

# Rise Up Men of God



**The Sabbath – to keep it holy!**

**Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.  
Exodus 20:8**

## **THE COMMAND**

God commands man to remember the sabbath day and to keep it holy.

Therefore, man is to remember the sabbath day and to keep it holy – because God commands it and that settles it.

Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. [emphasis].

Exodus 20:9

The LORD requires all Israelites to set apart and keep holy one day in seven in a week.

The basis for this commandment was the 7<sup>th</sup> day from Creation (Genesis 2:2-3), and the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week for the NT church (1 Corinthians 16:1-2, Acts 20:7) also known as the Christian sabbath or the Lord's Day. (Revelation 1:10)

Hence, in keeping the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment, we are to remember God's creation that He rested and redemption, in particular for God's children as evidence of their faith and trust in the LORD to provide all they need in six days.

Furthermore, those in authority, such as husbands, fathers and leaders in the church have a greater duty not only to obey God's Word as a godly example, but also to see that those under their charge also obey it.

## **THE CALL**

### **Why We Must Keep the Sabbath Holy!**

#### **i. Holiness demanded**

Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it *is* a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that *ye* may know that I *am* the LORD that doth sanctify you.

Exodus 31:13

The keeping of the sabbath was the final doctrine that the LORD reiterated after spending 40 days and night communing with Moses on Mount Sinai. Moses descended thereafter with the Ten Commandments written with the finger of God on two tablets of stones (Exodus 31:18)

Here, the LORD emphasized the unequivocal command for His people to keep His sabbath.

When God commands His people to keep the sabbath, He also provides us with the reason for doing so - a sign that distinguishes us from the world.

The world has no qualms not keeping the sabbath day in her ignorance. Man in sin is spiritually blind and dead within and without. The evidence is his greed and insatiable desire to get more and more, where enough is never enough. Unbelievers join one another in the pleasure mad throng to revel in sin and carnality over the weekend, as business owners also seek to cash in on Sunday profits.

In stark contrast, the church of God, like Israel of old, congregates to worship the LORD their God in holy convocation – clearly distinct and set apart from the world. God's children are unperturbed by the madness around them and unflustered at the prospect of 'losing out' on whatever worldly 'advantage' that extra day of business or studying may confer them in this physical and material world for they know these are vanity of vanities.

God's people keep the sabbath by faith and in obedience to God's command, trusting in the LORD to provide all they need in this life and the life to come.

Thus we see that the LORD alone sanctifies His people, and He sanctifies His people by His law when they obey by keeping the sabbath day holy. In obeying

God's commandments, God's people evidences their holiness within and set themselves apart from this unholy and sinful world to be holy without.

God's people are dedicated and consecrated unto the LORD – for our holiness is unto the LORD. We must know and remember that it is the LORD that doth sanctify His people.

## ii. Holiness to the LORD

Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it *is* holy unto you [emphasis]: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth *any* work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh *is* the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD [emphasis]: whosoever doeth *any* work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, *for a perpetual covenant.*

Exodus 31:14-16

The sabbath day is holy unto God's people (the twelve tribes who worked the land) because it is a sign of their faith and trust in the LORD and His people throughout the generations – for a perpetual covenant. Therefore, God's people should obey – to keep the sabbath day by faith. The impact to the surrounding nations is immediate.

Man is given six days to work to keep body and soul together, but the weekly sabbath is one day in a week separated from servile work to make money.

God gives man six days to do his business. In these six days, he must be occupied with his work and make his workmanship his occupation.

But '*the seventh is the sabbath of rest*' – when we rest from our worldly employment. It is '*holy to the LORD*' – for it is consecrated and dedicated to the worship and service of God, Christian fellowship, non-money-making activities for adults, no housework for homemakers and maids, no studying for students, and all things not sinful. This day is separated unto the LORD.

Even before the giving of the 10 commandments, the LORD had already given specific instructions to the children of Israel during the exodus to gather and bake twice as much on the 6<sup>th</sup> day and to keep the leftovers for the next day, for there shall not be any manna found on the sabbath day. (Exodus 16:22-26) Unlike the other days of the week, the manna did not spoil – '*it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein*'. (Exodus 16:24) The way to keep the sabbath day holy is to live day by day, trusting in the LORD to provide what we need for our physical wellbeing so that we will hate mammon and love God.

