

Exodus 21-22

July 24, 2011

Introduction:

Today's two chapters give us a host of Israel's civil laws. These are the laws by which Israel would govern itself. It is important to note that the people did not create these laws; God Himself gave them to them.

21:1-11 & 22:1-3 The first 11 verses of chapter 21 and the first 3 verses of chapter 22 have to do with the issue of slavery. What was your response when reading those verses?

- Most of us today have an immediate reaction to any thoughts about slavery. Our first response is "slavery is bad" and "it's not right". If you pay attention to these verses, though, you will see that these verses list the slaves "civil" rights.

What "rights" did Hebrew slaves have? Note: It is important to see these "slaves" as workers who are paid room and board, not abused, uncared-for pieces of property. "Servants" would be a better term; "slavery" carries a lot of baggage in our day.

- No male Hebrew slave had to serve more than 6 years (21:2). The words "without payment" mean that the slave does not have to purchase his freedom after fulfilling his obligation/contract.
- (2) Every slave could leave with whatever he brought into his situation of slavery (21:3).
- (3) He could volunteer to remain with a benevolent master.
- (4) A female slave can be redeemed by her father if her master is displeased with her (21:7-9).
- (5) Female slaves remain with their masters and are not released after six years (21:7). This insures that they continue to be cared for. In that day a man could get work and take care of himself; most women were unable to do so. You might notice that verses 7-11 really talk about this female slave being a wife: a dowry was paid for her; she could go home to her father if the man didn't want her for some reason; she could not be given to another; her "master"/husband could not deny her provision {food and clothing} or the chance to bear children. If the master/husband violated these civil rights, she could leave and would have to purchase {make payment} her freedom.

How did people become "slaves"/servants?

- Some parents sent their men off to work for others and some women were given as wives. In both cases, the parents would receive payment for the transaction. In 22:3 we see someone becoming a slave to make financial restitution for his theft. It is unclear if he served for six years or was free after he worked to pay off the price of his restitution. There were also others who would negotiate their way into "slavery"/servant/work in order to survive (Leviticus 25:47).

God never condoned the abuse of people; see 22:24 and 21:26-27.

21:12-25 What are the various personal injury laws in verses 12 to 25?

- Vs. 12-14 Anyone committing premeditated murder is to die for his crime. If it was in self-defense, he could flee to a city of refuge (Numbers 35:6-34). (NOTE: do not take time to read the numbers passage or try to explain the cities of refuge in this lesson.)
- Vs. 15,17 Anyone who strikes or curses one of his parents is to die for his crime.
- Vs. 16 Anyone who kidnaps another person is to die for his crime.
- Vs. 18 If two men get into a fight and one injures the other...and that other disables the man...then the "well" person will compensate the injured man for lost wages.

- **Vs. 20** A slave owner who kills his slave is to be punished. We are not told here what that punishment would be.

21:22-25 What do we learn from verses 22 to 25?

- Anyone who causes a pregnant woman to give birth prematurely shall pay two fines: one determined by the husband and one determined by a judge. If the baby dies, then the man must die for his crime... a life for a life. This is one of God's statements that the "thing" inside a mother's belly is a child and has the same rights as a person who has already been born.
- We also have the concept of justice in these verses. If you kill someone, you lose your life. If you damage an eye, you have your eye damaged. Knock out a tooth, lose a tooth. Etc.

Are these principles of justice made void by Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:38-42?

- Jesus' words there do not make void these principles of justice. **Exodus** is talking about civil laws; Jesus is talking about personal behavior. Individually, we are not to act as law enforcers and judges, but collectively, through our governments, we are to pursue justice and punish evil. **See Romans 13:1-4.**

21:28-36 What are the general principles of law that we learn in verses 28 to 36?

- People are responsible for their animals. If an animal endangers someone for the first time, the owner is not liable... stuff happens. If the animal had a history of bad behavior, though, and kills a man, then the ox and the owner of that ox are to die. If you dig a hole, then you are responsible if anyone is hurt falling into your hole. If your animal kills another man's animal, then you divide the dead ox, then sell the living ox, and divide the price. If you have animals, stuff happens. If the ox has a history, then the owner shall pay the man whose ox was killed the price of an ox.

22:1 What do we learn about restitution in chapter 22 verse 1?

- You must pay back more than you take. Steal and slaughter one ox and you must pay back five oxen. Steal and slaughter one sheep and you must pay back four sheep. If the ox or sheep is found alive, then the thief must add one to it for restitution; his punishment is to give back out of his own "pocket" what he took out of the other man's "pocket" (22:4). If he is unable to pay, then he becomes a slave to pay for what he took.

22:2-4 What do the verses 2 to 4 in chapter 22 tell us about break-ins?

- If you kill someone who breaking into your home, you are not guilty of any crime.

22:5-15 What laws are given in verses 5 to 15?

- You must pay back any damage to crops that your animal may cause. If you set a fire that damages others, then you are responsible to make restitution. If money or goods are stolen, the thief must pay back double what he took. If you borrow something, you are responsible to return it in the same condition in which you received it.

22:16-17 What verses 16 and 17 say was to happen if a couple had premarital sex?

- The guy must pay the girl's father a dowry and he must marry the girl. If the father refuses to give his daughter to him, then the guy still owes the father the dowry.

22:18-20 What are the other crimes mentioned in verses 18 through 20 that were punished by death?

Sorcery, bestiality (sex with an animal), and idolatry were punishable by death.

22:25 What does verse 25 say about lending money to others who are a part of God's people?

- You are not to charge them interest.

Is it wise for an individual to lend money to other individuals? Why or why not?

- It is *not* wise. The closer the person is to you, the worse the idea of lending to them is. See **Proverbs 22:7b**. Personal lending changes relationships. You are no longer just family members or friends: you are a lender and a debtor. If the need is legitimate and you feel impressed to help them, it is better just to give it.

22:28-29 What do we learn about first fruits in verses 28 and 29?

- The first of your produce and offspring belong to the Lord. The first of your crops, the firstborn of your animals, and the firstborn of your sons belong to the Lord. Like the tithe, these are reminders throughout our lives that all that we have is the Lord's.

Are these laws good laws or bad laws?

- They are **great** laws; they are God's laws. See **Isaiah 55:8-9** and **1 Corinthians 3:18-19a**.

8 “My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the Lord. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. **9** For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts. **18** Stop deceiving yourselves. If you think you are wise by this world's standards, you need to become a fool to be truly wise. **19** For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. As the Scriptures say, “He traps the wise in the snare of their own cleverness.” **NLT**