, like all the other commandments, is for all people.

Who was the Lord directing this commandment to? Verse 10, is directed to adults and specifically to parents, to keep this commandment and teach their children, their servants, and all foreigners to obey this commandment. Parents have the responsibility to keep this commandment and lead their families to obey it.

3. WHY should we keep the Sabbath Day?

A. God set it apart as a holy day – He did that at the end of creation week.

Genesis 2:1-3 ¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ² And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. ³ And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

God didn't rest because He was tired, but because He was finished. This was the rest of completion and satisfaction. God commands us to keep it holy. That is reason enough.

B. God established the Sabbath before giving the Law

Some people tie the commandment about the Sabbath Day to the Mosaic Law, but it predates the Law given to Moses.

See *Exodus 16:22-30*. No manna fell on the Sabbath. God gave a double portion of manna on the 6th day so they could honor the Sabbath without collecting manna that day.

C. God emphasized the Sabbath after giving the Law

See *Exodus 31:12-18*

D. The Sabbath Day was a reminder of God's redemption

See *Deuteronomy 5:12-15*. The commandments were given after God had redeemed His people and they were to keep them with that in mind. That would be their motivation to obey the commandments. The Ten Commandments called for grateful obedience from a saved people. Obedience to the Ten Commandments doesn't earn God's grace. It never did. Obeying the Ten Commandments is a response of gratitude for God's grace, not a means to earn God's grace because God's grace can never be earned.

E. God rebuked His people for profaning the Sabbath

Like all of God's Old Testament prophets, Jeremiah was faithful in his calling to preach God's message, and the people were also faithful to reject and oppose it.

See *Jeremiah 17:19-27*. Jeremiah rebuked God's people *before* the captivity.

When the Jews returned *after* their captivity, Nehemiah told them it was important to keep the Sabbath Day holy. See *Nehemiah 13:15-22*. Nehemiah forced the people to comply. He threatened them if they disobeyed. Remember, he was their governor, not their pastor.

So we have a clear pattern and rhythm of life ordained and set down by God from creation week, and then we have His clear commandment to “remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. In our next message we are going to see why the Sabbath Day is important for us as Christians and we will consider the final question: HOW should we keep the Sabbath Day holy? We will come back to this great topic next time.