

Sermon Title: Remember The Sabbath Day

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Exodus 20:8-11 (10 Commandments # 6 of 13)

Date: 3-27-11

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I invite you to please open your Bible; join me in Exodus Chapter 20, today beginning at Verse 8, where we will study Number 4 of the Ten Commandments: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." (NASB-1995, and throughout, unless otherwise noted)

Should you worship on Saturday, or should you worship on Sunday? Some people say that if you worship on Sunday, that's "the mark of the beast" (Rev. 16:2; 19:20). And would it be wrong to worship on Tuesdays? Is it a sin to mow your lawn on Sunday afternoon? Is it a sin to work on Saturdays or Sundays? Is it a sin to shop on Sunday afternoon? Those are some of the questions that revolve around various misunderstandings and misapplications of the text that is before us this morning. And some of those things have, ridiculously, diverted people from the real truth of what this is about.

There is something unique about this commandment, compared to the other nine of the Ten Commandments: This is the only one *not* reiterated in the New Testament as binding for you today. Now, why is that? Well, we're going to see, as we work through this. This is going to be a bit more of a page-turner than the other commandments *because* it is different than the rest, for very important reasons, so stay sharp and follow me.

And by the way, have you memorized the Ten Commandments yet? If you have not, go home after church and work on it. I'm *sure* it is not a sin to memorize the Ten Commandments on Sunday.

Very simple instruction in Verses 8 through 11. Remember The Sabbath Day—Verses 8, 9, and 10; and then, Here's Why in Verse 11.

Join me in Chapter 20 at Verse 8; here's the command: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." Everything else that follows that in this commandment is an elaboration.

The word "remember" implies two things: The concept has been introduced earlier, so you should remember this. And secondly, it is something that is required over and over, so don't forget it; *keep* remembering this, *keep* doing it—every week, to be precise.

I think you've heard of the word "holy"; "keep it holy" means that this day was to be "set apart," it was to be distinct. To be "holy" is to be "set apart" from everything else. It was something to be done to honor God. Whenever you are told to "be holy" or to "keep something holy" in the Bible, it implies "holy unto God" (e.g., Ex. 28:36; Lev. 23:20; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; Jos. 6:19; 2 Chr. 35:3; Jer. 2:3; Zech. 14:20-21; Lk. 2:23; 1 Pet. 2:9).

Keeping the Sabbath includes two primary things: Keeping it "holy"—that is, making it different from the other days; and not working, which means: resting. The explanation of this commandment is about as simple as anything else that you'll find in the Bible. If you have a hard time understanding this, maybe we need to have an English class.

Verse 9—"Six days you shall labor and do all your work." In Old Testament times in Israel, whatever your occupation was, God ordered you to limit your pursuit of it to no more than six days a week.

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And then He goes on to explain, in Verse 10—"but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you."

The word "Sabbath" is derived from a Hebrew word whose essential core meaning is "to rest," or "to cease from your labor, cease from work." And by specifying "you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you," God made it very clear that what the main deal was in the Sabbath is that He wanted everyone in Israel to take Saturdays off. Don't pursue your occupation on the seventh day of the week.

And this was something He wanted Israel to be tenacious about. He regarded it as something that was part of His design to make Israel distinct from the nations around them. Remember, in the run-up to the Ten Commandments, He told Israel: You are to be "a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6)—a "set-apart" nation, a distinct nation; you're to be different (e.g., Lev. 18:24; Deut. 18:14; 26:19).

Listen to the final words that God spoke to Moses before He allowed him to go down from Mount Sinai, when He was giving him the tablets of the Law; it's in Exodus 31, Verses 12 through 18—"The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, "You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you." [God says to Israel: "This makes you distinct"—that's a *big deal*.] "Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death"—*that's serious!*—"for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the Lord; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant." It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed.' When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God."

Does that sound like God thought it was a pretty serious thing, for Israel to keep the Sabbath? The Sabbath was *uniquely* and *specifically* for Israel. It was designed to help keep them distinct from all the nations around her, which did not know or honor God. And as we will see, it has significance in many other ways.

