

Exodus 20:8-11
2011
John 4:24

Remember the Sabbath!

July 17th,

(THE LAW OF REMEMBRANCE)

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” (Exodus 20:8)

The Fourth Rule – God’s Commandment – tells us, “Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Work six days and do everything you need to do. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to GOD, your God” (The *Message Bible*). When we listen to these words from God, many questions arise: “What does it mean to observe the Sabbath day? How can we keep it holy? How can we work just six days? Businesses are open 24 hours and 7 days all the time so whenever they call and ask us to work, how can we deny it?” Let’s look at what the Word of God means!

What is the Sabbath Day?

The word “Sabbath” is “the last day of the week” – Saturday. That word is rooted in the creation story in Genesis. When God creates the world, He finishes his work of creation in six days: day and night, sky and oceans, creatures, and so forth. Following the sixth day when He creates a human, God rests: “On the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done” (Gen. 2:3). If God rests then we humans also need to rest on that day! A dictionary defines “rest” as “To cease motion, work, or activity. To lie down, esp. sleep. To be at peace or ease; be tranquil.”

The Talmud, the Jewish wisdom book, gives us three reasons for keeping the Sabbath: The first reason for Sabbath is that given the fact that no one is permitted to do anything on Sabbath, no orders could be given, no work done. Therefore, the slaves and the rich would be equal for at least one day a week. (Employer and employees alike) The second reason is that we should have time to reflect on the meaning of our lives. The third reason for Sabbath is that we should reflect on the goodness of our work as God did on creation on the seventh day - “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (Gen. 1:31).

Rest and Remember

Sabbath day means to rest but it also means to remember the Lord. So “the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God” means that day is a time to stop but also to remember the Lord. Sabbath is a time to *rest* from your work and in the same time to *remember* your God who created you. That is the meaning of “Keep it holy.” It does not mean that you may forget your God during the rest of the days; it means you keep the day different from the rest of the days – separate or to sanctify.

How do you keep the Sabbath day? Does it make sense to keep Sabbath day in 21st century – 7 days work or 24 hours work time shift? The world we are living in is a driven society – compulsive and compressed. Everybody is getting busier; one is working more than in the past: work, work, work... One economist reports that “work hours and stress are up and sleep and family time are down for all classes of employed Americans. Wives working outside the home return to find a “second shift” of housework awaiting them. Husbands

add overtime or second jobs to their schedules...” (Juliet Schor, *The Overworked American*, 1991). How can we take time off? Or how can we help others to have Sabbath day? Those questions might be big challenges.

Remember the Sabbath Day! Sabbath day is a day to rest and reflect on your life in terms of your relationships with loved ones, God, and yourself. I consciously try to set my Sabbath day apart; I call it the day of maintenance of the physical body, the spiritual soul, the emotional mind, relationship with others, and even personal finances.

The Apostle John says, “Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well” (3 John 2). The Apostle John prays for us (listeners) that not only our physical good health is blessed but also our spiritual good health – the health of our whole body (flesh, mind, and soul). It indicates that the good health of your soul is prior to anything else as we remember the Sabbath day.

Jesus also observed his Sabbath day: “He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom” (Luke 4:16). He listened to God’s Words and reflected on his ministry in the light of his relationship with his heavenly Father. Jesus was often criticized by the Jewish religious leaders for his healing of the sick on the Sabbath day, but he justified his doing good work. “Jesus said to them, I ask you which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?” (Luke 6:9) One biblical scholar says, “To sanctify the Sabbath means to save life and do good, not just to rest but to *give* rest to others”

Sunday replaced the Sabbath day following Jesus’ resurrection from the tomb. We Christians celebrate and remember Sunday as the Lord’s Day because the risen Christ gives us the hope of eternal life.

Sabbath is a glimpse of eternal life that God has given us as a gift: At the time when God was giving the Torah to Israel, God said to them, “My children! If you accept the Torah and observe my commandments, I will give you for all eternity a thing most precious that I have in my possession.” “And what is that precious thing?” the people of Israel asked. “The world to come!” God replied. “Show us an example of the world to come,” they responded, “The Sabbath is an example of the world to come.” Taking time for God! Taking time for yourself! Take a glimpse of eternity through the Sabbath day!

Sabbath is the healer of relationships...by ignoring the Sabbath, we turn every day of life into an average day, a routine day, a working day. We lose a sense of celebration. We forget to stop and enjoy the world as God enjoyed creation. Scripture is clear: “And God looked and saw that it was good.”

God gave us the Sabbath in order for us to reconnect as well as to restore the relationship with God through rest and remembrance. On that day we honor God as well as our body and relationships with our loved ones. God wants us to release from work and set a day to the Lord, rest and refreshment and the worship of God. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy! Amen.