

## Remember the Sabbath and Keep It Holy

The 4th Commandment, in line with the first three, tells the nation of Israel to focus on God. In six days God did his work of creation and on the seventh day he rested. Therefore God blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy... (Ex 20.8-11). The two prominent words in this command are Sabbath and Holy. Sabbath has more of a cease and desist meaning than just the word rest. God did not need to rest from his labor as we understand rest but instead he ceased, he stopped, he finished all of his work, because his work was completed. The commandment of the Sabbath was good and beneficial to Israel for its time, but the religious order of Jesus' day used this precept to bring charges against him which led to the trial and ultimately to his crucifixion. Jesus' worked 7 days a week. He healed on the Sabbath, he plucked corn for food on the Sabbath. These actions for good incensed Israel's religious order. They contrived ways to catch him and accuse him as a lawbreaker, never minding Jesus' responses: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." and "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." and "Is it not lawful to do good on Sabbath days...?" The Sabbath day, however, does exist for us in this manner: Heb 4.9 "There remains then a Sabbath-rest for the people of God." We are to make every effort to enter that Sabbath-rest. Just as God did cease and desist from his own work, we are to work with all of our heart as working for the Lord. Heaven is our Sabbath-rest, our heavenly rest. For an eternity, we will cease from earthly toil and enjoy a blissful life as a new creature in a new creation--a new heaven and a new earth. We work and finish the race of life, then enter the Sabbath to rest.

This Sabbath-rest is still under construction. Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you...." (John 14.1-4). This brings us to the 2nd word--Holy. Without holiness no one will see the Lord (Heb 12.14). Our walk with The Lord is a daily walk. Different from Israel's people being holy only one day a week, Jesus has set a higher standard for his disciples to be holy every day of the week. In keeping with all 10 commandments the bar has been raised because the stakes are much higher. Eternal life is at stake and Jesus paid the debt that would have pronounced eternal death for all of us. Jesus Christ our Lord, through the Spirit of holiness was declared to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead (Rom 1.1-6). "If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches (Rom 11.16). "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. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind... (Rom 12.1-2). We all know there is only One who is truly holy: "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Rev 4.8). God has chosen the Christian nation before the foundation of the world, that its citizens should be holy and without blame before him in love (Eph 1.4). None wear a badge of holiness. We can only attempt to live in a manner that serves not the needs of self but serves the needs of others. Jesus, the Holy One of Israel, came with a single-minded purpose: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many". The holiness we seek will never be achieved on our own but only through being connected as a branch to the holy vine, Christ Jesus our Lord. Thank you, Jesus, for providing holiness. Help us, dear God, to do our part through our work of service to others in our allotted time on earth, so that we can enjoy that eternal Sabbath-rest when our work on earth is done. (sj--4/14)