Furthermore—and not in the Fourth Commandment, but elsewhere in the Law that God gave through Moses—they were to let the land rest every seventh year (Ex. 23:10-11). Israel came to ignore that; and as a matter of fact, when Israel was taken off into the Captivity for her overall disobedience to the Law of God (2 Chr. 36:16), the duration of their captivity in Babylon was related to the number of times that they ignored the Sabbath Year (Lev. 26:33-35, 43; 2 Chr. 36:20-21; Jer. 25:11). God wanted this to be something Israel did in obedience and by faith (see Lev. 25:20-22).

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So, Remember The Sabbath Day: Do your work six days a week; don't do your work on Saturday. Here's Why: Verse 11—"For"—that means this is an explanation—"in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy."

Now, according to this inspired text, what is the main purpose of having the Israelites take Saturday off every week? It was to commemorate God's finished work of creation, to celebrate that He is the Creator (Neh. 9:6; Ps. 121:2; Is. 45:12; Acts 4:24; Rev. 14:7).

And by the way, this is a classic verse, a very significant verse, for another reason: In the debate between those who *believe* what God says about Creation, and those who *don't* believe what God says about Creation, this verse is critical.

Some people claim to be Christians—and I'm sure some of them *are*, and just misguided—but some "Christians" sell out the integrity of the Bible by trying to accommodate it to what *they* believe is "scientific fact" that the Earth is actually millions or billions of years old. Therefore, one common idea is that, when the Bible says that God created "in six days," it wasn't necessary six literal days; some say it might have been six *periods of time*. And so they fit into those "periods of time" the millions or billions of years that they want to allow for the age of the Earth.

Now, that is *one hundred percent*—without *any* exception—flatly *contrary* to the Hebrew word for "day," and how it is used! Ignore Genesis Chapter 1. Do you want to figure out what "day" means there? Let's look at every single other use of the word "day," *yom*, in the *entire* Old Testament—and it's used *hundreds* of times. Sometimes, it's used generally, like: "in that day" (Is. 2:11; 4:2; 10:20, 27; etc.) or, in "the day of the Lord" (Joel 1:15; Am. 5:18, 20; Zeph. 1:7; etc.)—which refers to a long time, off in the future. But, whenever it is used with a cardinal number or an ordinal number—"one, two, three, four, five days" or "first, second, third, fourth, fifth"—*every single time* that is used that way, it refers to a *literal* 24-hour day! God is not *ambiguous*; God does not put contradictory uses of words into His own Word (cf. 1 Cor. 14:33a). So, the people who say that are saying: "Genesis 1 doesn't mean what Genesis 1 says!"

But, beyond that, there is *this* verse [Ex. 20:11]. If that's the meaning of the days of Creation in Genesis 1, then *this* verse is *absurd*! What it would really mean is: "Remember the Sabbath *millions of years* to keep them holy. *Six millions of years* you shall labor and do all your work; but the *seventh millions of years* is a Sabbath to the Lord your God." How ridiculous would that be?

Exodus Chapter 20, Verse 11, is an undeniable refutation of *all* viewpoints that try to marry the Bible to a belief that the Universe is millions of years old. *If the Bible is true*, the world was created "in six days"! (see Jn. 8:47)

Now, you are free to deny that if you like; but if you deny that the world was created in six days, you *deny* that *the Bible means what it says*! This is a *big, big deal*! (see Jer. 44:28b; cf. Mk. 10:6)

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I just got an article passed on to me by somebody from Heritage Bible Church this week. There is going to be a convention of Christian Homeschoolers, and they invited Ken Ham—the founder of "Answers in Genesis"—who has been fighting the battle for the veracity of the Scriptures for a long time; they produce wonderful, wonderful stuff. And apparently, this group *also* invited another man, who was *fired* from a reputable Evangelical seminary for his *denial* of literal creation and his *denial* of the inspiration of Scripture. And Ham says, "You know, I've got to point out that this guy teaches contrary to the Bible!" And so they called him "arrogant," they called him "divisive," they called him "ungrateful," and they expunged him. The guy who stands for the Bible—they expunged *him* from the "Christian" convention for Homeschoolers! How *utterly absurd* is that, and how *tragic* is that, that *that's* where the Church is today? We call people "arrogant" when they say: "The clear parts of God's Word mean what they say"! This *is* a watershed verse!

Now back to this portion in its own context. It's simple to understand: Take Saturdays off, and remember that God is your Creator.

