

Exodus pt. 36
The 10 Commandments pt. 4
Remember the Sabbath
Exodus 20:8 - 11

I. Introduction

- A. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 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, your male or your camel servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For 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." (Exodus 20:8 - 11)

II. What Does this Commandment Teach us about God?

- A. In our study of the previous commandments we've explored the particular details of the commandments at this point. Today, however, we will explore those things in a later section where it will fit more easily. So let's dive straight into answering this question: What does the Sabbath commandment teach us about God?
- B. God is a Working God
1. Notice that the Sabbath is actually rooted in God's creation of the universe. Long before the Ten Commandments were given, God established the Sabbath in the very first week of creation.
 2. "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them..."
 3. "God did not create the world and then abandon it to function on its own. He has been actively involved in human affairs throughout history. In fact, He is orchestrating history." (*Experiencing God*, pg. 54)
 - a) Blackaby's point is that God has always been working in His creation. God is working whether we see it or not, whether we feel it or not, whether we understand it or not.
 4. God works in Creation
 - a) God not only created the universe with His power but He maintains and sustains it by His power.
 5. God works in Salvation
 - a) For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:6)
 - b) And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)
- C. God is a Resting God
1. "...and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy."
 2. The word "rested" here literally means to cease from working. It is not meant to imply that God was exhausted and needed to catch His breath but rather after creating the cosmos He rested in His work being complete.

3. This points us to a deep truth about the Sabbath. We are not like God with unlimited strength. We actually need rest to survive. But the Sabbath is not meant to be resting out of exhaustion or burn out but it is to be a day of worship, resting in God's goodness and faithfulness, and thanking Him for what He has done.

D. God is a Gracious God

1. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 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..."
2. God allows us to enter into His labors.
 - a) Some people wrongly assume that work is inherently bad. They reason that work is a result of the fall of mankind into sin. However, if we carefully examine the text of Genesis we see two key truths:
 - (1) God created Adam and Eve to work before the Fall.
 - (a) Adam and Eve were meant to both tend the Garden and expand it.
 - (b) When God created Eve it was because Adam needed a "helpmate suitable for him." Why would Adam need a helpmate? Because there was work to be done. Eve was his helpmate perfectly fit for him. He couldn't do the work God had called him to without her.
 - (2) Work became difficult as a result of the Fall.
 - (a) Part of the curse of the Fall was that the work that once was enjoyable and pleasurable would not be burdensome and difficult. Now it is by the sweat of our brows that we work the land that has born thorns and briars.
 - b) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)
3. God allows us to enter into His rest.
 - a) God wants His people to rest. God is a working God so He invites us to work alongside of Him. God is a resting God and He invites us to find our rest in Him.
 - (1) "I am not a hard master, I do not grudge thee time to look after thy calling, and to get an estate. I have given thee six days, to do all they work in, and have taken but one day for myself. I might have reserved six days for myself, and allowed thee but one; but I have given thee six days for the works of they calling, and have taken but one day for my own service." (Thomas Watson via *Preaching the Word: Exodus*, pg. 551)
 - b) Notice that all of Israel was to enjoy this rest. "you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you"
 - (1) A Family Affair
 - (2) Servants Too
 - (3) Even Animals
 - (a) "Everyone should work, and everyone should rest, because everyone should be free to worship God." (*Preaching the Word: Exodus*, pg. 553)

III. How Does this Commandment Point us to Christ?

A. Jesus Provides Our Sabbath Rest

1. “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28 - 30)
2. Hear the beautiful words of invitation from the King of Kings: “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”
3. The Old Testament is full of pictures of God giving rest to His people. The Sabbath, the Promised Land, God’s deliverance, etc. but it is not until Jesus comes that true rest is attainable.
 - a) 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. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thought and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:8 - 16)

B. Jesus Proves the Sabbath Relationships

1. At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath.” But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, how they entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful of him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.” (Matthew 12:1 - 8)
 - a) Relationship One: The Old Testament to the New Testament
 - (1) Quickly, it’s worth pointing out that the Old Testament is still valuable to us today. When Jesus sets out to reframe the traditional thinking of the Sabbath, He quotes two Old Testament stories.
 - (2) There are two major points here that I’ll share briefly.

- (a) The New Testament would not exist without the Old. By that I mean that the New Testament is full of quotes and allusions to the Old. Jesus and the Apostles used the Old Testament so often there would be little of the New without it.
 - (b) The Old Testament is all about Jesus too.
 - b) Relationship Two: Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath
 - (1) The Law came from God it belongs to Him and is subservient to Him. The Jews had gotten to the point where they almost worshiped the Law, particularly the Sabbath laws. Jesus is God in the flesh and He is Lord of the Sabbath, He is Lord of the most revered Laws.
 - (2) In the same way, we worship God. Not the church, not the preacher, not even the Bible. Those are all things that point us to God but our worship is for Him and Him alone.
 - c) Relationship Three: The Sabbath is for man not man for the Sabbath
 - (1) 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." (Mark 2:27 - 28)
 - (2) The Sabbath was meant to be a gift from God to His covenant people. It was meant for their welfare, their health, their enjoyment, their worship. Yet it had become so perverted that instead of providing rest it was a day of unbearable burdens and stress. The Jews had made hundreds of laws that served as a fence around the fourth commandment. By the time of Jesus' ministry they worshiped the fence and not the actual commandment of God.
 - 2. Departing from there, He went into their synagogue. And a man was there whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, "is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" So that they might accuse Him. And He said to them, "What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath will he not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other. (Matthew 12:9 - 13)
 - a) Relationship four: God's laws are meant to do good for people not burden them.
 - (1) Jesus asks the question, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath?" Of course God did not intend the Sabbath to be a day when you could not help others. The day itself was meant to be a help to God's children. The Sabbath, like all of God's gifts, was meant to be for His people's good.
 - b) New Testament scholar Dr. George Barton described it this way: "The sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath; so that the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath." In these words Jesus set forth one of the great principles of his religion. He taught that religious institutions and rules are subordinate to human welfare. They are intended to minister to the well-being of men, but if a time comes when they interfere with that well-being, they are to be disregarded. They are sacred only so long as they contribute to the welfare and improvement of the bodies and the souls of men. If a time comes when they starve the body or stunt the growth of the soul, they must be revised or given up." (*Jesus of Nazareth: A Biography*, pg. 157 - 158)
- C. Jesus was Persecuted Because of Sabbath Rules

