

## Exodus Chapters 21-23:19- John Karmelich

1. The next 3 chapters deal with “practical” stuff.
  - a) In Chapter 20, we had the 10 commandments, or the Law of God.
    - i) As stated, the 10 commandments apply to all people.
  - b) What we have here, is the “Laws of Moses”
    - i) These are legislative, judicial and ceremonial laws.
      - a) They apply only to the Israel people.
    - ii) Next logical question - Why should we care? ☺
    - iii) Well, first remember Paul’s words to Timothy: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2nd Timothy 3:17, NIV)
    - iv) Second, as we’ve mentioned, many times, there are hints and “types” of Jesus written all over the Old Testament. “Behold, I have come; In the volume of the book it is written of Me;” (Hebrews 10:7 NKJV).
2. A lot of what you are going to read in the next 3 chapters has familiar “rings” to it.
  - a) This is because many of our laws are based on this section of Scripture.
  - b) Our founding fathers understood the wisdom of the Bible for making rules and regulations for our society. Many of the principals are still in effect today.
    - i) A lot of our property rights, personal rights, & dealings with other people come from these 3 chapters of scripture.
3. As you read this section, the key question to ask yourself is “What principal is this scripture teaching me?” If you remember that and that alone tonight, you’ve gained a lot of insight.
  - a) These laws were written to a society that existed 3,500 years ago.
    - i) They didn’t have paper money. (What, no dollar bills with Moses on the front and Mt. Sinai on the back saying “In God we trust?”.☺)
    - ii) Commerce was mostly in animals. You performed a service, you were paid in sheep, cattle, donkeys, etc. These animals were used for food, clothing, shelter, transportation, plowing the fields, etc. This was their commerce.
    - iii) Therefore, when you read about stealing a sheep or a donkey, the principal is what is important today, not the animal itself.
4. Looking at the big picture of the next 3 chapters, I see three over-riding themes: “Fairness”, “Justice” and “Witness”.
  - a) God wants fair dealings among his people. Fairness *requires* justice for the guilty. “Being a good witness” comes out of the first two. If one deals fairly with other people, those other people would *desire* this system and way of life.
5. Remember as we read this were the Israelites are in their journey. The Red Sea was 3 months ago. God preserved them through a set of miracles. They just got the 10 commandments and made their first altar (acknowledging a way of redemption when they failed the law).
  - a) Now we deal with regulations. There are two million people wandering around in the desert. Knowing human nature, these laws were necessary for fairness, justice and being a witness to outsiders.
6. **21:1** These are the decisions that you will set before them:
  - a) These instructions were given to Moses to give to the leaders and judges.
    - i) As opposed to the 10 commandments that were heard audibly by all.

7. **21:2** If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years, but in the seventh year he will go out free without paying anything
- a) The first set of regulations is about slavery. Remember that the people just came out of slavery. The Hebrews understood slavery. Therefore God is going to contrast how He expects the Hebrews to treat their slaves as compared to Egyptians/other cultures.
  - b) When we become born-again, God changes our attitude about our attitudes. It is logical that the first thing God calls attention to is their (our) attitude toward human life.
    - i) In most ancient cultures, a slave was less-than-human. Murder of one's own slave was allowed. Beating of one's slave was condoned. God was trying to teach the Hebrews to set a higher standard for themselves, one other cultures could look up to and admire.
  - c) Does God condone slavery?
    - i) Then, yes; today no. Plain & Simple.
    - ii) This was a culture that lived as slavery. For the Hebrews to go to a society that was 100% anti-slavery would be too much change at one time.
    - iii) Others argue it is similar to God's view on divorce.
      - a) Divorce is never desirable. The bible is clear that it is discouraged,
      - b) But divorce is never listed as a sin either. There are several places in the New Testament where Paul lists the "sins of the flesh". These are sins where if one willfully continues in them, one will not get into heaven. Divorce is never listed among these sins.
      - c) Jesus said: "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery." (Matthew 19:8-9 NIV)
  - d) Remember that these people were wandering through the desert. They had no jails. They needed a set of punishments less severe than the death penalty. One of the allowable punishments was slavery. Slavery was permitted in the following cases:
    - i) Selling their liberty in cases of extreme poverty. (Leviticus 25:39)
      - a) God expects you to honor your debts. If you can still work, this was a way to repay.
      - b) Selling their children into slavery (Exodus 21:7)
        - (1) No rational person wanted to give up his or her kids. This was also an incentive to work hard and not steal.
      - c) As restitution for thievery (Exodus 22:3-4)
8. **21:3** If he came in by himself he will go out by himself; if he had a wife when he comes in, then his wife will go out with him. **21:4** If his master gave him a wife, and she bore sons or daughters, the wife and the children will belong to her master, and he will go out by himself. **21:5** But if the servant should declare, 'I love my master, and my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' **21:6** then his master will bring him to the judges, and he will bring him to the door, or the doorposts, and his master will bore through his ear with an awl, and he shall serve him forever.
- a) Here's a recap of these verses: Slavery means ownership. If the slave-owner provides a wife for the slave, she is still a slave when his six years are up.
    - i) The kids stay with the mom.
  - b) The slave who is to be set free, out of love for his wife or master, could then choose to remain a slave-for-life. The visual symbol for this act is the slave allows the slave owner to put an earring in him. (The act is done up-against-the doorpost.)
    - i) Remember that the Jews still had Passover in their mind. Here was blood on the doorpost as a sign of loyalty to their master.

