

## “To Rest in God” (Exodus 20:8-11)

We're in the series of “The Call to Undivided Intimacy.” We've been studying the Ten Commandments. Today we will study the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment. It has a very rich meaning, so I decided to preach three times from this section. The title of today's message is “To Rest in God”.

Here are common worries that anyone can experience in life. About the past. A sense of defeat. Inferiority. Regret about what you have done or haven't done. Resignation. “It ended up like this, because so and so said those things.” “If only I hadn't made that choice.” “I shouldn't have said that at that time.” With these thoughts, we might continue to live in the past.

About the present. Sickness. Injury. Or what about mental health, even though you may be healthy physically? You may feel hesitant in personal relations. You may be wounded inside, but may be just making up appearances. You may know what is good, but cannot carry it out, instead you may be doing the wrong you do not want to do. Sometimes it doesn't look cool to do the right thing, when everybody else is happily going a different way. I have difficulty doing this. I don't want to be different from others. I can't do the right thing, because I am broken. You may feel like this.

About the future. Aging. Death. No one can avoid these things. No one can remove these burdens from us.

These are the burdens which everyone in the world has, but cannot bear. Nothing in this world can give us a solution for these burdens of ours. There is nothing that can give us peace and rest while we have these burdens. But the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment reminds us of God's covenant with us, burdened people.

Today, first, we will look at the Sabbath day in relation to Israel. Then we will look at what the Sabbath day means to us.

### 1. Life in God's Covenant

#### Exodus 20:8-11

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> 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 male or female servant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. <sup>11</sup> 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.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment is God's call for God's people, to remember what kind of covenant He has made with them, and remain in this covenant, looking forward to the day it is fulfilled. God says:

- Past: I redeemed you. I set you free from slavery.

- Present: I'm your God. I'm taking care of you. You're living in my grace.
- Future: I'll bring you to the Promised Land. One day, you'll live in heaven, my home and have eternal rest with me.

Practicing Sabbath reminds them the fact that they are in this covenant. Practicing Sabbath lets them taste what this covenant means in reality. Practicing Sabbath re-shape their lives aligning with the covenant.

## 2. Israel Couldn't Enter the Promise Land

God led Israel out of Egypt with his mighty hand. He parted the Red Sea and let them walk on the dry ground in the middle of the sea. The Lord was in the pillar of the cloud in the day and he was in the pillar of fire at night, and he led them to the Promised Land.

### Heb 3:16-19

Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? <sup>17</sup> And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? <sup>18</sup> And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? <sup>19</sup> So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

God promised Israelites that they would enter the Promised Land, the promised rest. But they couldn't enter. Why? The Bible says it was because of their unbelief. Unbelief? Did they not offer enough sacrifices? Did they not practice enough rituals? Unbelief? What does it mean?

Several verses before this section, it says:

### Heb 3:9, 10, 12

where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. <sup>10</sup> ... I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray...' <sup>12</sup> See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

They had witnessed the work of God so many times. Every day, God gave them manna. When they had no water, God gave them water out of the rock. The Israelites were traveling slowly because they had women, children and elderly people. It would be natural to wonder whether other tribes targeted them or other nations attacked them in this state. But they didn't face this kind of danger. Not even once. Nevertheless, they were unstable, they were not firm in the faith. They didn't trust in God 100%. They went away from the living God.

How could they fall into unbelief? God was so real with them. It's easy to say that. But if you put yourself in their place, you can understand them.

They were traveling in the desert. They had no idea when this travel would end. 1 year, 2 years, 5 years, 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, 38 years, 39 years,

they were still in the desert. Each time they moved, they had to pack all their belonging. Each time they came to the point to stay, they had to unpack. They didn't know when they would move again. They didn't have GPS, no google map. They didn't know how they were going to move. Can you see how stressed they could be?

They had children. Parents, you know how difficult it is to get kids ready to go. You know it is huge challenge to make kids move straight. They just follow something interesting. They just stop whenever they see something attractive. You must lead them whole day to just walk. It's not 1 day, 1 week, 1 month. For 10 years, 15 years, you have been doing it every day. Now you can feel how tired they could have been.

They eat manna every day. But they can't keep it. In today's context, this means you have no savings. You just spend what you have each day. Tomorrow, you will start from zero. That's all you can do. That is your plan. That is your tomorrow, next year, another year, you've been doing it for 10 years, 20 years, but you still don't know for how long it will go on like this. Now you can really feel how difficult their life could be.

You know God is leading. But it looks very uncertain how this travel goes on. The situation tells you that God is not reliable. "We can't rely on God. Look at how we are wandering like this! Can God really lead us into the Promised Land? He must be mistaken. He can't actually do it, can he?" They judged by themselves, fell into unbelief and wandered away from God.

As they were wandering, of course, they had no peace, no rest at all. God told them, actually commanded them, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." God knew they needed it. God provided what they really needed.

Did they observe the Sabbath? Surely, they did observe it. It's not difficult to imagine that they didn't go out to collect manna, nor do any work on the Sabbath. It seems they also made their slaves and domestic animals rest. They were observing the Sabbath on the surface, but they had no peace, no rest. Nor did they enter the Promised Land. Because their actions and everyday life were not connected with their faith.

What about us? There are so many uncertain factors around us. There are so many things that are out of our control. We are just surrounded by the things that give us stress, drive us crazy, make us so depressed. In uncertainty, there is one certainty. That is God. If we don't trust in this God, if we wander away from Him, there is no peace, there is no hope.

