

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Good morning church,

This morning we are continuing our study through the book of Exodus –

We will be going over chapter 21 –

Last Sunday, we saw God give the Children of Israel the Ten Commandments at the foot of Mt. Sinai –

And you might remember that God spoke them audibly to them.

And upon hearing the Ten Commandments and recognizing how holy God is and how sinful they were, the fear of God came upon them and they asked that Moses act as a mediator between them and God.

So for the next three weeks we are going to look at laws that were given to Moses that would cover a wide range of subjects.

For example, in our study today – we are going to study laws that deal with slavery and animal control laws.

You may be thinking – what is the point in studying these laws as they do not apply in our lives anymore.

I don't own any slaves – I don't have to worry about my ox gorging my neighbor's wife.

That may be true -

But, the reason that we study them is because through these laws, we gain insight into the mind and heart of God, and into the Person and Nature of His Son – because the sacrifices, the ordinances and the regulations that we are about to study over the next few weeks, all point to Him.

Let's pray...

[Exo 21:1-36 NKJV] 1 "Now these [are] the judgments which you shall set before them:

The “judgments” given in the next few chapters were supposed to be guidelines for the judges that Moses was to appoint over the people.

They were to use these guidelines to apply the Ten Commandments to particular cases that were going to arise among the Children of Israel.

The first section deals with slavery laws.

There are many individuals who take these verses out of context and they will make the statement that the bible somehow condones slavery.

This is not the case –

Slavery was something that occurred in the world long before Moses was given these regulations.

Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers.

We have to remember that the Children of Israel themselves were slaves while in Egypt.

So God addresses the issue of slavery among the Children of Israel.

And He imposes regulations.

We see something very similar in Matthew 19 – where Jesus makes it clear that divorce was not God's intent.

But because of the hardness of man's heart, God regulated.

And that is what God is doing here.

2 "If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing.

There were many ways that a Hebrew may end up being a slave of another Hebrew

If an individual was broke and had no way to repay a debt – that individual or their children could become slaves in order to pay off the debt.

In 2 Kings 4, we have the beautiful story of Elisha and the Widow.

At the beginning of the chapter, the Widow is worried because her dead husband left her with a huge debt – and now the creditors were coming to take her children as slaves to repay that debt.

This was a common practice.

So God sets guidelines and says that if this occurs, the maximum amount of time that one could have a Hebrew slave was six years and then they would have to allow them to go free – the debt was paid in full.

3 "If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he [comes in] married, then his wife shall go out with him. 4 "If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself.

At the end of the six years, the servant was to go out the same way he came in as a slave.

If he came in married with children, he could leave with them. But if he came in and got married while a slave and had children – the wife and children were considered the master's property – so they were not allowed to leave with him.

5 "But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' 6 "then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall

also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.

If you liked being the servant of your master or maybe you had got married and had a family during the six years and didn't want to be released, you could exercise your free will and choose to remain a servant for life.

Your master would take you to the front door of the house, take an "awl" in his hand, and pierce your ear by punching the hole into the doorpost – kind of like "nailing" you to the house.

After the master punches a hole in your ear, you would wear an earring in the hole to keep the hole from healing shut.

The earring meant that you were a willing slave to your master – you were a "bondservant". A slave/servant by choice.

Jesus Christ is the ultimate Servant, He is the Perfect Servant.

Jesus chose to become a Servant for His love for His bride.

He allowed Himself to be pierced in the process – not the piercing of His ear, but the piercing of His hands, His feet, His side and His brow.

7 "And if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. 8 "If she does not please her master, who has betrothed her

to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her. 9 "And if he has **betrothed her to his son**, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters.

If a father sells his daughter as a slave, she didn't just automatically become free after six years.

Apparently the idea of buying a daughter came with the intent that you would one day marry the girl.

If the master ends up not liking her, he can't sell her to gentiles, though he can allow her to be "redeemed" and let another Hebrew purchase her as a wife.

The idea in verse 9 is that is the person purchases the daughter as a future wife for his son – he has to treat her as a daughter-in-law and not a slave.

10 "If he takes another [wife], he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights. 11 "And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without [paying] money.

Once again, God is not endorsing polygamy – He is regulating it.

The taking of multiple wives is not in accord with God's design from the beginning.

There are many examples in scriptures of the consequences of having multiple wives – Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon are all examples of individuals who learned this.

Just because the bible records polygamous relationships, it doesn't mean that God approves of such things.

Here God is saying that if they were going to add wives, they better make sure that they are able to care for them equitably.

If the man was unable to give her food, clothing and children – then she could be free from her slavery.

Now we have laws concerning murder -

12 "He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. 13

"However, if he did not lie in wait, but God delivered [him] into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee.

Here God provides a distinction between premeditated murder and manslaughter.

If one is convicted of murder – then God states that the person shall be put to death.

Why?

Because God prohibited murder.

However, if someone unintentionally killed someone, God was going to allocate these cities of refuge where they would be able to live while they awaited their day in court and they were also protected from those that sought revenge.

14 "But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die.

Next to verse 14, I want you to mark 1 King 2 –

Because we see an example of this in the life of Joab –

Joab was a murderer - he murdered Abner and Amasa – and we see him at the altar here in 1 Kings 2– and Solomon orders his guys to take him from the alter and to execute him and they did.

