

## The Sabbath, Part 1: Resting in the Lord (Exodus 20:8-11)

Please turn in God's holy word to Ex 20 and this Lord's Day we'll be studying v. 8-11.

- In our preaching through Exodus and the 10 commandments we come to the 4<sup>th</sup>
- This commandment reminds us who is Lord of our work.
- It reorients us to God in charge of our time and our days, and to take time to be holy.
- It remembers our Creator and our need to rest in our restless world.
- It rebukes those who never stop: cease striving, be still and know He is God.
- Exalt Him who cares for body and soul and the mundane of every day

Exodus 20:8 *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD made heaven and 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.* This is God's holy Word.

Some of you know the name Paul Harvey.

- He would often talk about someone or some event that was very well-known.
- But there were crucial details few knew or thought of, about their story.
- At the end of the segment came his famous tagline 'now you know the rest of the story.'

The idea of rest on the Sabbath is very well-known but there's a lot more to the story to tell.

- There's key details some don't know or think about enough to help us know the rest...

### **Part 1, today's outline: The Sabbath to Jews of the OT**

#### **The Sabbath in Jesus & the NT (will be a biblical theology of rest)**

*Some studies take 20+ hours, this one I've studied on and off 20+ years*

### **First, in the original context: what did the Sabbath mean to Jews of the Old Testament?**

1. **Stay near your home to rest.** v. 8: *Remember the Sabbath day*... that's recalling ch 16 in context.

Go back to 16:23 where the word Sabbath is used for the first time in the Bible. Israel was to remember this:

<sup>23</sup> *he said to them, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.' "* [i.e., no cooking on the Sabbath, gather extra and get it ready the day before. v. 29] *See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. **Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day.** "* <sup>30</sup> *So the people rested on the seventh day.*

*Not an absolute shelter-in-place in the later law, but not a day to travel across town*

According to Exodus, Sabbath isn't a day to go out of your house to gather with others

- God's command is to rest at your house. Remember this day, God says.
- Ex 20:2 introduces this, saying God brought them out of the house of slavery.
- Pharaoh didn't give a day off, he always cracked the whip.
- God gives Israel this gift to a former house of slaves: stay in your house, rest this day!

Ex 20 doesn't forbid leaving your tent for fellowship but it focuses on ceasing all work for rest.<sup>1</sup>

The Law says don't buy/sell, no fire lit or animal loaded (today load minivan, stove, food heat)?

Later they made sure the tabernacle was a short walk from each home as Levite law called for a 'holy convocation...a sabbath to the LORD in all your dwellings...on the seventh day...complete rest' (Lev 23:3)

*1,000 years later synagogues arose in communities, but that wasn't required in the law<sup>2</sup>*

2. **Saturday is Sabbath starting Friday night.** Look again at 20:10 *the seventh day is a Sabbath...* End of v. 11 says God *rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.* That's in Genesis, *'there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day...He rested on the seventh day...'*

- Each day is evening and morning, daylight till next evening
- Saturday rest started Friday night (had to prepare day before)
- At creation week God finished all His work Friday before evening as a pattern.

Lev. 23:31: *'in all your dwelling places...a sabbath of complete rest...from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath.'*

3. **Sunday you shall work (thru Friday).** <sup>9</sup> *Six days you shall labor, and do all your work,* <sup>10</sup> *but the seventh day is a Sabbath.* The 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is to work **Sunday**, Monday, Tuesday, to Friday night.

God's law calls for labor every day except the 7<sup>th</sup> day (even SDA often don't)

Don't miss v. 9 is a commandment to work on Sunday and every other day except for Saturday.

- Every time the NT says *Sabbath day* it's always the 7<sup>th</sup> day (Saturday).

If all 10 commandments are all moral law for all times, we're all lawbreakers to not work today

- Sunday is no day off in the Bible. Sunday was a working day in the Roman empire
  - o Most believers worked all day Sunday in NT times till the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup>

The only NT record of a church meeting Sunday is at night, evidently after work late, Acts 20.

The concept of a weekend with Sunday off is from more recent centuries, long after Bible times

The command *you shall work* Sunday to Friday is part of the Ten with *'you shall not murder.'*

- #1-3 and 6-10 commands negative, #4 is positive, rooted in creation and God Himself.