The 4th Commandment is God's call for us, to remember what kind of covenant He has made with us, and remain in this covenant, looking forward to the day it is fulfilled.

### **3. The Shadow of Christ**

Should we observe the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment literally?

In conclusion, the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment is not something we are to observe literally, because the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment is a ceremonial law. But the essential meaning is the same.

#### Heb 10:1

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves.

The ceremonial laws are the shadows of Christ. When the reality, Christ appears, they disappear.

The priesthood points to Christ. Priests offered offerings and sacrifices to atone sins. Christ is our eternal high priest. We draw near to God through Him. He offered sacrifice for our sins. He is interceding for us at the right hand of the Father (Heb 7:24-25).

The tabernacle points to Christ. The tabernacle is the place where sacrifices are offered. It is the way through which a man is accepted by God. It is the place where God meets a man (Ex 29:42-43). Christ is the true tabernacle. Christ is the way through which we are accepted by God. Through Christ we draw near to God and meet Him (Heb 10:20; John 14:6). When we are in Christ, we are in the holy presence of God.

The sacrifice points to Christ. Innocent animals were slaughtered and offered as sacrifices for men's sins so that their sins would be forgiven (Levi 17:11). In order for a man to draw near to God, sacrifices had to be offered. And it had to be offered according to God's words, not according to men's convenience. Christ is the true sacrifice. Christ is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Christ is the perfect sacrifice, which was offered once for all to complete redemption of all sins (Heb 9:26; 10:14).

The 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment is a ceremonial law, which is a shadow of Christ. So, it is not something we are to practice literally. The 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment is only a shadow of the eternal Sabbath rest. "For that eternal rest is none other than Christ Himself."<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the Sabbath practice is to lead us to Christ, connect us with Him, and make us rest in Him.

#### **4. Jesus is Our Sabbath**

Jesus Christ proclaimed Himself as the Sabbath rest (Matt 11:28), demonstrated Himself as the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 4:35-41), and attributed

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<sup>1</sup> Michael S. Horton, *The Law of Perfect Freedom: Relating to God and Others through the Ten Commandments*, 1993, [Kindle 2004]. Location I817

to Himself the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning the Chosen Servant who would care for the broken and weary (cf. Luke 13:10-16, John 8:1-11).<sup>2</sup>

### Matthew 11:28-30

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Jesus is not teaching us how to be successful. He is not teaching us how to rest. Jesus is saying, “Come to me. I will carry your burden in place of you. And I will give you rest.”

The burdens of the past, present and future won't just disappear. We can't change what happened in the past. We can't erase the memories of the past. We may suffer physical disease and mental illness. There is no one who won't age. There is no one who won't die. But we don't have to carry all these burdens by ourselves. You don't have to be worn down by living with these burdens alone.

Jesus says “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” He can carry these burdens in your place, and he can walk with you in this life.

We can pray, “Jesus, I can't carry all these burdens of the past, present and future alone. I need you. Jesus, I rejoice that you walk with me in this life.” In this way, we can live with faces turned towards Jesus. That is true repentance. This is how we can “remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” every day.

“Sabbath invites Christ to come into our everyday life, to rethink priorities and celebrate his faithfulness. Sabbath is weekly preparation and anticipation for making space in our lives for Christ to come.”<sup>3</sup>

To observe Sabbath is to rest in our Lord Jesus. It's not that we rest because we have completed our task. Rather, we rest and receive the Sabbath rest by faith because it is what God has decided and given us.

“He is Lord of the Sabbath and Lord of our lives, and so we no longer have to be self-reliant.”<sup>4</sup> Our Lord, Jesus is the Lord of all the earth. He is in control of everything. He can turn this planet earth without you. He can arrange, advance, and complete anything because he is God. I know him as my God, you know him as your God. So, we can come to Him and rest with Him.

Speaking of rest, we think of having a day off. But Sabbath rest and day off are different in nature. We can have Sabbath rest on our day off. But having a day off doesn't mean having Sabbath rest. For a long time, I couldn't get it.

What do you expect by taking a day off? By taking a day off, we expect to recover from the tiredness of work so that we are ready to work harder. Day off is there for us so that we can work more. But for Sabbath, we come to Jesus, trust in

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<sup>2</sup> Horton, 1839

<sup>3</sup> Shelly Miller, *Rhythms of Rest: Finding the Spirit of Sabbath in a Busy World*, 2016, Kindle, 31

<sup>4</sup> Miller, 89

him and entrust everything to him, acknowledge what He has given us once again, enjoy them, rejoice and rest in His presence. We re-shape our life to be God-centered. “Experiencing the Life, Changing lives.” That is Sabbath rest. Next two weeks, we will study more about the Sabbath and I will talk about how we can practice the Sabbath rest.

### For Self-Reflection and Small Groups

1. Think about problems in your life about the past, about the present and about the future. Through practicing the Sabbath, what does God remind his people of his covenant about the past, about the present and about the future?
2. Why could Israelites not enter the promise Land? (Heb 3:16-19) What does their unbelief mean? What is it like to observe the Sabbath without faith? Why must faith be involved in observing the Sabbath?
3. The ceremonial laws are the shadows of Christ. What do the priesthood, tabernacle and sacrifices teach about Christ? How dose Christ give you rest?