- c) This term for one who is made a slave-for-life is called a bondslave. It is also a New Testament term. It means one who willingly chooses to become a slave for life.
    - i) This is important as four New Testament writers referred to themselves as bondslaves of Jesus Christ! Paul, (Romans 1:1), James, the leader of the early church (James 1:1), Peter (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:1) and Jude, Jesus half-brother (Jude 1:1).
    - ii) “Jesus gave us the right to be called friends instead of servants (John 15:15); yet the writers of the New Testament found plenty of glory in simply being considered bondservants of Jesus.” David Guzik
  - d) The book of Psalms also indicates this is a prophecy of the Messiah:
    - i) Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced; burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. (Psalm 40:6 NIV)
    - ii) Why is it prophetic? Notice the next verse
    - iii) Then I said, “Here I am, I have come-- it is written about me in the scroll. (Psalm 40:7 NIV)
      - a) This is the verse quoted in Hebrews 10:7 as being about Jesus!
  - e) Paul also picks up on this theme as Jesus-as-ultimate-servant:
    - i) Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. (Philippians 2:7 NIV)
9. Next set of verses – dealing with female slaves: **21:7** If a man sells his daughter as a female servant, she will not go out as the men servants do. **21:8** If she does not please her master, who has desired her for himself, then he must let her be redeemed. He has no right to sell her to a foreign nation, because he has dealt deceitfully with her. **21:9** And if he designated her for his son, then he will deal with her after the manner of daughters. **21:10** If he takes another wife, he must not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marital rights. **21:11** And if he does not provide her with these three things, then she will go out free, without paying money.
- a) God understood that woman had less physical strength than men had, and therefore needed special rights. He also understood that a woman being on her own in that culture was an extremely cruel sentence. Therefore, these rules were necessary.
  - b) Verse 8 says If a man sells his daughter as a slave (usually for poverty reasons), the father must redeem (buy her back) if she is not “pleasing” to the new master. The new master would obviously be cruel to her in this situation. It is for her protection.
    - i) Notice the 2<sup>nd</sup> part does not allow the father to sell his daughter to a foreigner because he (the father) has dealt deceitfully with her.
    - ii) Outside nations were far crueler than Hebrews to their slaves. Therefore he could not sell the daughter to a non-Hebrew. The daughter is obviously not at fault for the father’s necessity of putting her into slavery. Thus this law to prevent cruelty to her.
  - c) If she is sold as a bride, she is no longer to be treated as a slave. One could do a whole lecture here on “the bride of Christ, a bond-slave” and being “set free”!
  - d) Verse 11 simply states that if the new owner takes her for a wife, then marries another (polygamy), he still has to treat her fairly and pay her bills. He can’t throw her out in the street. God looks at polygamy the same way he does divorce. It is allowed, but not encouraged. Every story in the Bible involving polygamy always involved suffering for the husband. In my opinion, one wife is enough for any man to handle! ☺
  - e) If one forgets all these details, remember that the key terms are: fairness, justice and just being a good witness. It is a common application to all these verses.

