

CHAPTER FOUR

Rest Stop Ahead

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping 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, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ 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. ~Exodus 20:8-11

INTRODUCTION

Years ago, when I was 15 years old, our family took a vacation to visit family we had not seen for years, we traveled from Rochester, New York to Missoula, Montana. It took days – it seemed like weeks! One of the things that made the trip bearable were the well-advertised *rest stops*. Those places were always welcome respites to the long periods of travel. So too, this Fourth Commandment shows us a God who is compassionate about our physical needs as well as our need for spiritual refreshment.

In this Chapter we will be looking at the commandment regarding our *Work*, our *Rest* and our *Worship*. Remember that the first three Commandments have to do with our relationship with God, while the last seven have to do with our relationship with others. This Fourth Commandment is a transitional commandment and deals primarily with our personal needs. This Commandment leads us from contemplating intimacy with God into practical applications for daily living. We do not mean to imply that while we deal with life on a daily basis that we are no longer to be intimate with God, nor do we wish to imply that those first three Commandments are not *practical*. They are mentioned first, because they are to be *first* in our priority. Jesus told His listeners, “... Seek ye **first** the kingdom of God and His righteousness...” (Matthew 5:13). We are simply shifting our focus from the Heavenly to the Earthly; from the Vertical to the Horizontal. So, like Moses of old, we must descend the mount and turn our attention to those things that we confront on a daily basis. Hopefully, those first three Commandments will have an impact on how we view the horizontal.

Let us turn our attention then to God's Command, in particular, His Fourth Commandment; and, in so doing, let us search under the direction of His Spirit for the meaning that will bring *rest unto our souls*.

The emphasis here has generally been on rest from work. There are actually two parts to this Commandment. First, *work* for six days - verse 9; and second, *rest* on the Seventh day - verse 10. God established precedence for both Commands Himself – compare verse 11 with Genesis Chapter One. God worked at creating the earth in *six days*, and He rested on the *seventh day*. The precedent for man's *work* was established before the Fall. God charged man to have *dominion* over creatures (Genesis 1:28); God commanded Adam to *keep* the garden (Genesis 2:15). God has not nullified that command; man is still expected to labor for his meat, “The laborer is worthy of his hire” (Luke 10:7).

Paul instructed the Christians at Thessalonica:

II Thessalonians 3:10, For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that *if any would not work, neither should he eat.* ~Emphasis added.

One of the sad things that has happened in our nation as a result of the *Great Depression* of the 30's was the instigation of social reforms that led to the deterioration of the *work ethic*. Laziness has become a way of life. In all fairness, there have been numerous attempts to rehabilitate and train individuals so that they can become productive members of society. But, by and large, those attempts have met with failure!

Let me illustrate: Several years ago, I was speaking with a disabled veteran. He was disabled by his own hand, but the government had established that it was due to his tenure in Vietnam that led him to shoot himself. At that time, he was receiving something like \$1,200 a month. He refused to work; he refused to go to school and learn; he liked his disabled status because he didn't *have* to work. Every time I would suggest something he would say: "Yea, but..." and go into a long explanation as to how his disability disqualified him from pursuing that particular suggestion. He was, perhaps, one of the unhappiest "Christians" I have ever met. God wanted more for him than he wanted for himself. He never, to my knowledge, asked God what he *could* do!

Our purpose here is not to malign welfare, other forms of Government assistance, or the people who truly need that assistance. Our purpose is to reveal the will of God as it pertains to our daily lives!

Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:8, "But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." Vine's Expository Dictionary defines "infidel" as: "disbelieving, without Christian faith, untrustworthy".

The inventor, Thomas A. Edison, set himself an ambitious goal. He was to come up with a major new invention every six months and a minor invention every ten days. When he died, he had 1,092 US patents and over 2,000 foreign ones. Edison knew that by setting such goals for himself, and striving to reach them, he was bound to increase his output. The same principle applies in our work. No matter what goals you set for yourself, they are bound to help your results. Challenge yourself, seek God's will – then rise to meet the challenge.