1. But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him. (Matthew 12:14)
2. This is often overlooked but, I think, very important. The religious leaders hated Jesus. He often said shocking and controversial things and made them look bad. However, it is because the Lord Jesus bucked them on the Sabbath that they decided to begin to plot His death. This should make us pause and ask ourselves some difficult questions.
 - a) What areas of God's Word have we misunderstood, wrongly emphasized, or misapplied?
 - b) What man-made traditions or theologies could confuse our understanding of God's Word?
3. What traditions have we equated to God's Word or even serve as idols against God Himself?

IV. How Does this Commandment Point us to the Gospel?

- A. As I mentioned earlier Jesus is our ultimate Sabbath rest. In Matthew 11, He invites us to lay down our burdens, take up His yoke, and find rest. Jesus' language in that text is often misunderstood. Is Jesus offering rest to people under the crippling weight of life's burdens? Yes, I believe that He is. However, there is a deeper meaning that we must not overlook.
- B. The idea centers around Jesus' usage of the word "yoke." A yoke is what oxen would be tied to. Young oxen were often "yoked" alongside of older more experienced ones so that the older animal could help train the younger. In this way, a "yoke" came to represent a rabbi's teachings to his disciples. We see this clearly when Jesus says, "Take up my yoke and learn from Me." What is Jesus' teaching? It is the gospel, the good news that Jesus came to die for sinners and those who place their faith in Him will be eternally saved.
 1. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:4 - 9)
- C. How does the Sabbath point us to the gospel? Simply put, it is only when we cease working for our salvation and rest in Christ's grace and forgiveness that we can be saved. That is the gospel message. All of our sin and shame can be fully and finally erased not because of our own good works but because of the good works of Jesus on our behalf. If you want to be saved, if you want your sins to be washed clean, if you want to become a child of God you must take a Sabbath rest in Christ's grace and goodness. You must hang up your attempts to earn your salvation by being good and surrender in faith to Jesus.

V. How Should New Testament Believers Apply this Commandment?

- A. Here we find the hardest question to answer. There are several views of the particulars of the Sabbath and this is a hotly debated topic. Most of the controversy deals with which day is the Sabbath and how, if at all, Christians should observe it.
- B. Briefly I'd like to simply examine the words of the fourth commandment and then share some closing thoughts about how we should keep it as New Covenant Christians.
- C. Remember

1. The first word in the commandment is important. God is giving the Law for the first time but He tells them to “remember the Sabbath.” This is because the Sabbath was introduced earlier in Exodus 16 when God instructed them to gather enough manna for the seventh day.
2. Also as Exodus 20:11 clearly states, the Sabbath has roots all the way back to the week of creation when God rested from His labors. I believe that this means that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance that actually precedes the Law of Moses. That is important to remember in a moment. The Sabbath has its origins not in the Law but in creation itself.

D. Keep it holy

1. What does it mean to keep the Sabbath holy? The word holy has two general meanings. One is to be righteous or without sin. The other is that something is to be set apart as special or unique. I think both definitions are true of the Sabbath.
2. Exodus gives us two clues as to how God wants the Sabbath to be kept holy.
 - a) The Sabbath is “of the Lord your God.”
 - (1) This day was to be set apart as uniquely special. What is often overlooked is that the Sabbath was meant to be unto God. It was a day to celebrate and commune with the Living God.
 - b) There was to be no work on the Sabbath.
 - (1) It may seem ridiculous to us today but this becomes the essential controversial issue of keeping the Sabbath: what does it mean to work? The Jews made hundreds of new laws and traditions of what exactly constituted work. To give you some idea of how strict these were, orthodox Jews to this day will not flip a light switch on the Sabbath. That is work by their definition.
 - (2) Jesus seems to go out of His way to provoke this understanding of the work.
 - (3) The Law allowed for good things to be done on the Sabbath. Earlier we saw that the Levitical priests that worked in the temple were exempt from this Law. What about a doctor who saves a life, is that work acceptable?

E. The Seventh Day

1. The Sabbath is consistently the seventh day throughout the Bible.

F. The New Testament Perspective

1. The fourth commandment is the only of the Ten Commandments that is not clearly reiterated in the New Testament. This means that there is no passage of the New Testament that definitively teaches us how we should think of the Sabbath as New Covenant believers. I believe this lack of information is largely due to the confusion and controversies about the Sabbath.
2. 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 - things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. (Colossians 2:16 - 17)

G. Views of the Sabbath for Christians

1. The Sabbath should be kept exactly the same way for Christians as it was for Jews
2. The Sabbath is still Saturday but is different for Christians than Jews
3. The Sabbath has been transformed from Saturday to Sunday (the Lord’s Day)
4. The Sabbath is no longer commanded for Christians
5. The Sabbath is rooted in creation not the Law so all people should remember the Sabbath but the Levitical rules for it are covenantal to Israel not Christians