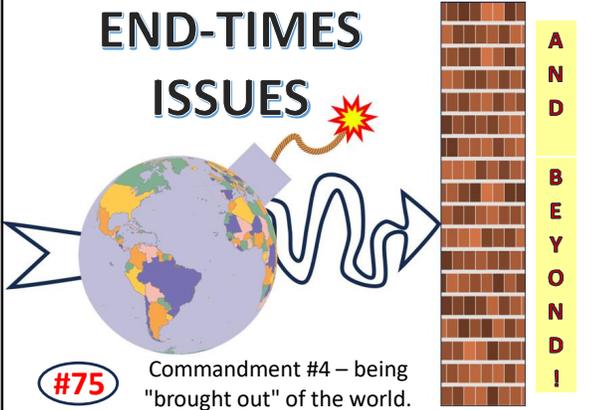


END-TIMES ISSUES



#75 Commandment #4 – being "brought out" of the world.

1

Comments about using the word "Sabbath."

- We tend to connect it to the word "Saturday"; but in Israel, this was not always the case.
 - ✓ The word was also used for various *non-Saturday* holidays – and even certain *year-long* events. The greater focus was to be on God – the source of holiness, rest, and many other blessings.
- Since we belong to the *New Covenant*, we should not be surprised if there are differences in the methods we use, when we focus on God. (This could include the *day* when we have this focus.)
 - ✓ But there are many things in common, then and now – especially since the Fourth Commandment (like all of the commandments) represents a *category* of commands, instructions and examples.
- Historically, Christians have tended to use the word "Sabbath," when looking at this issue.
 - ✓ We can also describe it as the day of worship or rest in God, the day for celebrating God and what he has done, etc.

2

TWO Reasons that the SABBATH is special:

#1 – Because of what God did at CREATION. He set aside one day out of seven as special – see Genesis 2:2-3.

For in six days **the LORD made** the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them, but on the seventh day He rested. **Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.**

Exodus 20:11 (BSB)

#2 – Because he REDEEMED his people out of slavery. This passage uses the phrase "brought you out." But in many other passages, this "bringing out" is defined as an act of *redemption*.

Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that **the LORD your God brought you out** of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. **That is why the LORD your God has commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.**

Deuteronomy 5:15 (BSB)

3

Both of these reasons have relevance to all people in all ages.

#1 – What God did at CREATION. He designated one day as special – blessed and holy – *even before sin entered the world*.

- Even without sin in the world, the human race needed to take time to change its focus – to rest from the daily activities of life (which were to be done for the glory of God). This would enable people to focus directly on God and his blessings.

#2 – God's REDEMPTION of people out of slavery. This has obvious *physical* implications for what Israel experienced; but it was intended to have *spiritual* implications as well.

- Even for Israel, redemption could not be fully experienced without the *spiritual* dimension. It would require *loyalty* to the God who redeemed them.
- In later centuries, God revealed more about this "redemption" concept. In the New Testament, we see its ultimate expression in the concept of "salvation." Yet even back when the commandment was first given, Israel had enough information to *know* how they should respond.

4

When God "brought them out" of the land of slavery...

Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that **the LORD your God brought you out** of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

Deuteronomy 5:15a (BSB)

- This word translated as "brought out" is a common one in the Old Testament. It can be used of anything that is moving (or being moved) from one location to another, literally or figuratively. *The emphasis is on where it is leaving or coming (or going) from.*
 - ✓ We can learn several things from this concept; but in this context, the connection to "redemption" is what makes it special.
- Scripture defines the nature of this "bringing out" by using two "redemption words" – both are very significant.
 - ✓ One focuses on *family involvement*; the other focuses on *purchasing or buying* (without any necessary family connection).
 - ✓ We will look at these issues at a different time.

5

Why did Israel need "brought out" of slavery in Egypt?