At the opposite end of the spectrum are those whom society labels as "workaholics". They seem to spend *all* their time working; everything is either work-oriented, or work-related. These individuals are literally consumed with their *work*. It has been stated that there has never been a death-bed confession where the person dying has said, "I wish I had spent more time at the office!" God never intended for our *work* to become our *life*! **He** is to be our life! And **He** is to be Lord of our *work habits*!

The second part of this Command shows us *three* aspects of this Law: The Physical: *Rest from our work*; The Spiritual: *Reverence in our Worship*; and, The Emotional: *Realization of our worth*!

I. REST FROM OUR WORK

That word *rest* means "to remain, be quiet." The precedent for *rest* was set by God Himself, (Genesis 2:3). That precept was passed on to Israel when they were camping in the desert (Exodus 16:23). Incidentally, that verse shows the first use of the word *Sabbath* in Scripture.

God gave instruction that they were not to gather manna on the Sabbath but were to gather a

double portion on the preceding day. Nevertheless, they “proved out” His warning; and, instead of gathering a double portion on the sixth day, they expected to go out and gather what they needed on the seventh. Imagine their surprise and dismay when they were forced to fast because there was no manna available. Before that He had warned them that anything that they gathered above their daily needs would rot and become filled with worms. You guessed it; they tested that precept, too.

Obedience to this Command is an exercise of faith ... trusting that God will provide or make-up for the *expected* shortfall. In Exodus 31, we find that this Command was a sign to God's people of their separation from the world unto God and of God's covenant faithfulness,

Exodus 31:13, 16, 17 Say to the Israelites, 'You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, *so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.* ¹⁶ The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. ¹⁷ It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested.'
~Emphasis added.

Even though we have strong scriptures like the one above, this Commandment is one of the most neglected by God's people. As a result of Israel's perpetual neglect, God sent strong warning through His prophets; and, when that warning went unheeded, He sent judgment. After the judgment had come, and the people of Israel were captives in Babylonia, they began to question what had happened and why. God used His Prophet, Ezekiel, to give them the answer. He told them that they had been given the Sabbath as a covenant sign between God and them. He told them that they had rebelled against God by refusing to walk according to the Law and that they had polluted God's Sabbaths (Ezekiel 20:12-24). The word “polluted”, as used in that passage, means “to defile, to wound or to profane, to treat as ‘common’.” If the only difference between this day (the Sabbath) and the other six is that we attend a worship service, then we are guilty of treating a large portion of this day as “common.” We are guilty of doing as Israel did by failing to keep it *Holy!* We will consider that further in The Spiritual Scope of this Law.

Prior to being taken into captivity by the Babylonians, God brought warning after warning to Israel through their prophets. In particular, Isaiah was mightily used by God to remind the people of their covenant relationship. Isaiah 58:13-14 is perhaps the *best* Biblical explanation of the parameters of the Sabbath. We read this:

If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honorable, and *if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,* ¹⁴ then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob. The mouth of the LORD has spoken. ~Emphasis added.

Did you grasp that? God is pleading with His people to stop doing their own thing for their own pleasure on the Sabbath. He has set this day apart so that His people can have time for Him. Think back over your own use of this day. Do you call the Sabbath a “delight”? Do you seek to honor Him throughout the whole day? Or, is there a mixture of the “holy” and the “profane”

(remember, “profane” means *common*)? We can’t wait to get home from Church so we can watch our favorite sports team, and we excuse ourselves with the thought that we are “relaxing”. What we are really doing is profaning the Sabbath!