Furthermore, the LORD also gave details in the keeping of the sabbath day to the children of Israel. He told them, *'ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day'*. (Exodus 35:3)

This was a unique one-off instruction and not to be continued. The context for this instruction was the construction of the Tabernacle. The Israelites must rest, i.e. keep the sabbath day holy even during the construction. No fire means no beating of tools or making of nails, etc. Constructing the Tabernacle was essential but not important enough for them to ignore the observance of the holy sabbath keeping. [Note: The Israelites did not work the land to make money, for they were still in the wilderness. Keeping the sabbath day holy when applied after Israel entered the Promised Land would be more significant.]

The LORD told Moses that the man who gathered sticks on the sabbath day *'shall be surely put to death'* and ordered that *'all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp'*. (Numbers 15:35) What the man did was presumptuous sin.

**Numbers 15:30-35** *"But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. 31 Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him. 32 And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. 33 And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. 34 And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. 35 And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp."*

The problem was not merely picking up sticks but one of challenging God, especially after the instruction was clearly given in verses 30-31. That was why the penalty was death. We can also fall into his sin when we break the sabbath day presumptuously - daring God to take action against us while we mar the holy name of Christ by our transgression. God's judgement upon this man was just and it will also put fear into all Israel not to break God's law presumptuously.

The weekly sabbath is holy unto God's people, because it is holy to the LORD. And God's people also ought to keep the sabbath holy to the LORD! This law is absolute. Keeping the sabbath day holy is also seen as evidence of one's salvation, as it demonstrates the reality of one's faith and trust in God.

God's children must view the sabbath in the same way as God views it.

God's people must trust the LORD to provide all they need in this life and obey His command by faith, trusting in His Word. When we are tempted, we must remember the eternal words of our Lord Jesus Christ who answered the Devil and

said *'It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God'*. (Matthew 4:4)

### **iii. Only Holiness Permitted!**

*It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed*  
Exodus 31:17

The sabbath observance acknowledges the LORD as the Almighty Creator and commemorates the work of creation by knowing that God created the universe and the earth. God's people must trust their Creator and heavenly Father to provide all their needs from His earth.

God's children must see this earth for what it is. This world is not to be owned by man - for all things belong to God! God's children must trust Him to provide for them according to the measure of their faith that will not hurt them or cause them to become carnal. In order to sustain their obedience and keep the sabbath holy for the rest of their lives, they must constantly fix their eyes on the LORD the Giver and not the gifts which He provides.

But God's people are forgetful. Hence, the Bible commands us to remember [emphasis] the Sabbath day. We forget the LORD whenever we take our eyes off the LORD our Giver. This is because the carnal world's influence can awaken our carnality as we interact with the world as God's witnesses.

To protect His children from this transgression, the LORD knows that even when His children succumb to sin, their transgression will not last more than six days. When kept holy, the sabbath day would convict them of their sin and bring them back to the LORD in true repentance.

The weekly sabbath refreshes God's people, spiritually. We are all panting as we struggle to maintain a holy witness in the midst of all our labours in six days. The sabbath day allows us to catch our spiritual breath – it refreshes and reminds us that we are God's children and strangers and sojourners passing through, on our way to our heavenly home.

God's design for His people to live a victorious Christian life is always perfect and best for us!

Adam's first day after he was created was to rest in the finished work of his Creator – the Almighty God. Christians today, need also to rest in the finished work of our risen Lord and Redeemer – the Lord Jesus Christ!

But God's people must not pollute and defile the sacred and holy things committed to them by the LORD to their hurt.

The examples of 2 pairs of brothers – Nadab and Abihu, as well as Hophni and Phineas immediately come to mind. The former pair profaned the holy things of God by offering with strange fire (Leviticus 10:1-2), while the latter treated the people's offerings like their personal banquet buffet. (1 Samuel 2:12-17)

God's people today *'are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people'*. Like the Levitical priesthood, we have God's Word today and have the liberty to put a *'difference between the holy and profane.....the unclean and the clean'*. (Ezekiel 22:26a) Or will we like the priests whom Ezekiel rebuked *"bid our [their] eyes from the LORD's [my] sabbaths?"* (Ezekiel 22:26b)

God's people, throughout all generations, both in the OT and NT ought to obey God's law and keep the sabbath day holy. Or else, what is the difference between the holy and the unholy, the clean and the unclean or the Lord's day and the rest of the week?

## **THE CONCLUSION**

As men of God, we are in the world but not of the world, even as the Lord Jesus Christ is not of the world.

The church of God – God's children, are called out of this world. We are called to be holy, as the LORD is holy.

Therefore, we are to remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy as the LORD commanded – as children of a thrice holy God.

In particular, we are to remember our Creator and our Redeemer in the observance of the weekly sabbath.

**Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.  
Exodus 20:8**

**END**