10. Next set of verses – pre-meditated murder: **21:12** Whoever strikes someone so that he dies must surely be put to death. **21:13** But if he does not do it with premeditation, but it comes about by accident, then I will appoint a place where he may flee. **21:14** But if a man willfully attacks his neighbor to kill him with guile, you will take him from my altar to die.
  - a) God has no toleration for pre-meditated murder. God is a respecter of all human life.
  - b) Verse 13 deals with “accidental” death, commonly referred to as manslaughter. This will be discussed later in the book. In summary, the Promised Land will have 6 cities of refuge, where the “killer” can flee as a sanctuary for accidental murder.
  - c) Suppose somebody commits murder and then runs into the tabernacle for refuge? God says in Verse 14 not to let that intimate the authorities. The penalty still applies.
    - i) This verse states a good principal about forgiveness. A man who kills someone and then runs to the altar is looking for forgiveness. Can God forgive them of that sin? Yes. But we, as society must still hold them accountable.
11. **21:15** And whoever strikes his father and his mother must surely be put to death.
  - a) There already was a law on the books about murder? Why this one?
    - i) To double-emphasize God’s respect for the family. It is mostly designed for grown-children that are rebellious against their elders.
  - b) This verse also applies to an older child who kills their parents. The law might otherwise make the parents responsible for any other type of murder.
12. **21:16** And whoever kidnaps someone and sells him, or he is found still holding him, must surely be put to death.
  - a) God does not condone kidnapping. He is guilty even if the guilty party has yet to sell them for money. We still have this law as a federal offense today.
13. **21:17** And whoever curses his father or his mother must surely be put to death.
  - a) Here’s a good one to put up on your teenager’s door. ☺
  - b) God wants respect of the family unit.
  - c) Most loving parents would not sentence their children to death for a first-time offense. I suspect this would only be used in serious cases and/or their adult child don’t take care of their parents in the latter years, and turn to society to help them.
14. **21:18** And if men fight, and one strikes his neighbor with a stone, or with his fist, and he does not die, but must remain in bed, **21:19** and then if he rises and walks about outside on his staff, then the one who struck him is innocent, except he must pay for the injured person’s loss of time and see that he is fully healed.
  - a) Here is another law of simple fairness. You get into a fight, the guy is injured, and you reimburse him for his time/expense loss. This law would strongly discourage fighting. It would also be a good law for judges to read for assault/battery charges.
  - b) As a sports-fan, I have a real problem with “cheap shots”. This is intentionally hurting someone after a whistle blows a play dead. I think if someone is injured and out for the season, so should the guy who hit him. If the injured career’s is ruined, so should the guy who hit him. (That’s not the rule, just my humble opinion!)
15. **21:20** And if a man strikes his servant or his female servant with a rod so that he or she dies as a result of the blow, he will surely be punished. **21:21** However, if the injured servant survives a day or two days, the owner will not be punished, for he has suffered the loss. **21:26** And if a man strikes the eye of his servant, or the eye of his female servant, so that he destroys it, he will let him go free for the sake of his eye. **21:27** And if he knocks out the tooth of his servant, or the tooth of his female servant, he will let him go free for the sake of the tooth.
  - a) God is saying a man has a right to punish his slave. If he goes too far, he has, than the owner is punished. If an owner knocks out an eye, or even a tooth, he has to let the slave go free. This really makes a slave owner think twice about the degree of corporal punishment he inflicts upon the slave.