It's the longest, right in the middle or heart of the law God thundered and wrote with His finger.

- 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is not 'rest one day in seven,' it's always emphatically only the 7<sup>th</sup> day.

If this commandment is for today in the way God said it, we better leave church and get to work

But let's go to ch 31 and it actually gets worse, the demand of this command!

4. **Stone violators by the congregation.** Ex **31:15**: *Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death...*

Listen to Numbers 15:32: *... in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day...<sup>35</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, "The man shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones..."*

Did you keep the Sabbath holy, no yardwork or housework yesterday?

This is deadly serious in God's law. This is a holy solemn duty starting Friday night in His Law.

- If Sabbath law is for today, remember it not as a day congregations gather for a sermon
  - o It's a day where if you gather sticks, the congregation should stone you to death!

This is part of the Sabbath command in Exodus, executing Sabbath-breakers. Feel the tension?

Is a church congregation under the law of Exodus in a civil sense (Israel's civil govt?)

5. **Sacrifice extra animals.** The Sabbath had civil and ceremonial law. In Ex 20, see v. 24 *An altar of earth you shall make for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep ...*

- God tells them this right after giving the Sabbath command, how to make the day holy.

Offering sheep is a key part of Sabbath. Num 28:9: *'On the Sabbath day, make an offering of two lambs a year old without defect...<sup>10</sup> This is the burnt offering for every Sabbath, in addition to the regular burnt offering ...*

This is all part of the Sabbath command but nobody does #1-5 today, not even Jews

- To obey making the day holy, there had to be burnt offerings of lambs. This is God's law.

God commanded extra sacrifices that day. This is part of Ex 20 (v. 24) and Sabbath requirement

- Ex 20 blends moral absolutes (no idols) and ceremonial applications (sanctify Sabbath).
- 4<sup>th</sup> commandment has a moral principle (God is holy) and a ritual part (how to keep holy)

Jews call the Sabbath in Hebrew *Shabbat* and tie it to Jewish ceremony. One Jewish writer says 'it is the only ritual commandment in the Ten Commandments. This almost surely means the Shabbat is the most important ritual in the Torah and therefore in the Jewish religion... more than any other Jewish ritual, the Shabbat preserved the Jewish people. As one major Jewish writer... put it, "More than the Jews have kept the Shabbat, the Shabbat has kept the Jews."<sup>4</sup>

To them it wasn't just moral law, it had much ritual and ties to the sacrificial system

**6. Seek rest in the Lord in His redemption.** Ex 20:2 starts with redemption, v. 8 says remember.

- This part I take as the moral heart of it in v. 10 all must obey: rest in the Lord.
- And v. 11 hints of spiritual, not just physical (beyond Jewish rituals).

It ends with God finishing His perfect creation, resting and blessing the 7th day paradise state.

- Original Sabbath in Eden wasn't just a day, it was to be days of perfect peace and rest.
- The work of creation ceased not just for 24 hours but from that day forward.
- Gen 2 doesn't mention evening and morning for God's rest, leaving it open-ended,
  - o as if to be a state of daily refreshing rest in God.<sup>5</sup>

But after sin the world and work became difficult in Gen 3. Now there's no rest for the wicked.

- Augustine said we're made for God and hearts are restless till they find rest in Him.

The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> commandments look forward and redeem what sin lost in the garden

<sup>12</sup> *Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.* That's looking forward to the land of Canaan to be given to Israel after the time of Moses.

- The paradise lost of a wonderful land and rest is now
  - o a promised land and a picture of that rest in the weekly Sabbath.

The middle of the decalogue law points ahead to the heart of what the NT will expand on.

- Eph 6 quotes the 5<sup>th</sup> command but it expands beyond Israel's land:
- *that you may enjoy long life on the earth* [not the land of Canaan, it's bigger and better in Christ].
- I argue the 4<sup>th</sup> command also expands. Israel set apart one day to God,
  - o but in Rom 14 some set apart every day (bigger, better in Jesus).

Even in the OT the command expands from 1 nation to all nations and all of life

23:12 *'the seventh day you shall rest; that...the son of your servant woman, and the alien, may be refreshed.'*

- The Sabbath wasn't to be a restricting duty,
- it was to be a refreshing delight remembering Eden.

Every Saturday can still be a day to remember God's perfect creation and His plan to redeem it.

- Israel was to experience a weekly foretaste of a wonderful future for all.<sup>6</sup>

Dt 5:14 *'the sojourner who is within your gates...your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. <sup>15</sup> You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out [there's redemption] ...Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.'*

So the Sabbath rest was rooted in redemption and to be shared with Gentiles

The OT later explains there was a rest to come, creation needed a redeemed new creation rest.

Reformation Study Bible: 'Sabbath looks forward to the final redemptive...rest...Ultimately, the Sabbath points to Christ, our Creator and Redeemer, who brings rest to the people of God... the Sabbath... is enjoyed by sharing His rest, celebrating His work of creation and redemption.'

A greater redemption than from Egypt was coming, but Ps 95 says Israel failed to enter that rest

We need to go to Mt 11 to know the rest of the story

## This takes us from the Sabbath to Jews in the OT to #2. the Sabbath in Jesus and the NT

The 10 commandments go beyond the physical in how the NT applies them (ex: physical idols).

- The 4<sup>th</sup> commandment was originally an order to physically stay near home,
- sacrifice animals, stone Sabbath-breakers, physically work on Sunday, rest on Saturday,

But like many other OT realities, Jesus expands it to the spiritual.

- Beyond a day or do's and don'ts, it's about Jesus.

This is the 1<sup>st</sup> time the NT talks about Sabbath and rest and it's in the Lord Jesus who redeems

11:28: *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* <sup>29</sup> *Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [that's the spiritual rest of salvation Israel missed. 12:1]* *At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.* <sup>2</sup> *But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath."* <sup>3</sup> *He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: <sup>4</sup> how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? <sup>5</sup> Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath [i.e., break it by working] and are guiltless? <sup>6</sup> I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. <sup>7</sup> And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. <sup>8</sup> For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."* <sup>9</sup> *He went on from there and entered their synagogue. <sup>10</sup> And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse him. <sup>11</sup> He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? <sup>12</sup> Of how much more value is a man than a sheep!*

- Jesus tells them it's lawful to do good works on the Sabbath and rebukes them for getting all worked up
- Jesus doesn't defend the Sabbath as a moral law like the rest (idolatry, adultery, murder, etc. never right)
- Jesus in v. 3-4 says it can be right to break Sabbath as ceremonial law, like David violating priestly law
- Then in v. 5 Jesus again ties it to the ceremonial sacrificial system of priests who worked on the Sabbath
- That Sabbath day in the temple priests had to work double duty sacrificing extra sheep to obey ritual law
- In v. 6 Jesus points to a bigger and better reality than Sabbath tasks, something greater than their temple
- Jesus connects the Sabbath to the temple. He later said He is the temple, the replacement of the physical<sup>7</sup>
- In v. 7 Jesus says God desires mercy, not sacrifice, and on the cross the temple veil and system was torn!
- Greater than temple, greater than David or Solomon, the new covenant priestly ministry of Jesus is here!
- In v. 8 Jesus calls Himself 'lord of the Sabbath.' The Lord who made the law can change how it applies
- In v. 9-12 Sabbath isn't always a moral absolute, working can be a moral obligation (mercy, necessity)
- Mark's gospel says right before this same story Jesus taught you can't put new wine in old wineskins or it will burst. His new covenant can't fit in the old setting, it's bigger and better; then this Sabbath story
- On another Sabbath He did the work of healing a woman, and said to hypocritical critics: *Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it?* Lk 13:15
- Jn 5:16 *the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing [healing work] on the Sabbath.* <sup>17</sup> *But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."* <sup>18</sup> *This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. [He goes on in Jn 5 to talk about the work of salvation, how He gives life by sovereign grace, so sinners believe in Him and go from death to life<sup>8</sup>]*
- God stopped His work of creation but He's working for salvation, redeeming and delivering every day
- Creation week God finished His work on Friday. At passion week Jesus said 'it is finished' Good Friday
- The rest of Paradise lost would be restored on the cross for believers; 'you will be with me in paradise'
- Jesus came to fulfill the Law and when His work of salvation was done once for all, He rested in a tomb
- After the literal Sabbath was over He rose again to bring spiritual Sabbath to believers who rest in Him

Now go to Heb 4 but remember the new command ‘*come to me...I will give you rest...for your souls*’