- First, they didn't become slaves because they were captives of war, or because they were in extreme debt (two common reasons that people could become slaves). Nor was it a voluntary arrangement (which sometimes occurred – see Deuteronomy 15:16-17).
- Israel had been a *blessing* to Egypt, through Joseph, in accordance with the promise God gave to Abraham: "**Through you all nations will be blessed.**"
- But a new king arose, who didn't know this fact (or who ignored it), and chose to view Israel as a *threat*. The Egyptians attempted to use slavery of a *brutal* kind (and eventually, *genocide* – the killing of all male infants), to "eliminate" the perceived threat.
- They repaid *blessing* with a *curse*. In doing this, a different part of God's promise to Abraham would be fulfilled: "**I will curse those who curse you.**" God would bless Israel, but Egypt (and Egypt's gods) would be decimated.

6

What was slavery in Egypt like?

- It was just plain brutal. The goal was to demean, debilitate and destroy Israel. This included:
 - ✓ Unrelenting affliction, with hard physical labor, bitter and rigorous; making bricks and working with mortar, day after day after day – Exodus 1:11, 13-14. *There was no rest.*
 - ✓ Being beaten by their Egyptian taskmasters – Exodus 2:11; 5:14.
 - ✓ Figuratively, it was described as being in an iron furnace – Deuteronomy 4:20; 1 Kings 8:51; Jeremiah 11:4.
- The Egyptians, who had been *blessed* by Israel's presence, had become *enemies* who *hated* them – Psalm 106:10.

- God later told Israel that, if they had slaves, they were to treat them *kindly* (the *opposite* of how Israel had been treated) – and even let them *share* in the blessings of the Sabbath.

7

What was God offering to give to Israel – in place of this slavery?

- A land of their own, overflowing with abundance.
 - ✓ "Flowing with milk and honey" – Exodus 3:8; 13:5; etc.
 - ✓ An inheritance – Leviticus 20:24; Deuteronomy 12:10; 26:1.
 - ✓ Land that they did not have to work for, cities they did not have to build, crops they did not have to plant – Joshua 24:13.
 - ✓ Rest from enemies; safety – Leviticus 25:19; Deuteronomy 12:10. Also the weekly Sabbath (and various other Sabbaths).

All this depended on their willingness to serve the God who *redeemed* them and *brought* them into the land.

- Ironically, they quickly forgot about how difficult life had been in Egypt. In their journey to the Promised Land, every time a problem occurred, they would begin talking about how "wonderful" it was, back in Egypt – *in the land of slavery!*

8

What people normally overlook:

Leaving Egypt involved *more than just being freed* from Egyptian taskmasters.

It involved leaving the *culture of Egypt – a spiritual slavery.*

★ This is the more important issue! ★

- In Egyptian culture, the Pharaoh was considered the embodiment of an Egyptian god. *To serve the Pharaoh (which the Egyptians did) meant serving the Egyptian gods.*
- This influenced all aspects of society – including the *values* and *conduct* that defined their culture.
- When God called Israel *out* of Egypt, this included *calling them out of the Egyptian culture and its defining values.*
- In New Testament terms, this parallels the idea of being called out of "the world."

9

- How serious is this "spiritual slavery" issue? The generation that left Egypt illustrates the seriousness of *not* abandoning *spiritual* slavery.

- ✓ Though their *bodies* left Egypt, their *hearts* remained there. So they were constantly rebelling against God.
- ✓ Ultimately, though *physically* leaving Egypt, they died in the wilderness, never reaching the promised land.

For who were **the ones who heard and rebelled**? Were they not **all those Moses led out of Egypt**? And with whom was God angry for forty years? Was it not with **those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness**? And to whom did He swear that they would **never enter His rest**? Was it not to **those who disobeyed**? So we see that it was because of their **unbelief** that they were **unable to enter**.

Hebrews 3:16-19 (BSB)

- ✓ The author of Hebrews warns us, based on Psalm 95:7-11, that we are *not* to follow their example; but to do the *opposite* – and do it *immediately* ("today" – v. 7). The promise of *rest* remains for those who trust God. (See Hebrews 3:7-4:13.)

10

- ✓ Later generations – those who made it to the land – never experienced the fullness of rest, because of the unbelief that so many of them continued to have.
- ✓ There is a *future* rest that *all* who trust God can look forward to. It's connected to *God's* rest on the seventh day of creation; but we must pursue it *now* – more specifically, "*today*." (Most who think "tomorrow" is soon enough will *never* make it.)

There remains, then, a **Sabbath rest** for the people of God.

For whoever enters **God's rest** also **rests** from his own work, just as God did from His.

Let us, therefore, **make every effort to enter that rest**, so that no one will fall by following the same pattern of disobedience.

Hebrews 4:9-11 (BSB)

- ⇒ **Question:** How much effort do *you* make, to enter that rest?

11

Why did God call Israel out of Egypt? NOT because they *deserved* it!

- It was because he *loved* Israel's ancestors; and he *loved* Israel, for the sake of their ancestors.

Because **he loved your ancestors** and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt ...

Deuteronomy 4:37a (NIV)

But because **the LORD loved you** and kept the oath He swore to your fathers, He brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 7:8 (BSB)

- Ironically, when things didn't go their way, the Israelites claimed that God *hated* them!

[You] said, "Because **the LORD hates us**, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt ..."

Deuteronomy 1:27b (BSB)

12

Everything God offered them was contingent upon their willingness to make him *their* God.

- They had been serving *Egypt's* gods. If the God of their ancestors was going to *redeem* them (= a concept that implied *payment*), they would have to agree to serve and obey *him*, and not *other* gods.

"I am the LORD your God who **brought you out** of the land of Egypt **to be your God**. I am the LORD your God."

Numbers 15:41 (BSB); see also Leviticus 22:33.

For the Israelites are My servants. **They are My servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt**. I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 25:55 (BSB)

For when **I brought your fathers out** of the land of Egypt, ... I commanded them: **Obey Me**, and **I will be your God**, and **you will be My people**.

Jeremiah 7:22a, 23b (BSB)

13

Israel knew all these things. Their response?

Regretfully, they never did completely abandon the gods of Egypt – or the many other gods that they had chosen at one time or another.

- In their hearts, they kept going back to Egypt and all that it seemed to offer. (They forgot the oppression and hardship, and looked at it as "the good old days.") This happened over and over again:

But our fathers refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and **in their hearts turned back to Egypt**.

Acts 7:39 (BSB)

- Even *after* they had entered the land, and had seen the *faithfulness* and *power* of God, they were *still* clinging to the gods of other nations. Joshua had to tell them:

Throw away the **gods your ancestors worshiped** beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

Joshua 24:14b (NIV)

14

- When they weren't worshipping the gods from their *past*, they were looking to the gods of the surrounding nations – including the gods of the nations they had been told to destroy.

"I said to you, 'I am the LORD your God; do not worship **the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live**.' But you have not listened to me."

Judges 6:10 (NIV)

"... you have rebelled against the LORD your God. You have scattered your favors to **foreign gods** under every green tree and have not obeyed My voice,"

declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 3:13b (BSB)

Before their exile to Babylon (586-587 BC), they went after *false gods* and idols. After that, they abandoned idols, but distorted the worship of the *true God*.

15

"Of course, we would never do anything like that!"

- **Israel** knew what they needed to do... and did the opposite.
 - ✓ They also knew their need to obey the Fourth Commandment (which would remind them about their need for God).
 - **What about us?** How do we respond, when we know what we need to do?
 - >> How often do we focus on our *need* for God?
- OR:
- >> How often do we do the *opposite*, and demonstrate the basic symptom of a sinful nature?

Although **they know God's righteous decree** that those who do such things deserve death, **they not only continue to do these very things** but also approve of those who practice them.

Romans 1:32 (NIV)

16

Parallels to consider...

- **Israel** needed to "go out" from Egypt – not just *physically*, but also *spiritually*. They needed to reject the values and culture that centered around the gods of Egypt.
- **We** need to "go out" from the world – not necessarily *physically*, but most definitely *spiritually* (= the values and culture that center around the gods of the world).

The Devil uses a variety of techniques... but they all have the same goal.

- **IDOLS:** This was more prominent before Jesus came. Today, there may be less emphasis on statues and physical images of "gods."
- **NON-IDOLS:** The evil one controls the whole world (1 John 5:19b), and he doesn't *need* to use physical images. He has *always* had many other methods of ensnaring people:

... the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life...

1 John 2:16b (BSB)

17

It's the same issue!

- The New Testament gives us the *general principle* (related to the "world"); Israel was given a *specific application* of that principle (related to "Egypt").

It's the same consequences.

- **Israel** didn't know all that we know, about eternity and the final judgment. But what they knew about God and the concept of justice would have been sufficient for them to realize that there had to be *something* that would "make things right."
 - ✓ **Even so, they often went against the truth that they knew.**
- **We** know more about eternity and the final judgment. But having this additional knowledge *doesn't* reduce our inclination to go *against* what we know to be true.
 - ✓ **Consider how often we go against the truth that we know!** (And since we know *more*, our judgment will be *greater*.)

18

What about God's reaction to all this?

NONE OF THIS SURPRISED GOD.

He knew all about it, even *before* Israel left Egypt.

- Even before they left Egypt, they were worshipping the gods of Egypt. *They had adopted the Egyptian culture and all that it represented.*

On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of Egypt ... I said to them, "Each of you, get rid of the vile images you have set your eyes on, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the Lord your God."

"But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me; **they did not get rid of the vile images** they had set their eyes on, **nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt.**"

Ezekiel 20:6a, 7-8a (NIV)

- God would have *destroyed* them *even then...* but *for the sake of his name* (= his honor and all that his name represented), he did not do so. (The Egyptians were aware that God had said he would bring the people of Israel out.)

So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them in Egypt. But **for the sake of my name**, I brought them out of Egypt.

I did it **to keep my name from being profaned** in the eyes of the nations among whom they lived and in whose sight I had revealed myself to the Israelites.

Ezekiel 20:8b-9 (NIV)

- How effective was God at accomplishing this? The surrounding nations were *still aware* of God's mighty power over Egypt approximately 500 years later! (See 1 Samuel 6:6. They admitted this, even though they *continued* to serve their own gods!)

In terms of God's sovereignty, he would use Israel's ongoing rebellion to accomplish something unexpected – Romans 11.

- Israel was, in one sense, special. They were the "chosen people." This is something they could have been tempted to *boast* about!
- But their ongoing sins brought them down to the same level as the other nations. *This removed any possible reason they might have had for boasting.*
- This also meant that they would be "bound" in disobedience – just like the people of all other nations – *unless they were willing to appeal to God for mercy.*
- The Gentiles had already been hopelessly trapped in their disobedience. But because of *Israel's* rebellion, God has offered mercy to the Gentiles!
- Now, Israel is also hopelessly trapped in disobedience. But the day is coming, when they (as a nation) will get "jealous" of the mercy that the Gentiles are receiving, and will want to *share* in that mercy. *Then* they will turn to the true God and will be saved!

The end result of all this?

- The only hope for *anyone* – Jew or Gentile – is God's mercy. There is *nothing* for *either* to boast about... except for boasting in God!
- Since *mercy* is available *only* for people who are hopelessly trapped in *disobedience* – and this includes *everybody* – it's available for *all* who are willing to receive it.

Because of their disobedience: God offers you mercy!

The mercy you are receiving will someday lead them to want mercy!

All are in the same "prison," so all can be offered mercy!

Just as you [= Gentiles] who formerly disobeyed God have now received mercy through their [= Israel's] disobedience, so they too have now disobeyed, in order that they too may now receive mercy through the mercy shown to you.

