

Exodus Chapter 21

V: 1 “*Now these are the judgments...*”

- Back in Ch. 19 God sends Moses back to remind the people of what God has done for them in delivering them from Egypt, how He sustained them in the wilderness.
- He says that if they will obey His voice and keep His covenant then they shall be a peculiar treasure above all people unto God, that they would be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.
- The people respond quickly, really without knowing what the conditions of that covenant were.
- Chapter 20 gave us the 10 commandments, and now in chapter 21 we come to the fine print, the details of the law, or the application of the law in the covenant that they have already agreed to.
- We’ll find that some of these laws seemingly apply directly to our lives, and some we may not be able to relate to.
- California 1970 Family Reform Act, removed Biblical language re: divorce.

Exodus 24:3 “And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, all the words which the Lord hath said will we do.”

V: 2 We need to be clear here; God is not instituting or even necessarily condoning slavery. Slavery has been a part of the culture for a good long time; God is intervening to regulate it.

- A Hebrew slave was to serve for 6 years, but in the seventh year he was to be set free, free also from debt or obligation to his master.

[Deuteronomy elaborates for us:](#)

Deuteronomy 15:12-15 “¹²And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. ¹³And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: ¹⁴Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. ¹⁵And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing today.”

- This is all very interesting particularly in light of human history:
- The description of human history begins with Adam & Even.

- As Adam & Eve fell to sin, we were all sold into slavery, subject to sin and death.
- There are about 4,000 years of history recorded from Adam & Eve to the advent of Jesus, the nativity.
- There are a little over 2,000 years from the advent of Christ to our present time – 6,000 years or so in all.

2 Peter 3:8 “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

- Lord willing we’re getting close to that time when we too would be set free from these bodies, encased in bondage – set free to be in His presence.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 “¹⁶For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

V: 3-4 What a man came in with, that will he go out with – whether single or married.

- Whatever has been gained in the mean time, wife, children – all that came from and belongs to the master.

1 Corinthians 3:7 “So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.”

V: 5 If that servant who has been given a wife, now they have children – and for those and perhaps other reasons he doesn’t want to leave – he becomes a willing slave or as the New Testament puts it – a bond servant, “doulos” – a willing slave.

- Peter, Paul, James, and Jude – all start their letters off in the same way:

Romans 1:1 “Paul, a servant / doulos of Jesus Christ,…”

- We love our master, we love being in His presence, His commandments are not burdensome to us – we want very much to please Him in everything that we do – that’s what it is to be a bondservant.
- Master, wife, children:

(Father) **John 8:29** “And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him.”

(Bride) **Ephesians 5:25-27** “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it;”

(Children) **John 1:12** “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in His name.”

V: 6 The servant would be brought before the judges to make known his desire, then he would be taken to the door post of the house. The door post would again remind them of the lamb that was slain, and whose blood covered the door post during the Passover, at that place they would have an awl driven through his ear, he would have an ear ring placed in his ear – symbolizing the commitment that he has made – and to be identified as a bond servant to the master’s household for the remainder of his life.

- That ring also symbolized that this person was not just owned, but under the protection of their master, that he belonged to somebody – it was security.
- There is a Messianic prophecy relating to Jesus that makes sense in light of this practice.

Isaiah 50:5-6 “⁵The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away aback. ⁶I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.”

John 6:38 “For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.”

- Jesus willingly went to the door post, to the cross; and allowed Himself to be pierced, pinned to the cross, submitting to the will of the Father going to the cross for each of us.

Judges: (H430) Elohim; gods in the ordinary sense; used of the supreme God; occasionally applied by way of deference to magistrates.

- As we’ve mentioned before, God is not a name so much as it is a title; the judges or gods with a little “g” as mentioned here are simply human judges. If you have committed a crime and you come before the court, and you are found guilty, the judge in pronouncing a sentence upon you actually can control your future, he has control over your destiny, and thus he becomes your “god”.

God’s protection for women: treated differently than men, not treated deceitfully.

V: 7-9 A daughter sold into slavery was not to be treated the same as a man, in other words she wouldn’t get to go out in the 7th year, wasn’t released in the 7th year.

- Fathers had the right to sell their children; daughters were usually sold to be the wife of a man, or a maid servant to be his concubine, part of a harem. The price was considered to be the dowry, alimony in advance in an attempt to protect the daughter’s future in case she was sent away or rejected by her husband at some future time.

- If after the daughter had been purchased and her new owner / master decided not to marry her, he could let her be redeemed, or he could give her to his son – all of this was prior to the actual marriage.
- He couldn't sell her off to a foreign land, (no gentiles) couldn't speculate on her.
- If she were to marry his son, then she is no longer a slave, but a daughter.
- We see that women were just barely above the status of slaves, no real rights to speak of – Christianity is what has given women equality, freedom, and value.

Galatians 3:28 “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

- There was nothing like this in any of the pagan cultures around them.

V: 10-11 If the man takes her as his wife, then take another wife – He must continue to minister to her needs for food, and clothing.

1 Timothy 5:8 “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

- And he must not ignore her in performing all the duties of a husband.
- The purpose behind this is very practical, in that providing his wife with children secured, particularly sons secured her future – children to take care of her in her old age.
- God's design for marriage is monogamy; God is not endorsing polygamy – just as with slavery and divorce, God is regulating it.
- If he fails in these things then she is to be set free.