II. REVERENCE IN OUR WORSHIP

It is in the area of the Spiritual that God’s people tend to lose sight of the full meaning of this Command. As a result, the physical adherence to this Command either becomes more lax or stricter, depending on the mind-set of the individual. For example, in Mark 2, Jesus and His disciples were walking through a corn field on the Sabbath and the disciples, being hungry, picked some corn and began eating. Immediately, the Pharisees began to denounce the act as that of breaking the Sabbath. I wonder where they came from? Were they hiding in the corn? Or perhaps they were picking some themselves. We have a tendency to do that ... condemn others for the same things that we do. Whatever the case, their purpose was to trip Him because of their own self-righteousness where the Law was concerned. In Matthew’s account of this incident, they then asked Jesus if it was “lawful” to heal on the Sabbath. Jesus revealed to them the *spiritual* meaning contained in this Command to “remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy”. Here are His words;

Matthew 12:9-13, Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue,¹⁰ and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"¹¹ He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out?"¹² How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."¹³ Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other.

In an attempt to promote the *physical limitations* imposed by the Law, they missed the *spiritual implications*! Jesus prefaced His words with, “For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day.” (Matthew 12:8). **That** is one of the ways we *keep it holy*: by submitting to His Lordship. I am a fan of the Phoenix Suns, an NBA team. It gives me pleasure to watch them play. When they play on Sunday, I have a dilemma. I can listen to what God says about His day, or I can fulfill my own pleasure. In determining the things that we do on that day, have we asked Jesus if it is what He would have us do? We call Him *Lord* yet we do not do what He has told us to do. He told us through the letter to the Hebrews, “... forsake not the assembling of yourselves together...”. Yet for many, worshiping with God’s people is low priority.

I once talked with a person about this command, and his remark to me was that it was *law*; and he was not going to be brought back into subjection to the Law. We are not speaking of being in subjection *to the Law* but being in subjection *to the Lord of this Law* – Jesus!

We sing, “I’ll go where you want me to go, dear Lord”; but, in our hearts we mean, “As long as it’s not to Church on Sunday evening.” If the truth were known, as God knows it, too many of God’s people are gathered around their idol. I like what David Wilkerson says about the television: “If it’s not your idol, why is all your furniture grouped around it?” Remember the reason God brought judgment upon Israel was because they forsook Him in *favor* of the idols in their heart.

Exodus 20:8 says we are to “remember this day and **keep** it holy”. The word keep is the Hebrew word “abad” and is defined by Vine’s as a primitive root that means to work and, by

implication, to serve, till, or enslave. It is used several times in Exodus 20; in verse 2 it is translated “serve”; in verse 6 it is translated “keep”; and, in verse 9 it is translated “labor”. Again, according to verse 8, we are to “remember this day to keep it *holy*.” “Holy” means “Set apart”. That same word is translated in other portions of Scripture as “sanctify”.

According to Vine’s,

“...in the primary stem it signifies an act whereby, or a state wherein, *people or things are set aside for me in worship of God: they are consecrated or ‘made sacred.’* By this act and in this state *the thing or person consecrated is to be withheld from workaday use (profane use) and to be treated with special care as a possession of God.*”¹ ~Emphasis added.

This is how we show *Reverence in our Worship*. We are set apart from the common tasks that we are engaged in throughout the week. We set apart one day in seven in order that we may devote ourselves wholly to Him. When “keep” and “holy” are looked at in the broader context, we come to realize that what God is stating here is that we are to devote ourselves, we are to *labor* to keep this day holy. Why is that? Because obedience is discipline and discipline takes *effort*. Jesus said, “Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life.” (John 6:27). How do we *labor for the meat which endures*? We should use as our guide for this “holy” day the words of the Apostle Paul,

Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—*this is your spiritual act of worship*.² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. ~Emphasis added.

Romans 12:1 stated that in view of God’s mercy we are urged to offer our bodies as *living sacrifices*. How do we present our bodies as “living sacrifices”? First, it is in recognizing that it is by God’s *mercy* that we are not consumed (see Lamentations 3:22). Second, by offering the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of our lips, and third, by doing good and sharing with others (see Hebrews 13:15-16 & Philippians 4:18). Where are we to do this? We are to do this in the assembly of believers. How are we *conformed to this world*? We are conformed by doing the same things that the world does with the same motive ... self-indulgence! How are we *transformed*? We are transformed by the *renewing of our minds* – thinking as Jesus would think. After all, according to I Corinthians 2:16, we have the mind of Christ.