16. I intentionally skipped verse 21-25 and will do them here: **21:22** And if men fight and hit a pregnant woman and her child is born prematurely, but there is no serious injury, he will surely be punished in accordance with what the woman's husband will put on him, and he will pay what the court decides. **21:23** But if there is serious injury, then you will give a life for a life, **21:24** eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, **21:25** burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.
- a) The focus of this passage is on a woman giving birth prematurely and the associated penalties. If the fight causes a pre-mature (live) birth, the guilty party pays the penalty. This would be the additional costs/trouble associated with a pre-mature birth.
    - i) Some translations (NASB, RSV, NRSV, TLB) use the word "miscarriage".
      - a) In my opinion this is wrong. This is important in the "abortion" debate.
    - ii) Many people will argue that the Bible condones abortion. They use this verse as their proof-text. On Page 12 I wrote an addendum refuting this argument.
  - b) The principal of "eye for eye", "tooth for tooth" limits revenge. Many people think, "You hurt me, I'll hurt you *worse*." The punishment is limited to the damage.
17. The next set of laws deals with regulations with animals: **21:28** If a bull gores a man or a woman so that either dies, then the ox must surely be stoned and its flesh must not be eaten; but the owner of the bull will be acquitted.
- a) Why punish the bull & not the owner? We'll get to that. A bull is a dangerous and mean animal. The punishment against the bull is to prevent further action by the bull.
  - b) The bull is also valuable property to the owner. If it kills someone, the owner loses any value the bull might have. It can neither be sold nor eaten. This law makes an owner think twice about boundaries and the bull.
18. **21:29** But if the bull had the habit of goring, and its owner was warned, and he did not take the necessary precautions, and then it killed a man or a woman, the bull must be stoned and the man must be put to death.
- a) If the bull did it once, the owner could not have known better. That is why verse 28 is a lighter punishment than verse 29. The owner is responsible if the bull has developed a bad reputation.
19. Men & bull's continued: **21:30** If a ransom is set for him, then he must pay the redemption for his life according to whatever was set for him. **21:31** If it gores a son or a daughter, according to this judgment will it be done to him. **21:32** If the bull gores a male servant or a female servant, he must pay thirty shekels of silver, and the ox must be stoned.
- a) "It seems that if the survivors of the dead man will accept monetary restitution in lieu of the owner's death, this is an acceptable settlement" David Guzik
  - b) Verse 32 sets the price (market value) of a servant at 30 shekels of silver.
    - i) This price is considered "blood money" for the accidental killing of a servant.
    - ii) Thirty shekels of silver is also the amount of money Judas was paid for betraying Jesus. (Matthew 26:15) Many see a connection here as a prophecy.
20. **21:33** If a man opens a pit, or if he digs a pit, and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, **21:34** the owner of the pit must repay the loss. He must give money to the owner of them, and the dead animal will be his. **21:35** And if the bull of one man injures the bull of his neighbor so that it dies, then they will sell the live bull and divide its proceeds, and they will also divide the dead bull. **21:36** Or if it is known that the bull had the habit of goring, and its owner did not take the necessary precautions, he must surely pay bull for bull, and the dead animal will be his.
- a) Ever see a sign in the store that says "You break it, you bought it".
    - i) Here is the principal being applied. Somebody digs a pit and an innocent animal gets hurt. If your animal hurts your neighbor, you are responsible.
    - ii) God is applying the principal of "negligence and restitution" here.

21. The next set of laws is on theft & punishment. **22:1** If a man steals an ox or a sheep and kills it or sells it, he must pay back five head of cattle for the ox, and four sheep for the one sheep.
- a) I'm logically speculating because an ox is worth more than a sheep on the open market, the punishment is greater for stealing an ox/cow over a sheep.
  - b) Remember, no jails. If the thief can not afford to pay the crime he is sold into slavery.
22. **22:2** If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguilt for him.
- a) Here's a law we have today. If you kill a thief on your property, you're not guilty.
23. **22:3** If the sun has risen on him, then there is bloodguilt for him. A thief must surely make full restitution; if he has nothing, then he will be sold for his theft.
- a) If a thief comes in daylight, and let's assume you can catch him without killing, God expects the owner to not be as severe as necessary. Again, the principal is "fairness".
24. **22:4** If the stolen item should in fact be found alive in his possession, whether it be an ox, or a donkey, or a sheep, he must pay back double.
- a) Remember 22:1 says if a thief kills or sells an ox, then he pays fourfold. Here the punishment is less severe as the thief is caught in the act. Why?
    - i) God is giving the thief time to repent. The punishment is less severe if he is confesses at this point prior to selling it or eating it.
25. **22:5** If a man grazes his livestock in a field or a vineyard, and he lets the livestock loose and they graze in the field of another man, he must make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard. **22:6** If a fire breaks out and spreads to thornbushes, so that stacked grain or standing grain or the whole field is consumed, the one who started the fire must surely make restitution.
- a) Both of these are more principals of restitution. We are to take responsibility for our actions. Need some modern examples?
    - i) Christians should always leave a note on a parked car if we hit it.
    - ii) If one of our kids breaks a neighbor's window, we are responsible.
26. **22:7** If a man gives his neighbor money or articles for safekeeping, and it is stolen from the man's house, if the thief is caught, he must repay double. **22:8** If the thief is not caught, then the owner of the house will be brought before the judges, to see whether he has laid his hand on his neighbor's goods.
- a) Again, a thief caught in the act pays double. The emphasis of this verse is in comparison to 28. Since the owner is responsible, he must tell the judge the circumstances.
27. **22:9** In all cases of illegal possessions, whether for an ox, or a donkey, or a sheep, or a garment, or any kind of lost item, about which someone says "This belongs to me," the matter of the two of them will come before the judges, and the one whom the judges declare guilty must repay double to his neighbor. **22:10** If a man gives his neighbor a donkey, or an ox, or a sheep, or any beast to keep, and it dies, or is hurt, or carried away without anyone seeing it, **22:11** then there will be an oath to the Lord between the two of them, that he has not laid his hand on his neighbor's goods, and its owner will accept this, and he will not have to make it good. **22:12** But if it was stolen from him, he will make it good to its owner. **22:13** If it is torn in pieces, then he will bring it for evidence, and he will not have to make good what was torn.
- a) The American Justice system is based on "innocent until proven guilty. These verses are the basis of that law! (Read Verses 10 & 11 again if you missed that point.)
  - b) I like how verse 9 says in a dispute, the loser of the court case has to pay double! There's a great incentive to cut down on civil & frivolous lawsuit claims.
  - c) The latter verses stress the responsibility of a caretaker. If someone tells you to watch his or her stuff, God holds you accountable while it is in your possession.

- d) “The New Testament makes it clear that believers should not take legal disputes among themselves to secular judges; they should allow the matter to be judged by the church (1 Corinthians 6:1-8)” David Guzik.
- i) There are Christian arbitration courts available for hire in such cases.
28. **22:14** If a man borrows an animal from his neighbor, and it is hurt or dies when its owner was not with it, he will surely make it good. **22:15** If its owner was with it, he will not have to make it good; if it was hired, what was paid for the hire covers it.
- a) These same principals of responsibility also apply to borrowing & lending.
- b) If all these laws seem confusing or boring, remember, they are the basis of our court of law. If you love God, believe in justice and fairness, and being a good witness, most of the laws are logical and simply “commentary” on the 10 commandments.
29. **22:16** If a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged and has sexual relations with her, he must surely endow her to be his wife. **22:17** If her father refuses to give her to him, he must pay money for the bride price of virgins.
- a) The Old & New Testament does not condone pre-marital sex. Remember the rule of “you break it, you bought it”? It applies to a male seducing a virgin too. Hopefully, this will help guys to think twice about it if he’s then committed for life!
- b) Suppose the father of the bride isn’t crazy about the guy. Fine, the guilty party still has to pay the penalty and does not get to keep the girl (verse 17).
30. **22:18** You must not allow a sorceress to live.
- a) Why is God so tough on sorcery? Because this is the realm of demons. If you remember back when we studied the magicians under Pharaoh, these guys had great power. It is demonic. God allows demons to have some power as to make us turn to God for strength to combat those powers.
- b) Avoid anything that can be an entry into demonic powers. This includes sorcery, witchcraft, voodoo practices, etc.
- i) Those of you who have seen the movie “The Exorcist” may not realize that it was based on several true stories (except in real life the demons lost!).
- ii) If you encounter such items, remember our God’s power is greater than theirs is. You’re greatest weapon of defense is prayer.
31. **22:19** Whoever has sexual relations with a beast must surely be put to death.
- a) This is one of those things that is so disgusting, I can’t even imagine one would think of doing such a thing. It shows the evil of men’s hearts that God had to mention this.
32. **22:20** Whoever sacrifices to a god other than the Lord alone must be utterly destroyed.
- a) This amplifies the first of the 10 commandments that you shall worship God and God alone. Here the punishment is defined for that person.
- b) Why so severe? It is like trying to stop a cancer from growing. Sometimes you have to kill the sin before it grows further.
33. **22:21** You must not wrong a resident foreigner nor crush him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.
- a) Want another reason why God allowed the Israelites to be slaves so long? So they knew the pain. They would not take revenge on others. God wants us to be kinder to others than others are to us.
- i) That makes us a good witness when we act in a greater way than people expect.
- b) This principal also applies to a lot of our suffering. God often allows us to go through suffering so we can be witnesses to others in the same predicament.

34. **22:22** You must not afflict any widow or orphan. **22:23** If you afflict them in any way, and they cry to me, I will surely hear their cry. **22:24** And my anger will burn and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives will be widows and you children will be fatherless.
- a) Sometimes people pick on easy prey. It amazes me how many people are willing to take advantage of seniors or handicapped because they can't retaliate. God is teaching us how much he loves people and will not tolerate hurting those who are defenseless.
35. **22:25** If you lend money to any of my people who is needy among you, do not be like a money-lender to him; do not charge him interest. **22:26** If you do take the garment of your neighbor in pledge, you must return it to him by the time the sun goes down, **22:27** for it is his only covering-it is his garment for his body. With what else can he lie down? And when he cries out to me, I will hear, for I am gracious.
- a) The same principal that applies to widows and orphans applies to the poor. For those who are afflicted, be it widows, orphans, handicapped, those without money, God is well aware of their suffering. He expects us to act differently because of their plight.
- b) "How accommodating are we to the stranger among us? Do we stay with our own safe group, and enjoy all the blessings, or are we outreaching and outlooking to be a blessing to others?" David Guzik.
36. **22:28** You must not blaspheme God nor curse the ruler of your people.
- a) God appoints our leaders. The New Testament makes this clear:
- i) "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God." (Romans 13:1 NIV)
- ii) "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. (Hebrews 13:17a NIV)
- b) Is there a leader you don't like, pray for him or her! They are there for a reason.
37. **22:29** Do not hold back offerings from your granaries or your vats. You must give me the first-born of your sons. **22:30** You must also do this for your oxen and for your sheep; seven days they may remain with their mothers, but give them to me on the eighth day.
- a) The principal has to do with giving. God commands us to give. Don't delay what God has called you to do.
- i) On the first day of every week (Sunday), each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. (1 Corinthians 16:2 NIV)
- b) Later, God would appoint the children of the tribe of Levi to be the priests. Prior to this, God choose the first-born sons from all the tribes to be his servants.
- c) Why does God command us to turn over the animals on the 8<sup>th</sup> day? (Verse 30)
- i) The number 8 in scripture always speaks of a "new beginning". If "7" is the number of completion, "8" is the number of new beginning. There were 8 people on Noah's ark.
- ii) This is why the circumcision was on the 8<sup>th</sup> day. It symbolizes new spiritual life.
- iii) Sacrificing the animals on the 8<sup>th</sup> day is the same reminder.
- iv) By the way, the "numerical" value of most/all the titles of Jesus in the Bible (in the Greek) are divisible by eight. (E.W. Bullinger's book "Numbers in Scriptures" is very interesting for those of you who are number-minded!)
38. **22:31** And you will be holy people to me; you must not eat any meat torn by animals in the field. You must throw it to the dogs.
- a) God does not want our leftover sacrifices. We can't say, "oh well, the animal got killed, lets give it to God. God wants the *first* of our efforts, our money, and our time. He wants us to trust Him to provide the rest.



39. **23:1** You must not take up a false report. Do not put your hand with the wicked to be a malicious witness. **23:2** You must not go after a crowd into evil things; you must not give testimony in a lawsuit by turning aside after a crowd to pervert justice.
- a) God wants us to be a good witness. This includes the “literal” aspect of being a witness in court or a witness to a crime.
  - b) “It has always been in the nature of man to follow a crowd to do evil since the time Adam followed Eve into sin. This is why it is so important for us to choose our crowd carefully: Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.” (1 Corinthians 15:33)” David Guzik.
40. Verse 3 & 6 go together. **23:3** And you must not show favor to a poor man in his lawsuit. **23:6** You must not turn away justice for your poor in their lawsuits.
- a) What’s wrong with helping the poor? Nothing, unless it is unfair. God is teaching us to not let someone’s wealth or lack of wealth cloud our judgement.
  - b) How do we do this today? When politicians or society says “punish the rich”. People should not be disproportionately penalized for success. (OK, off my soapbox! ☺)
41. **23:4** If you come on your enemy’s ox or donkey wandering off, you must by all means return it to him. **23:5** If you see the donkey of the one who hates you lying under its load, you must not forsake him, but be sure to help him with it.
- a) If you saw your enemy’s car parked on a hill, and the break gave way, would you just watch the car go down the hill & laugh, or try to stop it? This is the principal God is teaching here.
  - b) This is the same principal Jesus taught in the “Good Samaritan” story. (Luke 10:29-36)
    - i) Jesus told a parable of a hurting Samaritan. Two Jews passed him, because the Jews were enemies of the Samaritans. Jesus then said a 3<sup>rd</sup> person (assumed Jewish) helped that person. Jesus is applying this law to that parable.
42. **23:7** Keep your distance from a false charge-do not kill the innocent and the righteous, for I do not justify the wicked. **23:8** And you must not receive a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and subverts the words of the righteous.
- a) This is a commentary on the (1 of 10) commandment to not bear false witness. God is a god-of-love, but is also a God of justice. He expects us to uphold up-right standards.
43. **23:9** And you must not oppress a resident foreigner, for you know the life of a resident foreigner, for you were resident foreigners in the land of Egypt.
- a) Verse 22:21 was very similar. It said you must not wrong a foreigner. Here it goes further and says you must not oppress them.
  - b) Revenge is a strong motive. The anger of being a slave was probably deep-rooted in their system. God probably had to pound home the point of not taking revenge on other foreigners as to not let out their anger.
    - i) God’s solution? Get them to focus on the pain of the slavery, and remember that pain when dealing with others.
44. **23:10** For six years you are to sow your land and gather in its produce. **23:11** And in the seventh year you must let it rest and lie unworked so that the poor of your people may eat, and what they leave the wild animals may eat. And you must do likewise with your vineyard and your olive grove. **23:12** For six days you may do your work, but on the seventh day you must cease, so your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and your slave may refresh themselves.
- a) Here is an amplification of the “Sabbath” commandment.
  - b) Obeying the Sabbath didn’t just mean not working on the 7<sup>th</sup> day (Saturday), it also meant for farmers to not plow the fields every 7<sup>th</sup> year.
  - c) It always amazes me when I meet people who are obsessive about not working on the Sabbath how they manage to “forget” the part about not working on the 7<sup>th</sup> year.

- d) Why did God require them to not work the fields in a 7<sup>th</sup> year?
  - i) This was God's form of welfare. Verse 11 says so that the poor could eat what naturally grows out of the ground in that year.
  - ii) This mean that God will supply their needs in a good produce in year #6 and year #8.
- e) The Hebrews never keep this law. If you add up all the years between the time of this law and the time of the Babylonian captivity, it comes up to 490 years. Because the Is-raelites failed to keep the Sabbath year, they "owed" God 70 years ( $490/7 = 70$ ).
- 45. **23:13** Take heed to do everything I have told you to do, and do not make mention of the names of other gods-do not let them be heard on your lips.
  - a) We talked a little about this earlier. Remember I said that someone is killed for worshipping a false God? (See Verse 22:20). Now God goes further and saying even *men- tioning* the names of other Gods was forbidden. Again, it is like stopping a cancer be- fore it spreads.
    - i) The law is focusing on the context of worship. It is not discussing the existence of other false-gods.
- 46. **23:14** Three times in the year you must make a pilgrim feast to me. **23:15** You are to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread; seven days you must eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time of the month of Abib; for at that time you came out of Egypt. No one may appear before me empty. **23:16** You are also to observe the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors, which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering, at the end of the year when you have gathered in your labors out of the field. **23:17** At three times in the year all your males will appear before the Lord God.
  - a) There are 7 feasts ordained by Moses. Three in the spring (that run together), one is 45 days later, and 3 in the fall. The last 3 also run together. These 3 feasts are required attendance before God. In that day, it meant a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Also remem- ber Passover took place the 1<sup>st</sup> day of Unleven Bread.
  - b) I've discussed in earlier lessons the purpose of Feast of Unleven Bread. I'll save for an- other day Pentecost and the fall festivals.
  - c) What does "appear before me" imply in Verse 17? The feasts occurred at the begin- ning and end of the crop-collecting season. God wants us to trust him when the first of our money (crop) comes in, and at times when the money runs out for the year!
- 47. **23:18** You must not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; the fat of my festal sacrifice must not remain until morning.
  - a) What does God have against fat? "Fat" represents our efforts. We think of fat as bad as it represents extra stored food in our body. If we don't use it, it goes to waste. The same applies to God. He is not interested in our efforts to add to his sacrifice.
- 48. **23:19a** The first of the firstfruit of your soil you must bring to the house of the Lord your God.
  - a) Again, we're dealing putting God first. He wants to be a priority to us.
- 49. **23:19b** "Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk.
  - a) The chapter numbers and verse numbers were added in the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century. I sepa- rated this verse into two parts, as they are not directly related.
  - b) This strange little half-verse has been a center of controversy.
  - c) For those of you familiar with modern Judaism, you know that Jews never eat dairy products and meat products at the same time. It is not "kosher". Why? This verse.

- d) If they do, they “might” be mixing the mother’s milk (say cheese) with the baby’s meat.
  - i) Personally, I’ve yet to see a turkey give milk, so I don’t always get this.
  - ii) Judaism has big books of “oral tradition” and commentaries based on this verse and use it as guidelines for “kosher” eating.
  - iii) I have met many Jews who are more obsessed about not mixing these food groups than they are the 10 commandments! Some go as far as separate refrigerators for each group. Kosher restaurants only serve one food group or the other, never both.
- e) So how do Christians interpret this?
  - i) There are a number of possibilities:
    - a) Because it was a magical (occult) practice among the C anaanites to boil an animal in its mother’s milk (to try to make the land more productive). Therefore, God was preventing idolatry.
    - b) Because it is cruel to destroy a baby goat in its mother’s milk
      - (1) “The principal is not to be cruel to animals.”
    - c) Because it shows contempt for the parent-child relationship
  - ii) “While there is a problem in understanding the *purpose* of this passage, there is no problem in understanding its *meaning*. It means exactly what it says”
    - a) The two quotes in this section are taken from “When Critics Ask” by Norman Geisler.

50. I’m going to save the rest of this chapter for next week (Hey, I’m already past my 10 page limit, and I almost covered three whole chapters, a new record!) On the next page is an appendix to talk further about the abortion issue and Exodus 21:22. Read it if that interests you.

51. Let’s pray

## Appendix -- Discussion of Abortion & Exodus 21:22

For those of you interested in the abortion debate, read further. If not, you're free to pass. It's fairly technical, and I do my best to simplify the arguments.

Here is the verse as it reads in the NIV: "If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. (Exodus 21:22 NIV)

Here is the "pro-abortion" argument based on this verse: The argument is that a physical fight causes a miscarriage in a pregnant woman. The offender is fined, but not sentenced to death for the crime. Therefore, the value of a yet-to-be born life is less than a baby/human, as that would definitely require a death sentence.

The counter-argument is as follows: "The word in Hebrew ("yatsa") means to "come forth" or to "give birth" as it is translation in the King James, New King James or NIV translation. The word is never used for a miscarriage, though it is used for a still birth. But in this passage, as in virtually all Old Testament texts, it refers to a live, though premature birth... "There is another Hebrew word for miscarriage ("shakol") and it is not used here. From "When Critics Ask" by Norman Geisler.

Therefore, this passage means that if a fight causes a pre-mature birth, the responsible party has to bear the cost. Pre-mature birth can mean birth defects, deformities, etc. This law states the guilty party is responsible for doing what is fair to take care of the baby.

One additional quote:

"There is no ambiguity here, whatever. What is required is that if there should be an injury either to the mother or to her children, the injury shall be avenged by a like injury to the assailant. If it involves the life ("nepes"-Hebrew) of the premature baby, then the assailant shall pay for it with his life. There is no second-class status attached to the fetus under this rule; he is avenged just as if he were a normally delivered child or an older person: life for life. Or if the injury is less, but not serious enough to involve inflicting a like injury on the offender, then he may offer compensation in monetary damages." Gleason Archer, Professor of Old Testament & Semitic Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. From the book "Bible Difficulties", Zondervan Publishing, 1982.

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If you encounter someone who believes this verse permits abortion, have him or her check a bunch of different translations. The majority of English translations do not use that word. There is a web-site that allows you to see many translations at once. <http://www.ccel.org/wwwsb/>

One last quote: From Hebrew scholar Umberto Cassuto translated this verse as follows:

"When men strive together and they hurt unintentionally a woman with child, and her children come forth but no mischief happens, that is, the woman and the children do not die- the one who hurts her shall surely be punished by a fine. But if any mischief happens, that is, if the woman dies or the children, they shall give life for life." Commentary on the Book of Exodus, Magness Press, 1967.