

Sabbath Dishes – in Context

Ellen said, *"We would charge all not to wash their dishes on the Sabbath if this can possibly be avoided."* After reading this, some may say, "OK, I can't wash them so I'll just rinse them and set them in the dishwasher. But, I'll wait to turn it on until after Sabbath."

This shows a great misunderstanding of both the 4th commandment and the words of Ellen. Let's look at her next sentence to see if it may be helpful: *"God is dishonored by any unnecessary work done on His holy day."* So, is the issue here that dishes shouldn't be washed. Or, is the issue that we are not to work(unnecessarily) on the Sabbath? The 4th Commandment clearly states "... *thou shalt not do any work ...*", which includes everyone *"within thy gates"*, but, I find nothing here about washing dishes. So, it seems obvious that Ellen was referring to the work that is required to wash dishes as the only thing to avoid.

Now, let's look at our hypothetical example again. Since they are rinsing the dishes and setting them in the dishwasher, it is difficult for me to see how they are doing less work on Sabbath than on any other day, which is a violation of the 4th commandment. Then, to add "insult" to "injury", they didn't turn on the dishwasher because they thought that dishes getting clean was prohibited, even though no human labor would be used.

IMHO, this is exactly the kind of thinking that lead to the Pharisaical behavior of the Jews, of which Jesus spoke so strongly against.

Here is Ellen's complete quote:

We would charge all not to wash their dishes on the Sabbath if this can possibly be avoided. God is dishonored by any unnecessary work done on His holy day. It is not inconsistent, but proper, that the dishes should be left unwashed till the close of the Sabbath, if this can be managed. [16LtMs, Lt 104, 1901, par. 9](#)

What about her phrase *"if this can be managed"*? I suppose there could be a number of exceptions. One that comes to mind is a poor family with only one dish per person. They may find it a health benefit to wash it between Sabbath meals.

IMHO, God is not arbitrary or unreasonable. And, He always has a reason for His requirements...