One of the difficulties Israel found itself in is recorded for us by Ezekiel. Even though we mentioned this in Chapter 3, it has application here too:

Ezekiel 22:26, “Her priests do violence to my law and profane my holy things; they do not distinguish between the holy and the common; they teach that there is no difference between the unclean and the clean; and they shut their eyes to the keeping of my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned....” (profane = common).

Speaking of the responsibility of the priests, (keeping in mind that *we too are His priests*) God

¹ PC Study Bible for Windows, Ver 2.1B; Vine’s Expository Dictionary; ©1988-1996.

said, “They are to teach my people the *difference between the holy and the common* and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean.” (Ezekiel 44:23) ~Emphasis added.

We have treated this day like any other. There is no difference in our thinking nor in our actions as to how we approach this day. Too often, our attitude is: “I’m sure glad our worship time is at 9:30. We’ll be done by 10:30 or 11:00 (Lord willing) and then I can do what I want.”

One of the interesting debates in Christian circles concerns the actual *day* that we are to set aside. This scripture speaks of the *Sabbath* which translates into our Saturday—consequently, there are those who believe that *Saturday* is the only day of the week that is acceptable to God for our worship. In response to that, the emphasis here is not so much on a particular day, as it is on *one-in-seven*. This means that there is to be one day out of every seven that is set aside for rest and worship. The Christian church, for the most part, sets aside *Sunday* as that day because of its spiritual significance in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 14:5-9 speaks of regarding a day as *special* – we will pay attention to this later on in the chapter. Unfortunately, we manage to fixate on what is relatively unimportant and neglect the weightier matters of the Law (see Matthew 23:23). If that is true in our dealings with the *Sabbath*, then we are linked with the Pharisees rather than with Jesus’ true disciples.

Because we have done violence to this Command, it is, in my opinion, the reason why so many who call themselves Christians have difficulty with self-worth. That is not to say that to disobey will make you “loony”; but it may give rise to all sorts of emotional problems. Neither is it to say that all emotional or mental problems have their root in the disobedience of this Command. What I *am* saying is that one of the purposes for this Command was to show us God’s interest in man’s physical, spiritual and *emotional* well-being.

III. REALIZATION OF OUR WORTH

Remember Jesus’ answer to the Pharisees’ questions regarding the Sabbath, “... man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27). Remember, too, in Matthew’s account of that incident, Jesus stated, “How much then is a man better than a sheep?” What Jesus was trying to show was God’s overwhelming concern for the highest of His creation: Man!

It is interesting that man, in his objections to Sabbath observance, has bought into Satan’s lie and made it his own; meaning, that God wants to keep us from *fullness of life*. One of the most prolific occurrences in our thoughts, when confronted with this Command, is that this Commandment is primarily negative in its implications. We *can’t* do this, or we *can’t* do that! “You mean I can’t watch *any* TV on Sunday?” “But what if...” Our focus centers on what is *unlawful*; and consequently, our rebellion rises on the heels of those thoughts, rather than focusing on the positive, and what is *Lawful*. In other words, focusing on what God has done *for* us instead of what God has seemingly done *to* us!

We *need* to initiate a paradigm shift! We *must* re-orient our thoughts about how God thinks toward us. He spoke to Jeremiah, “I know the thoughts I have towards you... thoughts of peace and not of evil” (Jeremiah 29:11).

