

Regarding Servants

Question:

Recently at Sabbath services I witnessed a small group of people discussing the issue of going to restaurants on the Sabbath and holy days. It was a fascinating discussion because of the variety of views on it. The strongest point of contention centered around what a servant was. Those who thought dining out on the Sabbath was permitted by God argued that waiters and waitresses were not the servants of God's people and thus the command did not refer to them. The other side argued that the Sabbath was made for all mankind and applied to those who work at restaurants too. Can you shed some light on this?

Our Response:

The most popular argument advanced by those in God's Church who dine out on the Sabbath is "they are not my servants." These words are proclaimed with greater force and more confidence than any other. This argument stakes its entire position on the definition of one word—"your." After all, the commandment only mentions "your servant" not someone else's servant. However, imagine if God's people applied that same reasoning to the ninth or tenth commandment. Each of those employs the same word, but none of God's people struggle with understanding what the Eternal meant in those commandments. Despite this fact, the semantical arguments surrounding this word continue to persist.

With this said, is there a way to truly understand God's perspective on this piece of the debate. In other words, if we were to ask Him whose servants restaurant personnel really were, what would He say?

Perhaps the greatest error in this debate 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 your 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 that 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 avail themselves of their sin.