15 "And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

Pretty straight forward – God desires that we take elder abuse seriously.

16 "He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death.

Kidnapping to sell... That sounds like the kind of slavery we're more familiar with.

God said folks involved in that kind of slave trade deserved the death penalty.

17 "And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

The idea here is of a grown up child threatening their parents with death.

And it was punishable by death.

However, the parents did not have the right to carry out the punishment themselves.

They would still have to take their children before the judges and the elders.

18 "If men contend with each other, and one strikes the other with a stone or with [his] fist, and he does not die but is confined to [his] bed, 19 "if he rises again and walks about outside with his staff, then he who struck [him] shall be acquitted. He shall only pay [for] the loss of his time, and shall provide [for him] to be thoroughly healed.

Here we have a law regarding compensation for personal injury.

If two individuals get into a fight and one of them gets hurt real bad but does not die – then the other individual is responsible to pay for any medical bills and loss income until he or she is fully recovered.

These are some of the principles that we still have in our society today – unfortunately it seems that we see more and more people abuse it.

20 "And if a man beats his male or female servant with a rod, so that he dies under his hand, he shall surely be punished. 21 "Notwithstanding, if he remains alive a day or two, he shall not be punished; for he [is] his property.

Here is another regulation aimed at those who had servants –

They were not allowed to murder their servants.

And the idea here is that if the servants did not die immediately from the beating suffered at the hands of their master, then the intention of the master was most likely one of discipline and not murder.

And they were not punished because the loss of the servant was determined to be enough.

However, if the servant died within the first day of the beating, then it was apparent that the intention of the master was to murder their servant and then they would have to face the death penalty.

22 "If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges [determine].

23 "But if [any] harm follows, then you shall give life for life, 24 "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 "burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. 26 "If a man strikes the eye of his male or female servant, and destroys it, he shall let him go free for the sake of his eye. 27 "And if he knocks out the tooth of his male or female servant, he shall let him go free for the sake of his tooth.

I want us to focus on verse 23 through 25 here.

Because many of us have the misunderstanding that God is mandating that whatever anyone does to us – we are allowed to do it back to them.

Growing up, my mom would always tell me that if one of the boys at school ever punched me in the nose – then I had the green light to punch that person in the nose.

That is not what is being taught here.

The guidelines of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth were guidelines so that people wouldn't go overboard when they were seeking retribution for the wrong that was done to them.

So in other words, the punishment should fit the crime.

You see, these guidelines had to be set because the tendency of our human nature is to hurt the offending person more than they hurt us.

We tend to say, you hurt my eye – I want to hurt both your eyes as well as one of your hands.

These guidelines helped the judges make their judgments when they were brought before them.

Now turn with me to Matthew 5 – because Jesus expounds on this law.

[Mat 5:38-45 NKJV] 38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 "But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. 40 "If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have [your] cloak also. 41 "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 "Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

So here, Jesus says when someone hurts you – instead of spending all of our time and resources trying to get even with them, let God take care of all of that.

Our response should be one of love.

Our response should be one of mercy.

Because that is what God does.

28 "If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox [shall be] acquitted. 29 "But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made

known to his owner, and he has not kept it confined, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death.

Now, I didn't know that oxen were the type of animal that were considered a killer animal.

They could, and apparently they did.

When they did, they were put to death.

The owner wasn't held accountable, but neither could he profit by selling the meat.

However, if the oxen was known to be a menace and showed a pattern of wanting to gorge people – that is a different story – that is negligence and the owner of the oxen would be put to death as well – unless....

30 "If there is imposed on him a sum of money, then he shall pay to redeem his life, whatever is imposed on him.

Instead of the death penalty, his life could be ransomed.

The victim's family apparently could demand a monetary settlement instead of the death penalty.

31 "Whether it has gored a son or gored a daughter, according to this judgment it shall be done to him.

So this even applied if the oxen gored the children – this shows that the children were valued as much as the adults during this time.

32 "If the ox gores a male or female servant, he shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

So, now if the ox gores a servant of his neighbor, the ox is still put to death but the owner of the ox is only required to pay the owner of the servant, 30 shekels of silver.

The 30 shekels of silver was not the worth of the slave – it was simply the compensation for the loss of the slave's labor.

33 "And if a man opens a pit, or if a man digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls in it, 34 "the owner of the pit shall make [it] good; he shall give money to their owner, but the dead [animal] shall be his. 35 "If one man's ox hurts another's, so that it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and divide the money from it; and the dead [ox] they shall also divide. 36 "Or if it was known that the ox tended to thrust in time past, and its owner has not kept it confined, he shall surely pay ox for ox, and the dead animal shall be his own.

The chapter ends with guidelines regarding human responsibility.

If a person was responsible for the death of a neighbor's animal – in this case by leaving a pit open – he was to provide restitution for the owner of the animal.

We live in a society where we don't like to take personal responsibilities for our actions.

If we break something, we want someone else to pay for it.

If we cause an accident, we want to sue the insurance company for our own pain and suffering.

God's idea is that if we are responsible for something, we need to pay for it.

As common sense as these laws appear to you and me – we have to recognize that they were revolutionary during this period of time.

And through them, the Children of Israel understood that their God was not only extremely fair, He also cared about every aspect of their lives.

Much like He cares about every aspect of our lives.

Amen.

Let's pray...



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