[Now the laws concerning violence:](#)

V: 12 He that strikes a man, based on context of the next verse, he who lies in wait – premeditated murder – he shall be put to death, capital punishment.

This is repeated in Leviticus & Deuteronomy – 1st established in **Genesis 9:6**

V: 13 If it's manslaughter, an accident of some kind, then he can flee to a city of refuge.

- Later we'll see that 6 cities of refuge are set up for such cases, wherein the “avenger of blood” would not be allowed to take revenge upon the one who caused the death of another by accident.
- Manslaughter is not held to the same standard as pre-meditated murder.

V: 14 If the suspect has acted intentionally, used guile and deceit, then it's pre-meditated murder and he is to be killed.

- There is no refuge for that person, they can't' cling to the altar, or hide in the church.

V: 15 Falls right in line with the 5th commandment.

Exodus 20:12 "Honor thy father and thy mother..."

- Notice that there is no mitigation or grace, no mercy with this commandment.
- No reference to injury, simply striking a parent resulted in death.
- God doesn't tolerate the striking of the parents is a capital offense.

Deuteronomy 21:18-21 ¹⁸"If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: ¹⁹Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; ²⁰And they shall say unto the elders of his city, this our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. ²¹And all the men of this city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear."

V: 16 Kidnapping – capital offense.

V: 17 Again dealing with parent and child relationships:

- He that curses his father or mother shall be killed.

Repeated in Leviticus:

Leviticus 20:9 "For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him."

- Later in Matthew Ch. 15, Jesus elaborated on this issue: the religious leaders would later alter this command through their traditions.
 - When the parents might need help later in life often they would say that their wealth and possessions were "corban" or sanctified, meaning sorry, I can't help you, I've already given it to God.
 - Jesus explained that this was the same as curing their parents.
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V: 18-19 Two guys get into a fight, one guy tunes the other up and he doesn't die, then they have to pay for his lost wages and medical expenses.

- So don't get into a fight... there's no way to win.

James 1:19 "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

1 Timothy 3:3 / Titus 3:2 No brawlers.

V: 20-21 If a man strikes his servant or his maid and they die, it's different – it's not a capital punishment issue, there will still be a penalty, but not death – because the servant is his possession, or if they linger for a couple of days then die, then there is no punishment – there is no intent to kill, he's just out the money for a slave.

V: 22 If during an altercation one of the men's wives who is pregnant is somehow injured and she has a miscarriage, or a premature birth, but the woman survives and is ok.

- The offending party is then subject to whatever punishment or fine that the woman's husband imposes as the judge requires.

V: 23 But if mischief does follow, meaning that the woman or the baby dies – then the penalty is death, life for life...

Mischief: (H-611) 'acown, aw-sone'; evil, mischief, hurt, harm.

V: 24-25 If anything else comes of it, if the victim loses an eye, a tooth, hand or foot – the same shall be done to them.

- The punishment was fit the crime, can't kill someone for striking you, or knocking out a tooth.
- Jesus softened this quite a bit in the Sermon on the Mount:
- Jesus teaches us to be forgiving, don't exact it, be merciful – because the religious leaders taught that you had to do these things

Matthew 23:23 "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

Micah 6:8 “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

V: 26-27 If a man strikes his servant and he loses an eye or a tooth, then he is to let that servant go free for the sake of his eye, tooth, or body part.

Proverbs 10:13 “In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.”

Proverbs 20:30 “The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.”

- If they are applying the rod or correction / corporal punishment in a Biblical manner it's pretty hard to damage an eye or a tooth. If however they struck out in anger and hit their servant in the face, contrary to God's word, then injury like that was possible – and the servant could end up going free.
- Another controlling element causing master to treat their servants well, just as I believe that employers are to treat their employees well, fairly, and graciously.

Animal control laws:

V: 28-32 People were responsible for their animals; if an ox gored somebody to death, but didn't have a history of aggressiveness – it was a surprise, then the animal would be killed and the owner acquitted.

- If the same thing happened, but there was a history of the animal being aggressive in the past, then both the ox and the owner were to be killed, unless the owner ransomed his own life to the victim's family.
- If the ox “pushes” or gores a servant – the servant's owner shall be compensated with **30 pieces of silver** – the price of a slave.

Speaking prophetically of Jesus:

Zechariah 11:12-13 “¹²And I said unto them, if ye think good, give me my price; and if not forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. ¹³And the Lord said unto me, cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.”

- Another underlying truth in this part of scripture is that men are more important than animals.

V: 33-34 If a man digs a pit or leaves it open so that another man's ox or donkey falls in, the owner of the pit is to make it good, compensate the owner of the animal.

- It was common then to collect rain water into cisterns, or pits. They would dig a large hole or pit with a narrow opening at the top into which they would channel the rain water as it collected in various small ditches.
- If they left the top uncovered or un-fenced then livestock could fall in – this is instruction for those situations and for taking the proper precautions.

[Animals of different owners:](#)

V: 35-36 Again, taking responsibility for our actions including how we control our livestock.

- Taking personal responsibility, dealing with interpersonal relationships with our neighbors.
- These may seem like just common sense anecdotes, but considering the culture that had come out of, and what was going on all around them, this was revolutionary to them.
- This also portrays that God is interested in every part of our lives, even the simplest circumstances and details of our lives.