The Sabbath was a *gracious* provision of God, given to celebrate the freedom that He gave His people, and for them to remember that He is Creator. We're also going to see that the weekly rest was a blessing to help them remember their former *slavery* from which they were delivered (Deut. 5:15). I don't think they had very many days off from their labors in Egypt! This was a gracious thing that God did for them (cf. Ex. 23:12).

We're going to have to turn, though, to the New Testament. *In this case*, you can't fully understand the Fourth Commandment—I mean, you can understand *exactly* what the Fourth Commandment *says*, but to understand *how* it fits in with the whole message of God's Word, you need to move to the New Testament.

When Jesus did a number of His miracles, He *intentionally* did them on the Sabbath. One of the reasons was that the Pharisees had so misunderstood, misconstrued, twisted, and destroyed the significance of the Sabbath for the people. Jesus healed a man who could not walk, and He did it on the Sabbath. And He told the man, who would bring his little mat—called a "pallet" in the Bible—he would lay it out by this certain place in Jerusalem, and lie there and beg. Jesus healed him, and He told him to "pick up [his] pallet and walk" (Jn. 5:8). And Jesus got Himself in trouble with some of the leaders of the Jews: "So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured"—this is interesting now: They go after the guy who has been crippled for years, and now he's walking around; and the people who *ought* to be pointing everyone to the Messiah who just healed him, say: "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet" (vs. 10).

That's how far from the truth they had gotten. Instead of seeing the Sabbath as set apart for rest and gratitude to God for His generosity and His salvation, the leaders of the Jews saw it as cessation of *all* expenditure of energy one day a week—and then there were certain other special days during the year that were additional Sabbaths (e.g., Lev. 25:5, 8, 21, 24-25, 27-32, 34-36)—and *they* saw that as something you *have to do* as part of earning salvation or gaining favor with God (cf. Rom. 9:32; 10:2-4; cf. Lk. 18:9).

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They added a plethora of regulations to Scripture concerning the Sabbath (cf. Matt. 23:4; Mk. 7:1-13)—primarily, as I said, the work of the Pharisees, who had the most sway over most of the Jews in Jesus' day (Matt. 23:2).

We could go on all day doing this; let me just give you two examples from ancient rabbinical traditions concerning the Sabbath. This is what the simple teaching of the Fourth Commandment—"Take Saturday off"—had been twisted into by some of the Jews of Jesus' day.

Here's one that they said: "On the Sabbath, a man may borrow of his fellow jars of wine or jars of oil, provided he does not say to him, 'Lend me them.' " Now, if that sounds a little bit strange, *it is*. Why this regulation? Well, here's what they were thinking: To ask the question, "May I borrow"—fill in the blank...a cup of sugar, whatever it is—implies a transaction; a transaction implies the intent to *write* something, and they had decided that writing on the Sabbath was prohibited because *that* was "doing work." That's how they thought.

Here's another one: "If a man put out the lamp on the night of the Sabbath"—Friday night—"from fear of the Gentiles or of thieves or of an evil spirit, or to permit one that is sick to sleep, he is not culpable. But if he did it with a mind to spare the lamp or to spare the oil or to spare the wick, he *is* culpable." That's how *hairsplitting* they made it!

What *Jesus* meant was, "Whatever you do for a living, take off on Saturday!" (cf. Jn. 8:58 with Ex. 3:14; 1 Cor. 10:2-4) They turned it into, "How many rules can we think of that could trip people up on the Sabbath?" Apparently, they thought *fear* of a bogeyman coming in—that's an *acceptable* motive for putting out the lamp on Friday night; but *good stewardship* is an *unacceptable* motive for doing it. If you want to make the lamp last longer, that's not acceptable.

A variation on this theme exists today among conservative Jews. Among the most strict of them, they say it is unacceptable to operate a light switch or a similar device on the Sabbath. So when you go to a hotel in Israel, if you're there on Saturday, there is always one car of the elevator system that is programmed to stop at each floor, open the door, pause, close the door, go to the next floor, open the door, pause, close the door, go to the next floor. We were going down in the elevator one time—I got on the wrong car, on the seventh or eighth floor. Everybody in my group is down there waiting for me, and I go to the sixth floor—open, wait, close; fifth floor—open, wait, close. Why? Because it is unacceptable to *push the button* to open or close the door to choose your floor! I *wish* I had thought to ask somebody, "Is it acceptable to *climb eight floors of stairs* on the Sabbath?" Which is more in harmony with the will of God?

