

# The Ten Commandments

## Commandment 4: Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy

To keep the Sabbath or not to keep the Sabbath is the most controversial issue of all the Ten Commandments. A Jewish believer was once accused of not being a true believer because he no longer kept the Sabbath day. Whole church denominations have been formed around the issue of keeping the Sabbath. Even Jesus was accused of not being from God because He doesn't keep the Sabbath! Then comes the issue of doing normal stuff – shopping, sport, work, etc – on a Sunday. So what is the Sabbath all about and are we, as Christians, under obligation to keep the Sabbath?

Exodus 20: 8 – 11 “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

### 1) A day of rest

- We are told to remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
- Thus keeping the Sabbath was not a new command but something that the Israelites already knew about. We see that at the seventh day was set apart for rest at the time of creation. This is mentioned in the fourth commandment
  - Genesis 2: 2 – 3 “By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so 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.”
  - In the Genesis account the word for rest is more of a ceasing of work rather than a resting to regain energy after hard labour.
  - In the Exodus account the word for rest means to lie down or be quiet, to withdraw.
- The purpose of rest on the Sabbath can be both.
  - According to verse 10 it is definitely a cessation of work.
  - Doing work on the Sabbath was strictly prohibited and even when God sent manna for the Israelites in the wilderness he provide a double amount on the 6<sup>th</sup> day so that they would not need to pick up food on the seventh day – the Sabbath. In fact He did not even provide manna on the Sabbath so that when they went to look for manna to collect they did not find any.
- God knows the needs of man and so instituted the Sabbath for man's needs. God knew that we cannot just keep on working without rest. We would burn out.
  - Mark 2: 27 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath
- The day of rest can also be for withdrawing, being quiet, reflecting, meditating.
  - This is something that we ought to learn to do more in our busy and fast paced world today.
  - God reflected on the world that He had made and declared it good. We need to stop and reflect on our lives – the way we live, our relationships, our work, our ministries, our attitudes – and see how we are doing and where we need to change.
  - We need time to meditate on God's word and how it applies to our lives.

## 2) A day set apart for the Lord

- The Sabbath isn't just for rest but was a day set apart by the Lord and for the Lord. – hence it is holy i.e. set apart.
- What is meant by being set apart for the Lord?
  - It is a day when the Lord is the sole focus of attention
  - It is a time when we do not only cease from work but we cease from all activity that would distract us from focussing our attention on the Lord.
- The problem with the Pharisees is that they concentrated on the side of ceasing from work but did not focus their attention on the Lord – who He is and what He desire to do and what He wants from us.
- This was the problem when they always confronted Jesus but they didn't see the work of God in Jesus when He healed people on the Sabbath. They were concentrating too much on not doing anything that they missed what God was doing in their midst

## 3) Application for Christians

- Christians are not under the Old Covenant and are under no obligation to keep the terms of the Old Covenant
  - Colossians 2: 16 – 17 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ
  - Romans 10: 4 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.
  - Galatians 3: 1 – 10; 4: 8 – 10
  - Romans 14: 5 – 6 One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God
- The early Christians met on the first day of the week
  - John 20: 19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"
  - Acts 20: 7 On the first day of the week we came together to break bread.
  - The Jewish believers started off meeting on the Sabbath but moved over to meet on the first day of the week also known as “the Lord’s Day” – Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week.
  - The Sabbath was significant in remembering the work of creation. The first day is significant in remembering the resurrection of Christ
- It is advisory and wise for everyone to take day of rest
  - We would be wise to take a day's rest one day a week
  - We live in a fast paced world where people are burning out with stress and over work.
  - God has set us an example to follow to work six days a week and take a day's rest.
  - In our fast paced world it is easy to push God out of our lives even as Christians
  - It would honour God to set aside a day to set our focus on Him for worship, prayer, meditation on His Word and service – Jesus did service by healing the sick on the Sabbath
  - We need to ask ourselves after our day of rest:
    - Do I feel refreshed physically and spiritually?
    - Have I honoured the Lord?
    - Have I served Him?