

A Slave in Egypt

Is There a Lesson for God's Church Today?

By Dennis Fischer

One of the greatest stories in all the Bible took place nearly thirty five hundred years ago, when God miraculously delivered the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt. This moment in the history of God's people defied all odds. In essence, an enslaved race was going to be liberated from the most powerful government on earth—one whose tyrannical grasp was unspeakably cruel and degrading. Egypt was a nation where one man held the life of every citizen in his hand—and he was not shy in executing his judgement. The first chapter of the book of Exodus illustrates the lengths he would go to when dealing with a problem. There, Pharaoh attempted to orchestrate one of the greatest acts of genocide of all time. However, God intervened and the rest as they say is history. Instead of being a lost memory, Israel would become a model to all people who would eventually become God's children.

We all know the story of the exodus. But do we know the moral of the story? Is there a lesson to be learned from this extraordinary act of mercy God bestowed on His people so very long ago? Finally, is there a way to demonstrate that the lesson of this great moment hasn't been lost on us?

Consider what God did when He led his people out of Egypt. Actually, He was engaging in two extraordinary works—on which the entire history of His people (both then and now) rely. First, He was delivering His people out of the home of bondage and second, He was delivering them into the home of freedom. Imagine the contrast between these two concepts, bondage and freedom. On one hand the law of Egypt was designed to subjugate its people and empower its government. However, God's law was far different, because He is far different. The great moral code He would personally write with His own hand (Ex. 31:18) was a reflection of a King who desired His people to be prosperous and fulfilled but most of all FREE. God's law was a law of liberty. Even when He introduced the first commandment, God described Himself as a Liberator. He was the God who brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage: (Ex. 20:2). Furthermore, God was so committed to presenting His people with TRUE FREEDOM, He bestowed on them a government that would make them an example to all the world. He actually said as much through His servant Moses.

And it shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord your God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command you this day, that the Lord your God will set you on high above all nations of the earth. (Dt. 28:1)

This is an extraordinary promise. Here, the very God who led Israel out of Egypt, and in doing so, brought the mightiest nation on earth to its knees, was promising a collection of slaves that they were to become a nation to which all other nations would look up. In a very real sense, God was offering Israel an opportunity to preach the gospel of the Kingdom. This is because they would show the world what it was like to have the True God as their King. Notice the words Moses used to describe this wonderful opportunity.

Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do so in the land whither you go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who has God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? (Dt. 4:5-8)

An Introduction to Freedom

Immediately after leading the Israelites through the Red Sea, God would introduce them to an extraordinary symbol of FREEDOM—His Sabbath. He did this when explaining how He would feed them on their journey to a land of promise. Notice the instructions this Great Deliverer gave to His people.

Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily. (Ex. 16:4-5)

Here, God informed the Israelites that they were to prepare their Sabbath meal on the sixth day. Furthermore, He declared that this command would “prove them”—it would be a test of their commitment to honor their Great Emancipator. But why did God not want them to prepare their seventh day meal on the seventh day? Why did He instruct them to prepare it the day before? After all, on every other day the Israelites prepared their food on the day it was to be eaten. Why did God insist that the Sabbath should be treated differently?

The Sabbath from the Beginning

From the very beginning God’s Sabbath was different. It was unique—special. The book of Genesis indicates that when God made the seventh day He blessed the day and sanctified it. But God did one other thing on that very first Sabbath. He ceased from his labor.

And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and [he rested on the seventh day from all his work](#) which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

God from the very beginning made a powerful statement about work and his Sabbath. In essence He was declaring that profane labor is not to come into contact with that which is holy. Even the preparation of food by those other than the priests was forbidden. This was not because God is some bully in the sky, but rather because he is totally committed to man’s ultimate deliverance from bondage.

This is what the Sabbath pictures! It is a day that symbolizes the end of man’s corruptible reign on this planet and the beginning of God’s eternal reign—a reign that will culminate with His family entering an incorruptible dimension (Rev. 21:1-5). At that time they will experience the ultimate freedom.

