

Remember His Day

In our study of the first three Commandments of the Decalogue, we have seen the way that God intends for His people to relate to Him. Now we come to the 4th Commandment and it's clear that God has something to say to us about how we spend our time. In both Jesus' day and our day there has been confusion and even controversy about what we should or should not do on the Sabbath or Lord's Day. The main problem, however, is not usually in our application of the 4th Commandment, but in a lack of biblical conviction regarding the Commandment. The real question for each of us is this: is there any continuing significance about a day that is holy to the Lord?

Exodus 20:8-11

8“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 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. 11 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.

I. We Have a Positive Command (v. 8)

- A. The previous three commands have been about what we should not do. This is the first command telling us something we should do. And the command is simply stated, “Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy.” Two important words to note in this verse are “day” and “holy.” God is saying something to us about our time (day), and He is commanding us to set it apart (holy) from other time. So it is clear that there is here an issue of God's lordship over our time and a concern regarding the priority of our focus during that time.

II. There is a Purposeful Practice (vv. 9-10)

- A. In these verses, God elaborates on the practical application of the command, and it is interesting to note a couple of things in regards to the Old Testament practice of the Sabbath. First, God's people are told to rest. But this resting has a significance that we in our 21st century Western culture might miss. These Israelites had just a few months before been slaves in Egypt, and it was all their people had known for 400 years. No master had ever given them rest, but now their God, the ultimate Master, was giving them a day of rest. So this rest was connected to a deep understanding of God's mercy.

Not only that, but in the parallel statement of the Commandments in Deuteronomy 5, we read that God wanted them to remember that He had delivered them from slavery in Egypt. So there was also a remembering of their redemption that marked the practice of the Sabbath. Unfortunately, by the time of Jesus, the Israelites had lost this two-fold focus of the Sabbath and had turned it into a long list of do's and don'ts regarding work. Christ had much to say regarding the right focus of the Sabbath, culminating with His statement that He Himself was Lord of the Sabbath.

The New Testament Church did not practice the Sabbath, but began to do something else that is interesting to note. They began to be committed to gathering on the first day of the week (Sunday). They did this because it was the day that Christ had risen. Throughout the book of Acts we see mention of Christians gathering on the first day of the week to hear God's Word, to pray, to fellowship, and to celebrate the Lord's supper. They began to call it the Lord's Day and they had an intentionality about the day and a priority of worship on the day, always in the context of gathering together.

III. It Points to Something Greater (v. 11)

A. In this final verse we must address what it means when, in referring to the Creation account, it says that God “rested.” It cannot mean that God needed a nap or a vacation to get away. No, we learn from Scripture that it means that God “settled into” His creation. So our rest is not primarily a resting “from,” but it is a resting “to” and resting “in” the Lord Himself. Even more than this, there is an explanation of rest in Hebrews 3 and 4 that reveals for us the ultimate and eternal rest offered in the finished work of Christ. This is the true rest that ought to be the focus of the Lord’s Day.

Discussion Questions

1. How does this command fit with the other nine Commandments?
2. Why would God have something to say about the use of our time?
3. How would the practice of this command bring blessing to God’s people?
4. Why would it be so important for God’s people to set aside a day to focus on God’s mercy and redemption?
5. What are some ways we make the focus of our resting an escape “from”? What would be different about our rest if our focus was on resting “in” and resting “to” the Lord?

Going Deeper

1. How do you think you need to develop in your biblical conviction about a day that is holy to the Lord?
2. What changes do you need to make in your practice of the Lord’s Day in order to reflect your biblical conviction?