**The first NT use of Sabbath and rest is about salvation, so its last one to the end**

The Israelites in the time of Exodus had weekly rest,

- but God swore they wouldn’t enter the rest to come because they didn’t believe.
- Heb 4:1 says the promise of entering rest still stands for us

<sup>3</sup> *For we who have believed enter that rest, 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. <sup>4</sup> For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” [4<sup>th</sup> commandment quote, v. 7] again he appoints a certain day [not Saturday/Sunday] “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” <sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. <sup>9</sup> So then, **there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,** <sup>10</sup> for whoever has entered **God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.** <sup>11</sup> Let us therefore **strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.***

**The rest of heaven we enter now by faith (v. 3 present tense, eternal life starts here)**

Don’t think an OT day, think ultimate rest of salvation by resting in the Lord and not our works.

- It’s a rest forever to end of days, and we can enter any day by faith as we hear His voice.
- Israel got rest one day, but this rest is offered every day:
- today is the day of salvation rest in the Lord.

Strive to enter that rest, don’t harden your heart today lest He say in wrath you’ll not enter rest.

A psalm says ‘*my soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him...rest, O my soul, in God alone.*’

**‘rest in the shadow of the Almighty’<sup>9</sup>**

A hymn asks ‘do you rest each moment in the Crucified...walking daily by the Savior’s side?’<sup>10</sup>

STORY - missionary John Paton – trying to translate “faith,” used the tribal word for “rest.”

- Come to Jesus, all who labor, He gives soul rest
- But you must cease striving by works to be saved and trust His finished work for you.
- To enter His rest, v. 10 says rest from your works, rest in faith.

v. 3 says we believe and enter that rest (present tense now) but the future full final rest is not yet

**‘I rest in You, Abide with me, until our trials and sufferings give way to final victory’**

**Our closing song A Christian’s Daily Prayer says ‘be glorified today...all of life...every hour is yours’<sup>11</sup>**

Heidelberg Catechism, 1563, says ‘God’s will for you in the fourth commandment...[is] first, ...gospel ministry [it talks about church]...Second, that every day of my life I rest from my evil ways, let the Lord work in me through his Spirit, and so begin in this life the eternal Sabbath.’

Calvin’s Catechism for Children<sup>12</sup> explained Israel’s Sabbath ‘observance of rest is part of the ceremonies of the ancient Law, which was abolished at the coming of Jesus Christ.

169. Do you mean that this [4<sup>th</sup>] commandment properly belongs to the Jews, and that it was given for the time of the Old Testament? [Calvin’s reply] I do, in so far as it is ceremonial.

[Children would ask] Is there anything else in it besides the ceremony? A. It was given for 3 reasons... To represent spiritual rest, in aid of [church order], and for the relief of servants.

[Kids] What is this spiritual rest? A. It is to cease from our own works, that the Lord may work in us...mortifying...renouncing our own nature, so that God may govern us by His Spirit.

...We must do it every hour, but because of our weakness, one day is specially appointed...

[last ?] Is this to be done only one day a week? A. This is to be done continually. After we have once begun, we must continue all our life...meditate continually on the works of God’

There's value in a day for church and rest from work, Calvin taught, but spiritual rest is daily

I think he and Reformers in 1500s got it right, not later English Puritans, confessions of 1600s<sup>13</sup>

It's not about the old covenant law, legal restrictions on Jews

- or lists with little do's and don'ts.
- It's about the Lord of the Sabbath, resting in Him.
- We can do that Saturday, but better everyday

Today we hear His voice in His holy word and don't have to go to work, this is a gift

We can apply #1-2 by resting more at home, and even more Saturday night

- so when we come to church we're not falling asleep (I see you who do!).

We don't have to work on Sunday the same way Israel did in #3,

- but we get to do the Lord's work on the Lord's Day (serving, hospitality).

We don't stone sinners but congregations should deal with sin in discipline and discipleship

- we don't offer animal sacrifices but we're to give offerings, and us as spiritual sacrifices

We're not under the law's penalties or ceremonies Jesus fulfilled, but it has applications for us.