But the fleshly mind automatically thinks: “God’s mean”, and “We can’t have fun and relax the way we want.” That is patently false! God’s desire is that we delight in Him; and, He has made provision for us to find *physical and emotional* rest from the pressures of life; and, in that time of *rest*, to have time to get to know Him! How often have we been hindered in our daily devotional time, interrupted by cares of home, job, or emotional distress because of the pressures

of daily living? He has set up the solar system to enhance our bodies' need for physical rest, but He knew that would not be enough. He also knew that there is an innate need for *spiritual refreshment*, and to deny ourselves that is to open the door to a multitude of ills and frustrations that perhaps He never intended for us to have to deal with. We say "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"; the Sabbath rest is God's ounce of prevention! Religion is said to be good for the soul. It seems to be good for the body, too.

A study led by medical sociologist Kenneth F. Ferraro of Purdue University shows people who regularly worship say they feel healthier than those who don't. Researchers compiled data from interviews with 1,473 people and found of those who said they don't worship regularly, 9% reported poor health and 26% claimed excellent health. Among the regular worshippers, 4% said they were in poor health, while 36% reported excellent health.²

I recently heard that an increasing trend in the medical profession is to focus on the whole person because of the studies that have confirmed the link between emotional and physical. Would it not be logical to assume that there is also a dynamic link between the *physical* and the *spiritual*? It is generally adhered to that stress accelerates cancer! One of the known contributors of stress is the fast pace of our society. We've all seen the advertisements posted along the highway: "Speed Kills!" Well, the speed of our society tends toward the same. We need to do as the Psalmist stated, "Cease striving (Let go) and know that I am God..." (Psalm 46:10).

Jesus said to His disciples, "Come apart and rest awhile..." (Mark 6:31). Vance Havner commented on this Scripture by saying, "Jesus knows we must come apart and rest awhile, or else we may just plain come apart."

There is an old Greek motto that says, "You will break the bow if you keep it always bent." Listen, Jesus died so that the reality of this Law would become visible in us (see Romans 8:3,4).



We have spent considerable time exploring various truths presented to us in Scripture regarding this Commandment. If we were to take a survey as to what you considered *significant* about this Law, there would be many different answers; primarily, because we each gravitate to those things with which we are familiar, or that have touched us in a personal way. There are those who are struck by the *natural meaning of this Law* and would draw special comfort from the fact that God Himself had their *physical* welfare in mind; or perhaps, some have been convicted by the Biblical concept of *physical work*. There are others who are touched by the *spiritual side of this Law* and would come away with a new sense of *Reverence in Worship*. There are others, who would gravitate to the *emotional meaning of this Law* because of a personal need for *Realization of their Worth*. The realization is that God is interested enough in them to provide a special time and place to get away from all the stress, all the disappointments, all the fears, brought on by a hostile world!

Part II

In Part II we will be considering the *Focus, Force and Form* of our remembrance.

I. THE FOCUS OF OUR REMEMBRANCE

² USA Today, 10-19-92

We have already stated that in Exodus 31 this Command was a sign to God's people of God's Covenant faithfulness. As a result of *Covenant*, we are to set this day aside in our observance just as God has set us aside for His use. Is it possible that there is a relationship here between the usefulness of the Church to God and that same Church's use of the *Sabbath day*? Isn't it a likely conclusion that because we are not focused on Him on His day that we have difficulty focusing on Him other days? That is why we need to consider: the *Force of our Remembrance*. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it **holy**."

II. THE FORCE OF OUR REMEMBRANCE

The *Force of our Remembrance* is found in the Covenant, in its blessings and curses. The fact that this Command carries a blessing is seen in the words, "Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath Day". The word "blessed" is the Hebrew word "Barak", and occurs first in Genesis 1:22, "God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.'" What we see is that God promises to take responsibility for producing what needs to be produced. This has already been noted in the instruction God gave to Israel about gathering Manna. He told them to gather enough on the sixth day for their needs on the seventh.

In the following Psalm, we are given a picture of God's Covenant faithfulness to all His creation:

Psalm 104:27-30 These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. ²⁸ When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. ²⁹ When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. ³⁰ When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.