God’s Law Goes Forth

Less than two months after leading Israel out of Egypt, God formally presented them with His Great Moral Law—the Ten Commandments. God’s voice was so powerful as He thundered out the wisdom of His righteousness, that the Israelites actually begged Moses to make Him stop (Ex. 20:19-20). The drama at this particular moment must have been astounding. Here, the Great God of Heaven was proclaiming these slaves were slaves no more. They were free, and the powerful Deliverer who freed them was going to be their King.

The law given by God on Mount Sinai was unique. It possessed a formula for prosperity and happiness. No longer were the descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob going to suffer in bondage. They were going to ride on the high places of the earth. And God’s law was the secret to this prominence.

At this point it is important to understand that within God’s law is a special key that unlocks access to Him and a magnificent plan He has for His human family. That commandment involved

a special time He made exclusively for mankind. To understand this key and its significance, we need to go back to the very beginning.

The scriptures reveal that on the seventh day of creation God ceased from His labor regarding the physical universe (Gen. 2:2). He then created that which was and *is* HOLY. Here, the Great Architect of all that exists placed a segment of time in our physical dimension and wove through it sacred qualities (verse 3). God made the seventh day unique because it was designed for a unique purpose—a Holy purpose. That purpose was to provide a link between mortal finite man and his immortal infinite Creator (Ex.31: 13-18).

In the book of Genesis we read that God created man on the sixth day (Gen.1: 26-31). This act concluded the framing of the physical universe—the heavens and the earth (Gen.1). However, because God is a spirit (Jn. 4:24) He created a spiritual link for man to connect to Him. That link was His Sabbath. Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath” (Mk. 2:27). This truth is affirmed by the Genesis account of creation. Man came first then the Sabbath.

It was not by accident that God created the Sabbath on the seventh day as opposed to some other period during the week. It was also not by accident that He made a clear distinction between the first six days and the Sabbath. The first six days pertain to the physical realm, which God gave man dominion over (Gen. 1:26-30). These six days picture six thousand years of human history in which man presides over the earth. However, once this time has ended, God will intervene and bring a Kingdom that will be ruled by a great God-King. That King is Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:11-21) and the Sabbath pictures that kingdom. It reflects a time when man will be delivered from the oppression brought on by six thousand years of human mismanagement. In its place will be a Kingdom driven by mercy, judgement and faith. It will be a time when all the slaves to sin will be liberated—set FREE.

When God presented the fourth commandment to the children of Israel, he was very specific concerning work on this day. In short, it was not to be done. According to God’s law, labor contaminated the Sabbath. So committed was God to preserving the spiritual integrity of this day that He prohibited his people from issuing any order to work. In other words God’s command extended to everyone under the authority of His people.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all your work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God: in it thou shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor the stranger that is within your gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it. (Ex. 20:8-11)

It is difficult to imagine a law being more clear and specific. However, for some in God’s church today it is not specific enough.

Whose Slave are They?

One of the most common arguments used by many of God’s people today, who avail themselves of the labor of others on the Sabbath, is that fourth commandment only mentions “your servant” not someone else’s servant. Therefore, because this command appears limited in scope, many of God’s people reason that they may solicit labor being performed by non-believers. For example: some dine out on the Sabbath believing that restaurant personnel are not their servants, they are the servants of the owner of the restaurant. Therefore, the fourth commandment makes no direct statement concerning the labor they perform. Consider the belief of the Restored Church of God and their leader Mr. David C Pack.

“Those waiters, waitresses, chefs, and the like, who may serve in a restaurant, are not our ‘servants’ in the way described in the Fourth Commandment. They are the employees of the owner of the restaurant. They would be working

regardless of whether or not we ate there. God does not hold us responsible for their working on the Sabbath just because we use their services.”

