

“God First”

Exodus 35.1-3/Isaiah 58.13-14

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During the following Sundays we will be reflecting on the call that was sent to the people of Israel to build a sacred space that would remind them of the constant presence of God, as well as the gifts granted to them by him. God sent Moses to call his people to build the Tabernacle together and, by following specific instructions, have a space for worship.

The tabernacle was a mobile or transportable tent that served as a sanctuary where the Israelites went to present their prayers, their sacrifices and their praises to God. The people of Israel built the tabernacle while wandering in the desert after God freed them from slavery in Egypt.

In our reading, we can notice that before starting any enterprise it is necessary to understand that worshiping God and observing the Sabbath is a priority. So, the way we interpret the Sabbath and how we understand its essence will be the way we observe it, whether with a correct or incorrect spirit. To better understand this idea and make sure that our way of observing the Sabbath is based on what the Word of God truly says.

One of the reasons why we do not keep Shabbat is because it constitutes a heavy burden or a difficult yoke for most to bear, since throughout the week we have focused on work, school and other matters that we must resolve, therefore Sunday is the only day we have to enjoy with the family.

It is true that there are necessary matters to attend to, that the world has changed since those biblical times and that expecting Christians to stop attending their business or commitments on Sunday seems more like a legalistic demand. To be honest, Jesus thought the same thing too. He was criticized because he made a paralyzed man carry his stretcher on Shabbat whom he healed. He was also criticized because his disciples were cutting and rubbing ears of grain to eat on Shabbat, so that the accumulation of restrictions established by the leaders of Israel has been a stumbling block and has prevented people from keeping the Sabbath completely, since the only idea we have of the Sabbath is based on human restrictions above the essence

of what God really asks of us. So, what we must do if we want to restore the essence of Shabbat is to study what the scripture really says regarding how it should be kept.

“Moses called together the whole congregation...” – Now the Israelites were ready to begin building and erecting the tabernacle that had already been planned (25-31), but whose execution had been delayed because of their apostasy (32). Since everyone had a vital interest in the construction of the tabernacle due to their participation through their offerings and their work, Moses then “called together” the people to give them preliminary instructions.

Moses had descended from the mountain the day before (34), on Yom Kippur, with the second Tables of the Law, which represented God's forgiveness and his renewed love for the people of Israel. Once the covenant with God is restored, the people have the privilege of building the Tabernacle of God. In chapter 35, Moses transmits this command to all the assembled people - men, women and children - because everyone had to contribute in one way or another to the Tabernacle or participate in its construction.

“Six days you will work, but the Sabbath will be holy to you, a day of rest” – From this moment on the people would be busy in a sacred enterprise; in addition to their personal and family commitments, they would undoubtedly have to take advantage of all the time they had to fulfill what was expected. But make no mistake; Moses emphasizes the importance of keeping the Sabbath, as a holy day, to rest and honor God.

In this sense, God is not asking us to stop our lives and interrupt our commitments; what is being asked is that in those six days we complete our work and fulfill our commitments so that when the seventh day arrives we can enjoy a well-deserved rest, with our minds at peace and free of worries so that nothing prevents us from enjoying the presence of the Lord. Mister. Let's also think that if we keep the Shabbat God will help us to make our work more efficient and our time more productive to really be able to have this day of rest that is asked of us.

Something similar to what happened in the desert when the manna was given, that in six days they could go out to look for manna, on the sixth day they were given a double portion so that they did not have to worry about what they would eat and thus respect the Sabbath. So, we have six days to worry about our provision and our material support and on the seventh day we prepare everything we need in the spiritual realm.

This is where the words of the prophet Isaiah 58.13-14 make sense. What human beings treasure most in life is making money because it provides them with the security of its provision. God is not asking us not to seek to be better but rather we must take care that it is not our obsession.

In summary, both Exodus and Isaiah are in harmony with respect to what we should avoid: Using the Shabbat as just another day, equal to the others in which we work for the material things of this world, for the temporal treasures to which Jesus he referred. It is a day to trust in our creator and provider and not in ourselves, each week we have an opportunity to test if we truly trust that there is a creator who made a covenant with us and who promised us that if we kept his commandments, we would never have need you are welcome...

Jesus used the Sabbath not for his own benefit, but to benefit others, which is the whole meaning of Isaiah 58. He used the Sabbath to benefit man spiritually as Mark 2:27 says. Jesus used it to read the scriptures, to teach, to heal, to preach, to live with people. So, if we do the same thing every week, then our families and the world would be very different.

In reality, 24 hours is very little time. If we take away from the Lord's Day, for example, 8 hours of sleeping, 6 of festive and relaxed and meals, 1 of personal hygiene, etc. So maybe we have at most 6 hours left that might seem like a lot, but that we generally don't use. But in perspective, two hours a week to pray, study, talk with the family of faith, does not seem like much; but maybe it is what you need for God to continue providing blessings to your home.