That is also a picture of God's *covenant blessing* for the Sabbath. How do we know that? Because He never gives a Command without also giving the provision to implement it. The above Psalm shows God's commitment to His creation to provide for them. His Command to Israel to gather enough manna on the sixth day to suffice for both the sixth and seventh days is a case in point. When Israel followed God's Command, there was enough for the Sabbath. When they did not, they went without. **He** created the Sabbath and hallowed it; now, we need to, also.

But there is another aspect to the *Force of Covenant*—one that for the most part Christians and the Church have shied away from. We don't want to deal with the curses He proclaimed for violation of this Commandment. We have already seen how Judah went into captivity to the Babylonians because they violated God's Sabbaths. God's word has already been stated. He *has* to follow through; yet, our tendency is to gravitate to the blessings and ignore the curses.

III. THE FORM OF OUR REMEMBRANCE

Not only does our *remembrance* have the force of covenant blessings and curses, but there is to be a certain *Form* to our Remembrance. Whenever we are trying to define a word in Scripture, it is good practice to find where that word is first used in Scripture and take note of *how* it is used. In the laws of Hermeneutics (interpretation of Scripture), this is called the Law of First Mention.

The first occurrence of **Remember**: *zakar*, is in Genesis 8:1 with God as the subject: But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark; and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded. This same word is used again in Genesis 9:15, where God said to Noah: And I will remember my covenant...; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.³

What do you think would have happened to Noah if God *remembered* him the way we *remember* the Sabbath? What would have happened had God's *remembrance* been as haphazard as man's? Can you hear God say, after a second or third flood: "It's no big deal. I forgot, that's all!"

This word: 'Remember', is used of God in respect to His covenant promises and is followed by an action to fulfill His covenant. In Genesis 19:29, God delivered Lot from Sodom because of His covenant with Abraham to bless all the nations through him: God remembered Abraham and brought Lot out of the catastrophe....⁴

We find the same word, *remember*, used to describe God's renewed activity towards the people of Israel during their slavery in Egypt. "Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have *remembered* my covenant." ⁶ Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment'" (Exodus 6:5-6). Do you think by the use of the word *remember* that He forgot them? Fortunately for us, God does not "forget" His people. Isaiah reminds us of this in Isaiah 49:15-16. "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! ¹⁶ See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me." We know the fulfillment of God's *remembering* us and our need by the nail scars in Jesus' hands.

In spite of this, when destruction came, Judah complained in Lamentations 5:20, "Why do you always forget us, why do you forsake us for so long?" That's quite a charge to bring against God! God *never* forgets, but Israel would often "forget" God's law. Do you remember that verse from Hosea that we used at the beginning of this book?

Hosea 4:6 "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. 'Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored (forgotten - KJV) the law of your God, I also will ignore your children.'"

Not only were they (as are we) guilty of ignoring or forgetting God's Law, they forgot about Him period. "Does a maiden forget her jewelry, a bride her wedding ornaments? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number" (Jeremiah 2:32).

What God expects of us regarding the Sabbath is not only that we make an effort to remember this day; but also, that we make every effort to *keep this day holy*! It is not to be an optional thing;

³ BibleSoft; Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

it is tied into our *Covenant relationship*. It is *remembering* followed by *action*. We should be following the *form* initiated by God Himself.

We are told that the human brain records everything; everything your eyes have seen is recorded; everything your ears have heard is recorded; every touch, every sensation, every smell, our brains record it all! As a result, we don't forget; we simply "fail to remember". Now, that may sound like semantics to you; but the truth here is that we fail to make the necessary effort to set this day aside as unique among seven.