The thrust of the Old Testament concerning the Sabbath, as it was designed by God, is to take the seventh day off from your work. It was to be a day of rest, a day to reflect upon who God is, a day to commune with Him and His people, a day for rest and thanksgiving and remembering the Creator, enjoying your family, worshipping—those were the main issues in the Sabbath, as God designed it.

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By the time Jesus came along, the thrust of the Jews was to split hairs over the definition of "work," and to try to maintain all these regulations to gain favor with God. In other words: The Sabbath had been turned into *bondage*, rather than received as a blessing from God.

One of the reasons for so much misunderstanding of what the Sabbath is all about today isn't because Exodus 20:8-11 is unclear; it's *quite* clear. It's because of the things that have been *added* to it, and the things that have been *read into* it, and how many of the Pharisaical ideas have been transferred into the Church Age in various forms—*that's* what makes it confusing.

Now, we want to ask a question: Why is the Sabbath the *only one* of the Ten Commandments *not* repeated in the New Testament for Christians? Somewhere before this series is done, I will show you how everything that is said in the other nine *is* all repeated for Christians.

Well, some say—and this is a really weak one—God did away with it *because* of the way people perverted it by turning it into legalistic bondage. (see Ps. 50:21) Well, thank you, but *no* thank you. I don't want to know that god, who makes a law and then says, "Oh, what was I thinking? Boy, they messed *that one* up! I think I'll *scratch* that one!" (contra Mal. 3:6; Mat. 5:18) That's silly speculation, but some people say it; I thought I would let you know that some people say it.

Something else we have to say is: The Sabbath *was not* switched from Saturday in the Old Testament to Sunday in the New Testament. Now, there will be many people who will be with us in Heaven who have been what theologians call "Christian Sabbatarians," who believe that Sunday *is* the Sabbath. But the Bible does not say that. Not one verse *anywhere* in the Bible says anything like that at all.

Even when the Church began the practice of meeting on the first day of the week—on Sunday—they *never* called it the Sabbath, and they continued to refer to *Saturday* as the Sabbath. As a matter of fact, even in their evangelistic contacts with the Jews, Paul and the other Apostles would go to the synagogues on the "Sabbath" to "reason" with the Jews "from the Scriptures" (Acts 17:2)—and clearly, those Sabbaths were Saturdays—*then* they would go and worship with the Believers on Sunday, the first day of the week.

It would have been terribly ambiguous and confusing to call both Saturday and Sunday the Sabbath, simultaneously. Paul knew the difference between the Sabbath, when he gathered with Jews, and Sunday, when the Christians met.

The Christians adopted the term "The Lord's Day" for Sunday—the first day of the week, or, "The Lord's Day." It had special significance to them because Jesus arose on Sunday (Matt. 28:1, 6); He appeared to Mary and the Apostles on Sunday (Jn. 20:1, 14, 19); then He appeared again on Sunday the following week (Jn. 20:26). But even at that, it's not a *command* that they must worship on the first day of the week; that became the immediate *pattern*.

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In Troas, in Acts Chapter 20, Verse 7, it says: "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them..." That's Luke, writing about what Paul did when the Christians got together—*not* on the Sabbath, but on "the first day of the week."

In First Corinthians Chapter 16, Verse 2—"On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come." That tells us the church was meeting on Sundays, so that was the normal day for passing the offering plate; so Paul said, "That's when I want you to collect the offering for the saints in Jerusalem."

John, while he was a prisoner on the island of Patmos, late in the First Century, also referred to Sunday as "The Lord's Day"—he said, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice..." He received revelation of the Book of Revelation, starting on Sunday.

So the early Church chose to meet on Sunday, "the Lord's Day," mainly to commemorate the Resurrection, and mainly to *distinguish themselves* from the Jewish pattern of worship. But Sunday *is not* and *never has been* the Sabbath.

You *don't* have to worship with the saints on Sunday. You have to worship with the saints (Heb. 10:25), you have to worship God with your life *every day* (Rom. 12:1)—and the right day for Christians to worship is: *any day!* (cf. Prov. 23:17b; Phil. 3:3) If our culture were different, and another day was better, *we could do it that day*—no problem!

Sunday versus Saturday is part of the difference between Israel and the Church. Just as the Sabbath was to set Israel apart from the nations of *her* day, Sunday worship sets us apart from Judaism.