We'll look at more of those next week in part 2 and questions we can't cover today

Ed Clowney of Westminster Seminary wrote in How Jesus Transforms the 10 Commandments:

'the Sabbath commandment...shows most clearly how Jesus transforms the law... we come together as a gathered body of Christ to honor him, to remind ourselves and the world that we belong to him, and to announce the resurrection of the Lord of the Sabbath, who offers true rest to those who receive him... In this sense the Sabbath rest is still celebrated: on the Lord's Day we find rest and refreshment in Christ and the richness of the eternal rest... rest that satisfies all the hope of the original Sabbath day of rest... worship is part of our calling to do *more*, not less [than OT Israel]... Not only are we to leave aside our own preoccupations... not only are we to set apart time to worship God, but we are to serve... on every day that is given to us...'14

How does that look in a restless world? 'Few have lived as stressful a life as Hudson Taylor, founder of China Inland Mission. But Taylor lived in God's rest, as his son so beautifully [said]

Day and night this was his secret, "...roll the burden on the Lord." [Ps 37, don't fret]

Frequently [at 2-3 AM in the house they heard humming] Mr. Taylor's favorite hymn ["Jesus, I am Resting, Resting"]. He had learned that for him, only one life was possible -just that blessed life of resting and rejoicing in the Lord under all circumstances, while [the Lord of Sabbath] dealt with the difficulties, inward and outward, great and small.

It is possible to live a life as harried and busy as Hudson Taylor and yet be resting. Resting is trusting. Believer, you can have perpetual rest by resting in him ... Augustine knew from experience that life apart from Christ is striving, that men and women will remain restless regardless of what they attain or obtain in this world. You will never find rest apart from redemption in Christ...But when you come to him...you find a Sabbath rest for your soul'<sup>15</sup>

For further study: David Murray, *ReSet: Living a Grace-Paced Life in a Burnout Culture*.

Shona Murray, *Refresh: Embracing a Grace-Paced Life in a World of Endless Demands*.

SDG #6. Where do you need to pursue spiritual rest and refreshment? In ways can that happen in a special way on the Lord's Day? In what ways can you pursue that every day?

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<sup>1</sup> Later Jews wanted to limit steps outside one's home to a "Sabbath day's journey" (see Acts 1:12). Some sources say this was 2000 cubits based on Exodus 16 and Jewish tradition of how the wilderness encampments were setup at a particular distance from the tabernacle (according to tradition, approximately 3000 feet or a little over a half mile). Prohibitions on lighting fires for cooking include Exodus 35:3 and loading animals or buying and selling in Nehemiah 13:15-22.

<sup>2</sup> See D.A. Carson, editor, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*.

<sup>3</sup> See Richard Belcher, *A Layman's Guide to the Sabbath Question*.

<sup>4</sup> As cited by Dennis Prager, also citing Ahad Ha'am, *Exodus: God, Slavery, and Freedom* (Regnery, 2018), p. 247.

<sup>5</sup> For more on this, see Dale Ratzlaff (former Seventh Day Adventist), *Sabbath in Christ*.

<sup>6</sup> "In common with other features in Exodus, the Sabbath mandate reinforces the idea that God's dealings with the Israelites reverse, in part at least, the consequences of humanity's expulsion from the divine presence due to the sin of Adam and Eve." -- T. Desmond Alexander, *Exodus*, *Apollos Old Testament Commentary* (InterVarsity Press, 2017), 2:412.

<sup>7</sup> John 2:19-22, see also Hebrews for how Jesus fulfills and replaces the temple ceremony and imagery in Himself.

<sup>8</sup> John 5:21-24.

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 61:1, 91:1 NIV84.

<sup>10</sup> Elisha Hoffman, "Are You Washed in the Blood?"

<sup>11</sup> "A Christian's Daily Prayer," Sovereign Grace Music.

<sup>12</sup> [Calvin's Catechism – by Dr. John Calvin | Reformed Theology at A Puritan's Mind \(apuritansmind.com\)](http://apuritansmind.com)

<sup>13</sup> The Westminster Confession and 2<sup>nd</sup> London Baptist Confession in contrast argued Sabbath day restrictions were moral and are to be transferred to Sunday for worship and spiritual duties (as opposed to recreation and other rules the Puritans debated). This view is outside the scope of this sermon (and outside scripture in my opinion) and Lord-willing I will address this idea in Part 2 next week.

<sup>14</sup> Edmund Clowney, "Resting in the Lord," *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments* (Presbyterian & Reformed, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> Kent Hughes, *Genesis*, 46-47.