This concept of *remembering* marks the history of Israel at every major point. The promise "to remember" was repeated in the Covenant at Sinai (Leviticus 26:40-45). God's remembrance was sung in the Psalms, and the promise to remember was repeated by the prophets in regard to restoration from captivity (Ezekiel 16:60). The New Covenant promise is made through Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:34), "...I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

How would we like it if God took as much effort in forgetting our sins as we take in *remembering* His Sabbath? Look at the lengths God went to in order to bring about our salvation. Scripture tells us that the plan was made before the world was formed. Therefore, from the time of Adam's transgression until the coming of Jesus, God's focus was on presenting Jesus. "In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son..." (Galatians 4:4). In light of that, what *effort* goes into our setting this day apart? What preparations have been made to enter into His rest?

Hebrews 4:4, 9-11 For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: 'And on the seventh day God rested from all his work.'⁹ There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;¹⁰ for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.¹¹ Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

The context of the above verses centers around our *rest* from our own efforts to produce righteousness—we rest in the work that has already been accomplished by Jesus. The fact that "Sabbath-rest" is the term used is proof that God still considers the weekly Sabbath to be in force.

This verse indirectly establishes the obligation of the Sabbath; for the type continues until the antitype supersedes it: so legal sacrifices continued until the great antitypical sacrifice superseded it. As then the antitypical Sabbath rest will not be until Christ comes to usher us into it, the typical earthly Sabbath must continue until then. The Jews call the future rest the 'day which is all Sabbath.'⁵

~Jamieson, Fausset and Brown

When is the *rest* that is mentioned above? There are two aspects to it: First, our present rest, mentioned above, in that we no longer have to labor to enter His presence since the blood of Jesus has secured the way into that *most holy place*; and second, ultimately when we stand before the King! This is when we are ushered through death into everlasting life. Are we ready to meet the King? I fear that too many look for the second and pay scant attention to the first!

Further Considerations

⁵ BibleSoft; Ibid

What about Preachers and Pastors? They *work* on the Sabbath. Priests in the Old Testament Temple performed many “duties” on the Sabbath but were, in fact, exempt because of the “law of necessity” – doing what is right!

Matthew 12:5 “Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent?”

The rule here then is found in verses 8 and 12:

Matthew 12:8 “For *the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.* ¹² ... Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” ~Emphasis added.

What day is the true Sabbath? Some Christians take the literal meaning of the word “Sabbath” which means “seventh” and they state that it is to be observed on our seventh day, ie. Saturday. Sunday is substituted among the majority of Christians because of Mary’s visit to the tomb on the “first day of the week”. It is the day of the Resurrection of Jesus. It appears that in the early Church *both* days were observed. Regardless of the day, however, Scripture is quite clear as to the *use* of the day; i.e. whether it is dedicated to God or not.

The main criteria in helping us determine what “day” is right for us to use as our “Sabbath” should not be culture or even Christian tradition, but it should be the assembly times of those with whom we seek to fellowship. The following Scriptures should help us sort through and prioritize the Sabbath according to God's will.

Romans 14:5-9 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.* ⁶ 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. ⁷ For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. ⁸ If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. ⁹ *For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.*
~Emphasis added.

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.* ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; *the reality, however, is found in Christ.* ~Emphasis added.

Hebrews 10:25 (KJV) *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.* ~Emphasis added.

I John 3:19-21 This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence ²⁰ whenever our hearts condemn us. For *God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.* ²¹ Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God. ~Emphasis added.

Prayer for Forgiveness:

Father, I come to You now in Jesus' name, recognizing that I have not given You the glory due Your name by neglecting to keep the Sabbath *holy*. I have too often substituted my desires and my definition of *rest* for Your will. I now submit myself to You and ask you to guide my paths so that even in my *rest* I will bring You honor and glory – not my will, but Yours be done. Thank You for Your concern and consideration of my well-being as to provide me with a special day free from the cares of this life that I can be refreshed physically and prepared spiritually for the coming week. I love You! In Jesus' name Amen.

The Bible instructs us to give honor to whom honor is due (Romans 13:7). Heading the list of those we are instructed to honor is our parents. The next Chapter will detail how the Fifth Commandment impacts not only our lives in the present but our future as well.