Perhaps the greatest error in this thinking is in claiming whom the waiters and waitresses, as well as other restaurant workers, serve. Most think they serve restaurant managers and owners. But is this true? At this point it is important to understand that those who labor in restaurants on the Sabbath are SINNING. It may look like just another person trying to provide for themselves and their family, but looks can be deceiving. God calls labor on His Sabbath a sin, unless it is performed by those He specifically designates. This being the case, those who work on the Sabbath are actually SLAVES to SIN! The apostle Paul understood this profound truth. Notice what he said in a letter written to the Church at Rome.

Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? (Rom. 6:16)

Today, those who work on the Sabbath are truly slaves to sin—a sin that has been sold by mankind’s greatest enemy (Rev. 12:9). Furthermore, those in God’s Church who avail themselves of this sin are condoning both the slavery and the SLAVE MASTER. This is what God was conveying when He gave the fourth commandment. This Great Lawgiver actually explained why His people were to release their servants from labor on the Sabbath. Notice the commandment:

But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shall not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor your ox, nor your ass, nor any of your cattle, nor the stranger that is within your gates; that you manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you.

And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day. (Deut. 5:14-15)

Here, God is telling His people that labor on the Sabbath is a form of bondage. This is the very bondage He freed them from when He delivered them out of Egypt. This being the case, it is hard to understand why anyone would want to return to that bondage—even to look at it. Now think of this in terms of our own lives.

The scriptures reveal that just as the children of Israel were enslaved in Egypt until God miraculously delivered them, those whom He has called in this present age were also once enslaved in “spiritual” Egypt. God’s people today were once in bondage. We once believed the things the world believed, taught the things the world taught, and practiced the things the world practiced. We even profaned God’s Sabbath and holy days. We did so because we served the same Slave Master the world serves today.

However, our calling reveals that a Great Deliverer has again rescued His people from a world that does not know Him or His way. For this reason, God’s people today should never compel the unbeliever (a slave in Egypt) to work on their behalf on the Sabbath. We must refrain from this practice because we were miraculously delivered from this very practice ourselves. Remember, YOU were once a SLAVE in Egypt.

With this in mind, God’s people must understand that their Great Deliverer would no more permit His people today to return to this world and avail themselves of its sin, than He would permit the Israelites of yesterday to return to Egypt and their sin. As much as some may want to go back to Egypt, God forbids it and warns of its consequences. Notice what He says.

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues. (Rev. 18:4)

Consider these words in the context of dining out on the Sabbath. In order to engage in this practice, God's people must return to a world that does not know Him—a world that tramples on this great day. In the Old Testament that world was called Egypt. In the New Testament it is called Babylon. But make no mistake about it; these worlds are one and the same.

When God commanded His people to cease from working on the Sabbath and to not compel others to work on their behalf, He was making a powerful statement. He was commanding His people to COME OUT OF EGYPT, to COME OUT OF BABYLON! In other words, God's people are not to be a part of the very sin that once gripped their lives. This is because they are now FREE!

Although the world today is truly in bondage, God's people stand as proof that it will not always be that way. By refusing to allow the slave of this world to labor for them on God's Sabbath, His people are proclaiming a great hope – a hope that one day all who are enslaved will be FREE. At that time they, too, will “remember the Sabbath and keep it HOLY.”

God's plan is that all mankind will ultimately be free from the tyranny of ignorance and sin. The Sabbath pictures that freedom. It is not by accident that when giving the fourth commandment, God reminded His people that they were once slaves in Egypt (Dt. 5:15). It is for this very reason that every Sabbath God's people are to be liberators. In other words, they are to declare everyone they come in contact with FREE. Nowhere in the commandment does it remotely hint that God condones His people going back into “Egypt” to avail themselves of the very sin they were once a part of (Dt. 5:14-15). The Sabbath is about liberty, not slavery.

Whether one is a believer or a skeptic, bond or free, rich or poor, young or old, God's people are not to allow them to labor on their behalf on His day. Those who are ignorant of God's law may not understand why the faithful would be so considerate of them. But God's people do understand. By releasing the unbeliever from labor on the Sabbath, they are acting out what their King will ultimately do when He returns to earth.

They declare all the slaves free