The idea that the Sabbath was switched from Saturday to Sunday arose *not* from the Bible, *not* from the New Testament—it arose when the Church began to *get away from* the teaching of the Apostles!

I found this from W. E. Vine—he wrote "Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words," and there's an expanded version that includes Old Testament words. He said this: "For the first three centuries of the Christian era, the first day of the week was *never* confounded with the Sabbath. The confusion of the Jewish and Christian institutions was due to *declension* from the apostolic teaching!" When the Bible became *less* authoritative in the minds of people, *that's when* they got away from it.

Now, there's *another* slant on this. You can, from the Fourth Commandment, extract a *general moral principle* and say: It is a *good thing*, it is a *healthy* idea, to take a day off every week. Perhaps more to the point: It's maybe *not* a good idea to *never* take a day off, and to work seven days a week. The commandments of God are always *good* for you; this one is not an exception.

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You *might* even say: It's a matter of faith—and you can draw *that* principle from the Scriptures. God illustrated that in how He provided manna for Israel during their wilderness wanderings. Remember, there was *just* the amount so that there was enough and they had what they needed "every day" (Ex. 16:4, 18), and they were to gather just enough for today; if you tried to gather more than you needed, it spoiled before you could use it (vs. 20). If you would go out on Monday morning and say, "You know, I really want to sleep in the next couple of days; I'm going to gather three times as much today"—two thirds of it would spoil. It was miraculous stuff. But then on Fridays, there was a two-day supply given miraculously by God; and what you gathered for the Sabbath did not spoil as it did if you tried to do the same thing on the other days of the week (vss. 5, 22-24). Read all about it in the "Manna Chapter"—Exodus Chapter 16.

So the principle—a moral principle you could *derive* from the Fourth Commandment—is: Trust God to supply what you need, without feeling that you need to work every single day. Make God the priority, and don't trust your own ability to provide what you need through your own efforts (see Matt. 6:33; cf. Prov. 3:5-6). Let God provide for you.

So, what's the primary function of the Sabbath? Rest. As Jesus put it: This is a gift. Mark 2:27—"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." (cf. Is. 58:13) And He said that *in the face of* the Pharisees, who make people *slaves* to all of their Sabbath regulations.

But that's *still* not the conclusion of what the Bible teaches about the Sabbath. There are three theological truths illustrated by the Sabbath, and they are very important—and we need to look at these.

Sabbath Theological Truth Number 1: The weekly Sabbath was a reminder that God is Creator. Where did we get that idea? From God Himself: Genesis 2:1-3—"Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done"—referring to the work of Creation. That doesn't mean God hasn't done anything *since then* (see Jn. 5:17; cf. Heb. 1:3), but He finished the work of Creation in six days. "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made." So, it is meant to be a reminder that God is the Creator.

Sabbath Theological Truth Number 2: The weekly Sabbath was a reminder that God is the Redeemer. The Ten Commandments are presented in Exodus Chapter 20, and then they are reiterated in Deuteronomy Chapter 5, where another wrinkle is given to the purpose of the Sabbath for Israel: Deuteronomy Chapter 5, starting in Verse 12—"Observe the sabbath day to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant or your ox or your donkey or any of your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you, so that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you." And then, this explanation added: "You shall remember that you



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were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day." He *gave you the day off* when you were freed from slavery! Remember His redemption.

But there's one more, and if you don't get to *this* one, you will fall short of understanding what the Sabbath is all about. Sabbath Theological Truth Number 3: The weekly Sabbath was a picture—a prefiguring, if you will—of the *ultimate rest for your soul*, which is found in Jesus Christ.

Consider one of the most *sweeping* invitations that Jesus ever gave during His ministry on Earth; it's Matthew Chapter 11, Verses 28 through 30. And bear in mind: He is saying this in the presence of the Jews with all their legalism; the people felt this *horrible* spiritual *burden* of trying to live up to all these do's and don'ts that the Pharisees said they had to live up to in order to know God (cf. Matt. 23:4; Acts 15:10). And Jesus says this: "Come to Me"—there's an emphasis there: Not *them*, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden"—that is, under the load of all this legalistic nonsense—"and I will give you *rest*"—the root word for the Sabbath. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart"—in contrast to the Pharisees: proud and arrogant, and piling burdens on people—"and you will find *rest for your souls*. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Does that mean you'll never have any trouble, you'll never have any problems, you'll never have a hard day if you believe in Jesus? *Of course not!* (see Jn. 16:33; Ac. 14:22) But *He finished the work!* You see, to the Pharisees, it was works-righteousness—they had to work it up, *they* had to earn it! Jesus says: "My yoke is easy and My burden is light"—I will take care of it all (see Rom. 10:4; Phil. 4:13).

Now, listen to the *theological application* of Jesus's invitation here: Look at Hebrews 4, Verses 1 through 10; connect this to the Sabbath, the Fourth Commandment. The writer of Hebrews says: "Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it." Now, let me interject here that throughout the Book of Hebrews, which has some fantastic theology, there are several warring sections—writing to Jewish people who professed Christ in the First Century—saying, "Let's *make sure* you have made the transition! Let's make sure you're *not* still trying to earn your way. Let's make sure you're *not* trying the wrong method. Let's make sure you have understood grace. Let's make sure you're standing on faith alone in Jesus Christ. So, let's be fearful, lest anyone should *come short* of the rest that is in Christ!"

"For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, 'As I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest,' although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works'; and again in this passage, 'They shall not enter My rest.' Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to

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them failed to enter because of disobedience, He again fixes a certain day, 'Today,' saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, 'Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.' For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His."

Now, we would basically have to teach pretty much the whole Old Testament, to have you fully grasp the significance of everything in those ten verses. But the point is: Joshua taking them into the land—*that was not the final rest!* There's something *bigger*, there's something *greater*.

And the time to enter that rest is not *after* you've worked as *hard* as you possibly can, as *long* as you can, and with your last dying breath say, "Okay, *now* Lord, take me!" It's "today"! (cf. 2 Cor. 5:2) If you hear the voice of God, if you hear the good news—"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...He was buried...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4)—*today* is the day to "find rest for your soul," if you never have before.

The punchline, in Verse 11 of Hebrews 4—"Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience."

Now do you understand the relative *insignificance* today, of keeping one day special? That would actually *diminish* the significance of the ultimate deal, which is: "rest for your soul," which is found only through Jesus Christ.

My friend, you may have come to Heritage Bible Church for *years*, you may have grown up in a similar church somewhere: If you have *never given up* trying to be good enough for God to accept you, *today* is the day; because I can tell you, I don't care *how good you are*—and you may be *far better than me*, by any human standard you can come up with—but unless you're *perfect*, you'll "fall short" (Rom. 3:23; cf. Gal. 3:10; Jas. 2:10).

Come and receive the "rest"! Christ took the burden of our sin! "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21; cf. Is. 53:4-8; Rom. 4:3-5; Phil. 3:9). Rest! Accept the rest—from legalism, from works-based pseudo-righteousness (Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9).

Maybe as a Christian, you've stumbled and fouled up worse than you ever dreamed you *possibly* could. Some Christians beat themselves up and say, "I don't *deserve* to be forgiven for what *I* did!" Well, you know what? *You didn't deserve to be forgiven in the first place*, so don't tell me that last week or last month's sin was the one that broke the camel's back! Christ died for "*all*" our "sins" (Mic. 7:19; cf. Rom. 8:33-34). There's *rest*.

The Fourth Commandment was *significant!* God made a big deal about it for Israel, but it was a *picture*. It was *real*, but it was also a picture or a shadow of the spiritual rest that Israel was intended to enter through faith in their Messiah.

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And as a Christian—as an adopted child of God (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5; 5:1-2)—you have entered into and you remain in that rest, by faith. Every day of your life is to be "holy to the Lord" (cf. 1 Pet. 1:16-17) as "a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God" (Rom. 12:1). You're *not* to worship God just one day a week, but *every day*!

Now, my friend, you need to understand that, since the Sabbath is *not* carried over from Old Testament to New Testament, and since the Sabbath was *not* transferred from Saturday to Sunday, *that was an issue* understanding all of that, in the early Church. And you need to understand that the New Testament *does* say things about celebrating Sabbaths, and certain special days of worship.

I already showed you Mark 2:27—"Jesus said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.'" Jesus wanted them to know that it wasn't the Sabbath rules of the Pharisees that mattered, it was following *Him*. You know the One who is *greater* than the Sabbath.

And so you can imagine: When some Jews came to Christ, and their whole lives they had been keeping the Sabbath, and that was hard for them to give up, and then some Gentiles come to Christ who say, "Woo Hoo, we get a day off now!"—and they were pretty excited about Sunday—there could be conflicts; so, that is addressed in the New Testament.

For example: Romans 14, starting at Verse 1—"Now accept the one who is weak in faith..." Some people are "weak in the faith," relatively speaking; some people are stronger in the faith. The one who is *weaker* in the faith is the one who thinks things are sinful when they aren't actually; he's not strong enough to understand freedom yet. So, "Accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only." Insert joke there, by our standards; but what he means is, some people think that's a spiritual issue. "The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand." (cf. Jd. 24)

Now, let's switch from meat and vegetarianism to days of the week: "One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike." Which one's right? That's not the question. He says: "Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God."

If you wish to make one day more special than another, that is *perfectly fine*. If you want to hold that as your own conviction, then be "fully convinced" in your own mind—and the *instant* you tell someone else, "You're not as spiritual as me because you don't regard the days of the week the same way as I am," you have jumped over the fence into Pharisee-land! You *don't want to be there!* (cf. Is. 65:5) It's a matter of *conscience*, not a command from God.

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Galatians Chapter 4. Remember, Paul went into the region of Galatia, he preached the Gospel, the Judaizers came around and corrupted almost everything he said, and he wrote Galatians to correct that (Gal. 1:8-9; 3:1-3; 5:7-10; 6:12). He says this, in Chapter 4, starting at Verse 9—"But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain." What he is referring to is the Old Testament rituals and holidays and celebrations—*they are now obsolete!* They have not be expunged from God's Word; they mean what they say. They are for Israel—we are not Israel, we are the Church.

I was asked last week if I was going to comment on a thing that is current now, called the "Hebrew Roots Movement," which is teaching Christians to celebrate all the Jewish feasts. I'm going to comment—not today, and it won't be pretty—because they are *corrupting* the Word of God! They have *huge* problems—theologically and exegetically and practically speaking. When somebody says you have to celebrate a Sabbath—whey somebody says *you* have to celebrate the Feast of Booths or the Passover or whatever, you're talking to or hearing from someone who is corrupting the Word of God—at a *minimum*, a misguided Christian; more likely a false teacher, *just like* Paul said to the Galatians (cf. Phil. 3:2-3; Titus 1:10).

Here's another one: Colossians 2, Verses 13 and following: "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him." Summary: Christ died for all of our sins. "Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day"—all referring to Jewish rituals—"things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ." Come to the light! Don't hide in the shadows! That's the point.

The question is: Is your soul resting in Christ, or are you striving to figure out what to do to be good enough to find acceptance with God? Are you working your way to Heaven, or are you trusting completely and exclusively in the One who can provide you with entrance into Heaven? (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5) Are you burdened by sin? I'm not Jesus, but I can quote Him: "Come! Come...find rest for your soul."

Let me point out something cool to you: When did the seventh day of Genesis 1 and 2 end? *It didn't*, right? The first six days are literal 24-hour days, marked clearly: "Evening and morning...this day." God has "rested" from His work of Creation ever since then. Oh, *He does a lot of things* (Eph. 1:11)—but He created the Universe, and He has rested. So, if that is a picture of the "Sabbath rest" for your soul, when you enter into the "Sabbath rest" described in Hebrews Chapter 4, how long does it last? For eternity! If the original "Sabbath rest" was to commemorate God's finished work of Creation, then the "Sabbath rest" in Christ describes His finished work of Redemption (cf. Heb. 10:14).

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So this is, perhaps, the most *evangelistic* of the Ten Commandments. Like Hebrews 4:11 says: "Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience." (cf. 2 Cor. 13:5; 2 Pet. 1:10)

My friend, there is "rest for your soul"—I hope you are basking in it *every single day!*

Let's pray:

*Our Father, what a fitting description of what it means to know Your Son, Jesus Christ. It means that by Your grace, I can rest—rest from the burden of guilt, rest from the burden of seeking Your favor. And now, Father, as Your child, redeemed and cleansed, I can joyfully seek Your favor, because I know You and I love You, and I want to please You. Father, please don't let a soul leave this place today, which is not at rest in Jesus Christ. You know the needs of each of our hearts. I pray that You will do whatever needs to be done in our hearts to make us useful for Your glory. For we come in Jesus' name. Amen.*