

Exodus 23-24

July 31, 2011

Introduction:

- **Exodus 23** begins by giving us more 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.

23:1-9 The first 9 verses of chapter 23 have much to say about right, wrong, and justice. What do they teach us?

- We are never to lie, especially when those lies will hurt other people (23:1). We are never to misrepresent the truth so that it makes right look wrong or wrong look right (23:2,7). We are never to take a bribe (23:8).

What is a "bribe"?

- A bribe is when someone pays another to do something that is wrong. In this case, the wrong is giving false testimony.

23:2 What great truths do we learn in verse 2?

- We are to do the right thing no matter how many people are doing the wrong things. We are to be "somebodies" who do what the Lord tells us to do, not "anybodies" who decide what they will do based upon whom they are with.

How do you or did your parents verbalize this principle?

- "If 100 people drove off of a cliff, would you do it too?"

23:3 & 6 How do verses 3 and 6 fit with each other?

- These verses tell us that right and wrong have nothing to do with financial status. Verse 3 says that we are not to be partial in judgment to someone just because he is poor. His poverty should not tip the scales of justice. Verse 6 tells us that we are not to take advantage of someone who is poor, either. See James 2:1-13.

How are these two principles violated in our day?

- In court, juries over and over give judgments in favor of the poor person since the other party is wealthy or has insurance. A great example of this is the woman who put a McDonalds' coffee cup between her legs, squeezed out the coffee, burned herself, sued McDonalds, and won. Since she had little, she was given much. It is also a perversion of justice if the rich win over the poor just because they have more money. Right is right and wrong is wrong no matter who did it.

23:4-5 & 9 What do verses 4 to 5 and 9 say about how God's people are to treat others?

- We are to be kind and helpful to others. We are to be kind even to our enemies. See Matthew 5:43-48. We are never to oppress or take advantage of others (strangers...people who are different from us).

23:10-12 What do verses 10 to 12 teach us about the Sabbath?

- They were to work 6 days and then rest 1 day before resuming work. They were also to rest the land on the seventh years. The produce that came up on those Sabbath years were for the poor and for animals.

Why did God “model” and tell us to keep a Sabbath?

- God modeled a Sabbath at creation; He worked **6 days and then rested on the 7th**. (1) Without rest, we eventually run ourselves down physically which will affect us emotionally, relationally, and spiritually. (2) On the Sabbath we remind ourselves that we belong to God. He sets the rule and we are to keep it. We give ourselves to worship. (3) Since we don't work that **7th day**, we have to trust in God's provision; we have to have faith...especially if we allow the land to sit idle for an entire year.

Turn with me and read **2 Chronicles 36:11-21**. What do you make of the statement in Chapter 36?

- Israel had failed to trust and obey God. They did not allow the land to have its Sabbath rests. God used the Babylonians to take them into captivity and they stayed there until the land had been “paid back” its lost Sabbaths.

23:13 There should never be any question about WHO is first in your life. (Meditate on this)

23:14-17 What is the point of the **three feasts** in **verses 14 to 17**?

- The Feast of Unleavened Bread led up to the Passover (**Exodus 12**). Leaven is a “picture” of sin. They were to spend **7 days** purifying themselves (repenting). They worshiped God as they remember that He passes over our sin and delivers us from bondage.
- The Feast of the Harvest took place when the first crops were harvested. The Feast of the Ingathering took place when the last of the crops were harvested. Both of these feasts reminded the people that God was their provider.

23:19 In **verse 19** the people are reminded that God gets the first of their produce / profit / lives.

23:20-33 God gives instructions to the people about the Promised Land. What does He tell them?

- God is going to drive the people out of the land and He is going to give it to Israel. God is sending HIS ANGEL who will direct them and work for them. God will bless them if they obey Him. They are to utterly destroy and drive out the people who inhabit the land. God will use bees (hornets) to drive out many of the people. They were not to let any of the people remain in the land, because the people would lead them to sin.

