

## **“Remember the Sabbath Day” (Exodus 20:1-21)(9.13.20)**

Exodus 20:1-21 (NIV84) *The Ten Commandments*

**20** And God spoke all these words:

<sup>2</sup> “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

<sup>3</sup> “You shall have no other gods before me.

<sup>4</sup> “You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup> but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

<sup>7</sup> “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

<sup>8</sup> “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 manservant or maidservant, 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.

<sup>12</sup> “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

<sup>13</sup> “You shall not murder.

<sup>14</sup> “You shall not commit adultery.

<sup>15</sup> “You shall not steal.

<sup>16</sup> “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

<sup>17</sup> “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

<sup>18</sup> When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance <sup>19</sup> and said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.”

<sup>20</sup> Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.”

<sup>21</sup> The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

### **The word of God for the people of God.**

Title: **“Remember the Sabbath Day”**

LET US PRAY.

INTRODUCTION:

Here in the Ten Commandments, the I AM, the Lord our God, addresses the Sabbath in more detail than any other commandment. You might argue that it is a tight race with idolatry; and, covetousness is a distant third. No, I am not trying to create a hierarchy in the Ten Commandments. Rather, I am saying that we fail to take the commandment to remember the Sabbath Day nearly as seriously as we should. And, I include myself.

First of all, notice that it is a day. Second, the proper way to remember it is to keep it holy. Third, it is the Lord’s Day. Fourth, rest is mandated. Fifth, the Sabbath should be observed by everyone within your responsibility. Sixth, the Lord has consecrated the Sabbath. How does it all fit together? Notice that it is the Commandment that bridges our treatment of God with our treatment of fellow human beings.

BODY:

Those of you here now, heard me sing “Sunday Morning Comin’ Down,” before I read the scripture. Because of copyright concerns, I did not stream it on Facebook Live or record it for the weekly radio

broadcast. This song put the author, Kris Kristofferson, on the Nashville map when Johnny Cash took it to number one on the Billboard US Country Charts in 1970.

On his variety show, Cash introduced the song with the following monologue:

*"You know, not everyone who has been on 'the bum' wanted it that way. The Great Depression of the 30s set the feet of thousands of people—farmers, city workers—it set 'em to ridin' the rails. My Daddy was one of those who hopped a freight train a couple of times to go and look for work. He wasn't a bum. He was a hobo but he wasn't a bum.*

*I suppose we've all....all of us 'been at one time or another [a] 'drifter at heart', and today like yesterday there's many that are on that road headin' out. Not searchin' maybe for work, as much as for self-fulfillment, or understanding of their life...trying to find a \*meaning\* for their life. And they're not hoppin' freights much anymore. Instead they're thumbnin' cars and diesel trucks along the highways from Maine to Mexico. And many who have drifted...including myself...have found themselves no closer to peace of mind than a dingy backroom, on some lonely Sunday morning, with it comin' down all around you."*

Johnny Cash had married June Carter in 1968, which "began a decades-long re-examination of his life and re-dedication to his Christian roots. This culminated in two and a half years of study in the late-70s, after which he received a degree in theology and became a minister. He was encouraged in his studies by the [Reverend Billy Graham](#), who became a close friend of the Cash family during these years." In fact Johnny & June would join Billy Graham on some of his evangelistic crusades.

I believe that if he had introduced "Sunday Morning Comin' Down" during this later period, his remarks would have been somewhat different. Yes, there are strong elements of searching, but it is a quest for God. None of us can truly find ourselves unless we know first who we are in the Lord Jesus Christ. Ecclesiastes tells us that God put eternity in our hearts. We find no rest until we wrestle with that reality. And, the psalmist describes a great thirst for God like a panting deer, running for his life, who thirsts for the cool clear stream water.

### **Sunday Morning Coming Down**

Well, I woke up Sunday morning  
With no way to hold my head that didn't hurt  
And the beer I had for breakfast wasn't bad  
So I had one more for dessert  
Then I fumbled in my closet through my clothes  
And found my cleanest dirty shirt  
Then I washed my face and combed my hair  
And stumbled down the stairs to meet the day  
I'd smoked my mind the night before  
With cigarettes and songs I'd been picking  
But I lit my first and watched a small kid  
Playing with a can that he was kicking  
Then I walked across the street  
And caught the Sunday smell of someone frying chicken  
And Lord, it took me back to something  
that I'd lost somewhere, somehow along the way  
On a Sunday morning sidewalk  
I'm wishing, Lord, that I was stoned  
'Cause there's something in a Sunday  
That makes a body feel alone  
And there's nothing short a' dying  
That's half as lonesome as the sound

Of the sleeping city sidewalk  
And Sunday morning coming down  
In the park I saw a daddy  
With a laughing little girl that he was swinging  
And I stopped beside a Sunday school  
And listened to the songs they were singing  
Then I headed down the street  
And somewhere far away a lonely bell was ringing  
And it echoed through the canyons  
Like the disappearing dreams of yesterday  
On a Sunday morning sidewalk  
I'm wishing, Lord, that I was stoned  
'Cause there's something in a Sunday  
That makes a body feel alone  
And there's nothing short a' dying  
That's half as lonesome as the sound  
Of the sleeping city sidewalk  
And Sunday morning coming down

Kris Kristofferson expresses the human condition apart from God with an insightful lament. And this was a perfect song for Johnny Cash who lived it and whose unique bass-baritone voice made it credible. For me, this song represents not only the individual, but also our culture that has drifted far from our Creator's intentions.

This man is not living a holy or god-honoring life. He is in a cycle of ups and downs, booze, smoking, drugs, and music or entertainment. There is great theology in "I fumbled in my closet through my clothes and found my cleanest dirty shirt. Yes, all our righteousness is dirty rags before God. We may dress ourselves up, wash our faces, and comb our hair; but we are not really ready to meet the day. There is an emptiness. Missing the joy of children in simple play, swinging and kicking cans. The Sunday School children make a sweet sound when they sing. There is a longing for the comfort food shared around the table with a loving family. This man cries out for escape from this emptiness, "I'm wishing Lord, that I was stoned."

It was very intentional that this is a Sunday morning. The streets are empty. Some of the people are sleeping it off and some are in church. In the distance someplace is the call of that lonely church bell. It's lonely because it is not what it is supposed to be. He isn't what he is supposed to be. Society isn't what it is supposed to be.

You see my friends, the Sabbath has been forsaken. The Lord's Day IS NOT being lived out the way that God decreed. We have lost the anchor and we are drifting on a sea of melancholy, looking for something on which to grasp.

Hear the singer as he stumbles through the day. What's missing? Something lost, somewhere, somehow. Lonesome sounds. There is an echoing through unidentified canyons – vanity, vanity, all is vanity – disappearing dreams of yesterday. There is an atmosphere of death, which is no exaggeration. Separation from God, the presence of God, and the ways of God, is death.

This is no surprise to the Almighty. That is why we were given the Sabbath, to keep us connected to God, and to sustain us in this life and prepare us for the life to come. Remember, remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Are we doing that church? I don't think that I am nearly to the extent that I should.

Like all the other commandments, God's Chosen People had problems adhering to Sabbath requirements. God speaks in Ezekiel 20:13 (NIV84), " 'Yet the people of Israel rebelled against me in the desert. They did not follow my decrees but rejected my laws—although the man who obeys them will

live by them—and they utterly desecrated my Sabbaths. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and destroy them in the desert.”

To ensure that the people would obey God in regard to the Sabbath, the Pharisees became very strict in enforcing Sabbath rules. In an attempt to cover every situation, they even added more specific restrictions. While the original intentions were good, the Pharisaic Sabbath became a burden instead of a blessing. In fact, the Gospels record many instances of conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees over Sabbath law.

Jesus was trying to show them that acts of charity and necessary work for eating and survival were not prohibited. Jesus performed many healings on the Sabbath and his disciples gathered gleanings in the fields to eat. Mark 2:27–28 (NIV84) <sup>27</sup> Then [Jesus] said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. <sup>28</sup> So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” So, Jesus has and is the final word.

Can we conclude then, like so many have, that the Sabbath guidance is no longer in effect? No, not at all. He says in Matthew 5:17 (NIV84), “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” From my Dictionary of Bible Themes, we read: “The NT develops the OT teaching on the Sabbath in three important directions. It declares that the Sabbath should not be observed in a legalistic manner; the Sabbath-rest is treated as an important symbol of the Christian doctrine of salvation; and finally, the NT itself indicates how Sunday, rather than Saturday, came to be seen as the Christian Sabbath.”

If you are a serious student of the Bible, you have already probably brought an early scripture to mind: the second chapter in the whole Bible. This scripture demonstrates that the blessing of the Sabbath is not merely a matter of Mosaic Law. Genesis 2:1–3 (NIV84)

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

<sup>2</sup> By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. <sup>3</sup> And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Two thousand years before Moses, God established a holy day of rest. God blessed the seventh day.

Was Almighty God tired and needing rest? I don’t think so. It was a proclamation of completion. It was an example to all men and women. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. This makes it quite evident that the holy day of Sabbath rest is an integral part of God’s design for the human race. Why do we resist it? Why do I resist it?

Why would the Lord redeem a whole day? We live in the world six days of the week; so, we need a whole day to be properly refreshed, renewed, and refocused. We need to remember who we belong to. We need to remember that we have a God-given purpose. We need to remember that our citizenship is in heaven. We need to recognize our ministry of reconciliation; and more. We recharge our cell phones daily or maybe every other day and yet we think we can plug in for an hour and be good for another six days.

Honoring and making the Sabbath Day holy is not just about going to church; even if your church worships in spirit; proclaims God’s word; and, strengthens the Fellowship. If your day is not bathed in prayer; if you have not shifted down into a lower gear; if you have not made the Lord your focus; how can you embrace the worship and be transformed by the power of God’s word? Your outer shell is still hardened by the ways of the world so that the things of God have a hard time penetrating that barrier. What do you think it means to make it holy? It is to be a day different than the rest of the week. Plan your chores and your time to complete them on the other six days. This is not just about avoiding all the evils that we resist every day. Making the Sabbath holy is an intentional and faithful approach to affirming godly priorities. Be purposeful in helping or reaching out to someone in need.

Build your family relationships. When you honor the Sabbath, you send an important message and model a life-giving gospel. You can be a major influencer on those around you when you are positive and uplifting due to the sustaining power of a God-centered Sabbath.

It is the Lord's Day. It does not belong to the National Football League or any other sports league. It does not belong to any of the casinos. Would you invite Jesus to participate in the activity with you? Does it honor the Creator of the universe?

God knows us better than we know ourselves and he says we need rest. The fact is that we will be able to accomplish more in the six days when replenished by a holy Sabbath than when we try to ram through seven days without it. Also, because we are honoring God, it is more likely our gracious and good Father will bless our efforts. And, we are saying we trust you heavenly Father.

The Sabbath has been set aside, set apart, consecrated, made holy by the God of the universe. Who are we to take it lightly? Who are we to think we know better than the One who designed and created us? The frosting on the cake is that celebrating a holy Sabbath is preparing us for our heavenly reward where we will reap a great harvest of blessings.

#### CONCLUSION:

It should not surprise that our culture has not just drifted away from God, but been blown way off course. When we treat the Sabbath like any other day, we are conceding the battle to Satan. In issue after issue, in confrontation after confrontation, we have surrendered to the world and to the Prince of Darkness.

We have too little ammunition. We have not sharpened the sword of the spirit, the word of God, so it is dull and impotent in our hands. Many are not even able to draw the sword out of the scabbard. The fuel of worship two weeks ago, has long been used up and we are stranded along life's byways. Our prayer communication channels have been cut as there is no power to activate the transmitters.

Too many of us, stumble through the day. We put on our best face, but are stilling wearing last week's shirt. We are too overwrought to appreciate the basic blessings of family and dinners together. We can hear that church bell faintly and the children's choir rarely raises a note. Loneliness is a common chord. There is a real sense of dying and lostness, but only a vague idea of why. These things are not just true for individuals. They are true for most all of our society; even many professing Christians.

Always, Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy!

Amen and amen. Let us pray.