For God has consigned everyone to disobedience so that He may have mercy on everyone.

Romans 11:30-32 (BSB)

Following the "God of mercy."

- **THE AMAZING FACT!**
 - ✓ Whether Jew or Gentile, **you have been offered mercy!**
 - **THE BIG QUESTION!**
 - ✓ **Are you willing to be a recipient of that mercy**, so that you can be released from the "prison" of disobedience... and can learn to *follow the God of mercy?*
-
- **What does it mean to "follow the God of mercy"?**
 - ✓ **A change of values:** It includes rejecting the values of the *world* and accepting the values of *God*, as revealed in Scripture.
 - ❖ Just as Israel needed to *physically* come out of Egypt, we (and they) need to *spiritually* come out of the world.

- ✓ **Dependence on God:** Another part of "*following the God of mercy*" includes an ongoing **awareness** of one's *dependence* on God – and the **desire** to periodically focus on fulfilling that need.
 - ❖ **An awareness of one's need** is just part of the issue. There must also be:
 - ❖ **A willingness to do the things that fulfil this need.** (This includes taking our focus off our *every-day* activities, so that we can devote our attention to the God who makes possible holiness and many other blessings.)
 - ❖ **To accomplish this**, there are many things we can do, as we interact with other Christians. *Make it this week's mission!*

The Fourth Commandment focuses on these issues!

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, **'You must observe my Sabbaths. ... so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.'**"

Exodus 31:12-13 (NIV)

◆ Our Mission ◆

⇒ **To come out of the world!**
⇒ **To be part of God's family!**

We, the "temple of God" (2 Corinthians 6:16a) have nothing in common with the world's "idols."

This means we have an obligation:

God's promise for those who do this:

"Therefore **come out** from among them and **be separate**, says the Lord." ...

"I will be a **Father to you**, and you will be **My sons and daughters**, says the Lord Almighty."

2 Corinthians 6:17a, 18 (BSB)

In New Testament terms... →

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IN NEW TESTAMENT TERMS...

To pursue the *eternal rest* that God (Jesus) offers us!

"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and **I will give you rest.**

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.**

For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30 (BSB)

Following Jesus is not always *easy*, because of the world's hostility to it. (It also involves *self-denial* – Luke 9:23.) But it's the *only* way to attain rest for one's *soul*.

26

GOD HAS GIVEN US AN OPPORTUNITY TO PURSUE HOLINESS!

We began looking at this Fourth Commandment by reviewing what some of the historical catechisms had to say about it. The Heidelberg Catechism (quoted below, in the *left* column) summarizes quite well some of the things we can do, in our pursuit of holiness – *doing it the way God tells us to do it!*

Q. What is God's will for you in the fourth commandment?

[Catechism:]
[How we can do this:]

A. First,	<u>[Pursuit of holiness for life.]</u>
that the gospel ministry and education for it be maintained,	Encourage the teaching and learning of God's Word.
and that, especially on the festive day of rest,	Set aside a special time for focusing on love for God and neighbor...
I diligently attend the assembly of God's people	Meet with other Christians, with the following goals: [next page]

→

27

[Goals when meeting with other Christians.]

to learn what God's Word teaches,	Learning God's Word, allowing it to change our values and conduct.
to participate in the sacraments,	Participating in the "Lord's Table" – remembering what Jesus did for us.
to pray to God publicly,	Group prayer.
and to bring Christian offerings for the poor.	Expressing love for Christians who are in need.

Second,	<u>[Application of holiness in life.]</u>
that every day of my life I rest from my evil ways,	Turning away from sin (a daily objective).
let the Lord work in me through his Spirit,	Living under the control of the Holy Spirit.
and so begin in this life the eternal Sabbath.	Having <i>even now</i> a foretaste of what God has in store for us in eternity.

Source: Heidelberg Catechism [left column in table] – <https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/HeidelbergCatechism.pdf>

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Credits

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