23:30 Do you see any significance that **verse 30** has to our lives today?

- God changes our lives “little by little”. He brings us along in steps. We progressively learn about Him and His will. He progressively reveals the things in our lives that don't please Him. Our victory in the Lord...our becoming like Him...is step by step, little by little.

23:33 Look at **verse 33**. How important is it that we surround ourselves with people who love the Lord?

- All of us are broken by sin. As a result of that we are all “bent” toward doing the wrong thing. We, therefore, can be easily tempted. It is easier to influence people to do wrong than it is to get them to do what God wants. See **1 Corinthians 15:33**.

24:1-9 What takes place in **chapter 24 verses 1 to 9**?

- God tells Moses to return to the camp and to bring Aaron, Aaron's two sons, and **70 elders** of Israel back to the mountain. Moses records and tells the people the laws that we saw in **chapters 20-23**. They were in a “book of the covenant” (**24:7**). The people said that they would obey the Lord. They offer sacrifices to God and enter into a covenant (a contract) with Him.

24:3,7 Is it easier to say you will do something or to actually do what you said you would do?

- The “saying” is the easy part; the “doing” requires character.

24:9-11 Who did the Jews “see” in verses 9 to 11?

- They did not see God the Father. See 1 Timothy 1:17; 6:15-16; 1 John 4:12; & Exodus 33:20. They saw the preincarnate (before He became “flesh” in Mary’s womb) Jesus. See Colossians 1:15 & John 1:18.

24:12-15 Notice in verses 12 to 15 that the elders and priests went so far...and then Joshua went further up the mountain...and Moses went into the cloud (fire by day/cloud by night) on the mountain (24:18).

24:16 What do you find to be interesting about what we are told in verse 16?

- Moses waited **SIX DAYS** before God spoke to Him. In our world of high-speed, instant everything, few people now will wait silently in God’s presence for **6 minutes**.

24:17-18 What was the appearance of the glory of the Lord to the Israelites?

- He was in the sky as a cloud by day and a fire by night. See Nehemiah 9:19.

24:18 God is going to give Moses instructions to build the Tabernacle and for all of the sacrifices. Notice that Moses is going to spend the next **40 days and nights with God on the mountain.**

CHAPTER 23

A Call for Justice

1 “You must not pass along false rumors. You must not cooperate with evil people by lying on the witness stand. 2 “You must not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you are called to testify in a dispute, do not be swayed by the crowd to twist justice. 3 And do not slant your testimony in favor of a person just because that person is poor. 4 “If you come upon your enemy’s ox or donkey that has strayed away, take it back to its owner. 5 If you see that the donkey of someone who hates you has collapsed under its load, do not walk by. Instead, stop and help. 6 “In a lawsuit, you must not deny justice to the poor. 7 “Be sure never to charge anyone falsely with evil. Never sentence an innocent or blameless person to death, for I never declare a guilty person to be innocent. 8 “Take no bribes, for a bribe makes you ignore something that you clearly see. A bribe makes even a righteous person twist the truth. 9 “You must not oppress foreigners. You know what it’s like to be a foreigner, for you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. 10 “Plant and harvest your crops for six years, 11 but let the land be renewed and lie uncultivated during the seventh year. Then let the poor among you harvest whatever grows on its own. Leave the rest for wild animals to eat. The same applies to your vineyards and olive groves. 12 “You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but on the seventh day you must stop working. This gives your ox and your donkey a chance to rest. It also allows your slaves and the foreigners living among you to be refreshed. 13 “Pay close attention to all my instructions. You must not call on the name of any other gods. Do not even speak their names. NLT

Three Annual Festivals

14 “Each year you must celebrate three festivals in my honor. 15 First, celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread. For seven days the bread you eat must be made without yeast, just as I commanded you. Celebrate this festival annually at the appointed time in early spring, in the month of Abib,* for that is the anniversary of your departure from Egypt. No one may appear before me without an offering. 16 “Second, celebrate the Festival of Harvest,* when you bring me the first crops of your harvest. “Finally, celebrate the Festival of the Final Harvest* at the end of the harvest season, when you have harvested all the crops from your fields. 17 At these three times each year, every man in Israel must appear before the Sovereign, the Lord. 18 “You must not offer the blood of my sacrificial offerings together with any baked goods containing yeast. And do not leave the fat from the festival offerings until the next morning. 19 “As you harvest your crops, bring the very best of the first harvest to the house of the Lord your God. “You must not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.

A Promise of the Lord’s Presence

20 “See, I am sending an angel before you to protect you on your journey and lead you safely to the place I have prepared for you. 21 Pay close attention to him, and obey his instructions. Do not rebel against him, for he is my representative, and he will not forgive your rebellion. 22 But if you are careful to obey him, following all my instructions, then I will be an enemy to your enemies, and I will oppose those who oppose you. 23 For my angel will go before you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites, so you may live there. And I will destroy them completely. 24 You must not worship the gods of these nations or serve them in any way or imitate their evil practices. Instead, you must utterly destroy them and smash their sacred pillars. 25 “You must serve only the Lord your God. If you do, I* will bless you with food and water, and I will protect you from illness. 26 There will be no miscarriages or infertility in your land, and I will give you long, full lives. 27 “I will send my terror ahead of you and create panic among all the people whose lands you invade. I will make all your enemies turn and run. 28 I will send terror* ahead of you to drive out the Hivites, Canaanites, and Hittites. 29 But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals would multiply and threaten you. 30 I will drive them out a little at a time until your population has increased enough to take possession of the land. 31 And I will fix your boundaries from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea,* and from the eastern wilderness to the Euphrates River.* I will hand over to you the people now living in the land, and you will drive them out ahead of you. 32 “Make no treaties with them or their gods. 33 They must not live in your land, or they will cause you to sin against me. If you serve their gods, you will be caught in the trap of idolatry.” NLT

CHAPTER 24

Israel Accepts the Lord's Covenant

1 Then the Lord instructed Moses: "Come up here to me, and bring along Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of Israel's elders. All of you must worship from a distance. 2 Only Moses is allowed to come near to the Lord. The others must not come near, and none of the other people are allowed to climb up the mountain with him." 3 Then Moses went down to the people and repeated all the instructions and regulations the Lord had given him. All the people answered with one voice, "We will do everything the Lord has commanded." 4 Then Moses carefully wrote down all the Lord's instructions. Early the next morning Moses got up and built an altar at the foot of the mountain. He also set up twelve pillars, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 Then he sent some of the young Israelite men to present burnt offerings and to sacrifice bulls as peace offerings to the Lord. 6 Moses drained half the blood from these animals into basins. The other half he splattered against the altar. 7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it aloud to the people. Again they all responded, "We will do everything the Lord has commanded. We will obey." 8 Then Moses took the blood from the basins and splattered it over the people, declaring, "Look, this blood confirms the covenant the Lord has made with you in giving you these instructions." 9 Then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel climbed up the mountain again. 10 There they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there seemed to be a surface of brilliant blue lapis lazuli, as clear as the sky itself. 11 And though these nobles of Israel gazed upon God, he did not destroy them. In fact, they ate a covenant meal, eating and drinking in his presence! 12 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain. Stay there, and I will give you the tablets of stone on which I have inscribed the instructions and commands so you can teach the people." 13 So Moses and his assistant Joshua set out, and Moses climbed up the mountain of God. 14 Moses told the elders, "Stay here and wait for us until we come back. Aaron and Hur are here with you. If anyone has a dispute while I am gone, consult with them." 15 Then Moses climbed up the mountain, and the cloud covered it. 16 And the glory of the Lord settled down on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day the Lord called to Moses from inside the cloud. 17 To the Israelites at the foot of the mountain, the glory of the Lord appeared at the summit like a consuming fire. 18 Then Moses disappeared into the cloud as he climbed higher up the mountain. He remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights.