

Exodus 21-22 “God’s Care For Individuals”

Let me just briefly catch us back up to where we were a few weeks ago in our study through Exodus. If you remember a few chapters ago the father in law of Moses had come to him and as he watched Moses throughout his day he could see that Moses had way too much on his plate and he wisely suggested that Moses should delegate the responsibility of hearing the different issues that came up in the camp of Israel.

Moses then appointed elders over the people and there was a system put in place where there were people that would oversee groups of 10’s, 50’s, 100’s and 1000’s...the hard cases would then go to Moses while the easier ones would stay with the other leaders.

Right after this Moses was seen going up on the mountain of God and the Lord gave him the 10 commandments and what we have here in chapters 21-22 is a continuation of God giving Moses specific rules and regulations that he would then pass along to those who were making judgments as they heard the people.

Now the law as we look at it here for the next several chapters can be broken into three parts. There is the moral law that we looked at in chapter 20 and then today we are beginning to look at what we would call civil law which is kind of like how we should treat others and what is right and wrong in different situations that come up in everyday society. And then after this we are going to be looking at the ceremonial law or the laws that govern the worship of God.

So let’s look at this here if you look with me at verses 1-6 of chapter 21 which say the following “Now these are the judgments which you

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

We can see here that God is allowing the people of Israel to work through hardships that they may come into as they go through life. Perhaps a family ran into hard times and their land was not producing the way they needed it to and they had debts they could not pay. Here the Lord is allowing them to be sold as servants to another Hebrew.

Now I want to be clear here that we are not talking about slavery like we had here in the United States many years ago. It's also very different from what the Israelites came out of as they were forced into labor in the land of Egypt. What we have here is what is called indentured servitude which was allowed to help a person to pay off their debts and meet the needs of those that had experienced great difficulty.

So God is setting this up to be a healthy situation that protects individuals. If you ran into hard times you could become a servant to someone for six years and then in the seventh year you were to be set free and you would then pay nothing. Later on we find out that the

master was actually to bless the servant as they left and we find that over in Deuteronomy 15.

Now there were some rules that went along with this. If you came in by yourself you were to go out by yourself and if you came in married you were to take your wife with you when you left. And then we are told if you were given a wife while you were serving a master that the wife was actually to stay with the master as they belong to him...The master probably also had the option to let a given wife go but it was not a requirement.

Now you should take note of verses 5 and 6 because we get a very important principle from these verses. In those verses we see that if someone became a servant and it was time to go free but they had grown to love their master they could actually choose to stay with them and if they did they would then become a servant of that master for life. We are told if they chose this they would go to the judges of the city and they would then pierce their ear through with an awl as a sign that you belonged to someone.

When someone did this they were choosing to become what is called a duolos or a bondservant and this idea carries over to the New Testament in that you and I as we have a new Master in Jesus then choose to willingly serve Him not for a season but for all of our lives. The idea is that we used to be slaves to sin but now we have become slaves to Jesus...He has paid for us, He owns us and we choose to serve Him willingly.

Look with me at verses 7-11 which say this 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. 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.

Here we have a situation where a man chooses to sell his daughter to be a female slave...again this is not a forced slavery but instead this might have been done for a few reasons. Number 1 it may have been done to advance her life, if a family had very little they may allow her to go and be with another family that could help her...and then number 2 this might be a situation where we have an arranged marriage and so she goes to live with a man that has agreed to take her as a wife or perhaps take her as a sons wife as he got older.

I want to point out here that this section of scripture is actually protecting women from finding themselves in a bad situation. If a man took a woman for this reason and then decided that she was not the one for him or his son then she was allowed to be redeemed and she couldn't just be sold to anyone and especially she could not be sold to a foreigner.

We can even see that the owner of the daughter was to make sure that she was taken care of as a daughter and that her food and clothing were to be given to her...if the person didn't do these things she had a legal right to then go free. So the idea here is that a woman is not a piece of property, she is valued and she is to be taken care of in every situation.

Look with me at verses 12-14 which say this 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.**

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.**

Well if you wanted a case for capital punishment here it is. If someone killed someone they were to be put to death. Certainly this is supported in scripture and if you take notes you can write down Ecclesiastes 8:11, Deuteronomy 19:21 and Leviticus 24:21-22 to look at for homework as well as Romans 13. These teach us that punishment was to be swift, without pity and without partiality.

In verse 13 we have the law for what we would call manslaughter which means the killing of someone that was not premeditated. In these cases there was to be a place of refuge that someone could run to that they might find safety from the avenger of blood and we'll get to that later in the scriptures. You might just write down Deuteronomy 19 and you can read about the cities of refuge that were set up.

Verse 14 is interesting in that it told the Israelites that if someone killed someone that they were even allowed to be taken from the altar that they might die...Places of worship were often seen as a place of holiness and there were many that would actually run to the altar and try to find safety from the penalties that were due them. You can read specifically about this as it took place with Solomon when his brother Adonijah did this in 1 Kings 1 and 2.

Look with me at verses 15-17 which say ¹⁵ **“And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.”**

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

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

Well kids, don't punch your mom or dad, don't come against them and don't curse them either for the death penalty was the answer for this kind of behavior. Children were certainly expected to be obedient and respectful to their parents.

Today our society could take a lesson from this...not to be severe but our kids need to know that the expectation is that when parents say something that is how its going to be and they should be obedient.

We also see here in verse 16 that kidnapping was a capital offense. Good it should be in my opinion. There should be much stricter punishments for those who would do such a thing.

Look with me at verses 18-19 which say 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 some boundaries for how a person can be penalized if they get into a fight with someone else. If someone doesn't die but they have injuries you are to pay for their loss of time and you are to provide for them until they are healed.

Verses 20-21 say this 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 we have a law that would protect the servants of a master. Certainly if a servant got out of line they should be punished even beaten if need be but the punishment could not go to the point of killing someone.

Masters should have authority over that which is theirs and this would include the people that served under them. Obviously grace could be given as well and I am reminded of the book of Philemon where there was a slave named Onesimus who had done his master wrong by running away and Paul was writing to Philemon to ask him to forgive this man as he had come to Christ and receive him back.

Look at verses 22-25 which say 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.”**

I want you to notice that here in the law we have a protection that God gives for the unborn child. I want you to know God does stand for life throughout the scriptures, He intimately fashions every human and He has plans for each of us...and so right away here in the law we are told if a woman gets struck as two men fight and she gives birth

prematurely **that the one that struck her is to be punished**...and it was to be done eye for eye and so forth.

When it comes to the principle of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth I do want to remind us that Jesus actually expounded on this idea if you listen to Matthew 5:38-39 which says 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.** As believers we are to love even when hated.

Verses 26-27 say this 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.

Well I guess this is one way to get free early just have your master strike your eye or knock out your tooth.

Look at verses 28-32 which say this 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. ³⁰ If there is imposed on him a sum of money, then he shall pay to redeem his life, whatever is imposed on him. ³¹ Whether it has gored a son or gored a daughter, according to this judgment it shall be done to him. 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.

If you had an animal that was allowed to freely roam and it ended up goring a man or woman to death then the ox was to be stoned and you could not eat the meat but we are told here the owner was to be acquitted...clearly this was a freak accident situation where an animal suddenly turned violent.

However we also see here that there was guilt that would come upon a person if they knew the animal was already prone to violence...this is what is called criminal negligence...the penalty for this happening was quite severe as the person who owned the animal was to be put to death or he could be required to pay a certain sum of money and whatever was put upon him was required.

We do also see that if a servant was gored to death that the price was to be 30 shekels of silver...interesting that this was the sum as Judas gave up Jesus for the very same amount...Judas didn't esteem the life of Jesus all that much at all.

Look with me at verses 33-36 which say 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.

To you and I this may not seem like a big deal but for the Israelites these were real questions and situations that they faced. And really

this took the guess work out of things, instead of Moses running to the Lord with each situation the answers to what would come up were already laid out.

So if your ox hurt another ox so that it died then you were to sell the live ox and split the money and the dead ox was to be split as well so you could use the hide for leather or any number of things that could be done even though the animal had been gored...however if your ox was known to have a violent past again the burden was on you to make things right.

Ok let's move into chapter 22 here if you look at verses 1-4 which say **this 22 "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep. ² If the thief is found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt for his bloodshed. ³ If the sun has risen on him, there shall be guilt for his bloodshed. He should make full restitution; if he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. ⁴ If the theft is certainly found alive in his hand, whether it is an ox or donkey or sheep, he shall restore double.**

Ok so if you are a thief and you get caught you are to pay back 5 oxen for 1 ox and 4 sheep for 1 sheep...meaning you will pay a hefty penalty for choosing to take what is not yours.

We also see here that if a thief is caught in the act of stealing and someone strikes them in self defense or defense of their family and they die that they will not be held responsible...and certainly today that should be the law as well...if someone is on your property and they are causing an issue and you act against them I see no problem with that as you are just watching over your family.

We are told here that if the sun has risen on the situation then you are not allowed to kill the thief in other words if the act is done already the penalty should not be death for a person that steals...you can't seek them out after the fact and take their life.

The person that has stolen is expected to make full restitution and notice if they can't pay then they are to be sold as a servant. I think today we need to do more of this in our society...I don't mean to sell someone as a slave but they should work to pay off their debts...instead we toss people in jail for a few weeks and they leave without ever being held responsible to pay back what was taken or they pay back very little...It's my opinion that if penalties for crimes were a bit stiffer people would think twice before they do them.

Verses 5-6 say ⁵“If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed, and lets loose his animal, and it feeds in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard.

⁶“If fire breaks out and catches in thorns, so that stacked grain, standing grain, or the field is consumed, he who kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.

I suppose if I was an Israelite I would keep a close eye on my animals as they seem to be the cause of a lot of trouble in these chapters. If my animal was loose and it fed in another field then I had to pay the owner what was lost.

The same principle applied if fire happened to break out in another person's field...I would have to pay them for the loss of crops.

Verses 7-8 say ⁷“If a man delivers to his neighbor money or articles to keep, and it is stolen out of the man’s house, if the thief is found, he shall pay double. ⁸ If the thief is not found, then the master of the house shall be brought to the judges to see whether he has put his hand into his neighbor’s goods.

From time to time I am sure that people would need some help watching over things and they may ask their neighbor if they could do so for them. If someone put something of theirs in your care the idea was that you were to watch over it and if it was stolen for some reason the thief was the one that would be responsible and they would pay back double.

We do see here that if the thief was not found the person who was in charge of the goods or money was to go before the judges to make sure that they were not guilty in the matter.

Really at the end of the day if you gave someone something to watch over and it was stolen then you couldn’t expect them to be held guilty for it.

Verses 9-13 say ⁹“For any kind of trespass, *whether it concerns an ox, a donkey, a sheep, or clothing, or for any kind of lost thing which another claims to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whomever the judges condemn shall pay double to his neighbor.* ¹⁰ If a man delivers to his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep, and it dies, is hurt, or driven away, no one seeing it, ¹¹ then an oath of the Lord shall be between them both, that he has not put his hand into his neighbor’s goods; and the owner of it shall accept *that*, and he shall not make *it* good. ¹² But if, in fact, it is stolen from him, he

shall make restitution to the owner of it. ¹³ If it is torn to pieces by a beast, then he shall bring it as evidence, and he shall not make good what was torn.

To further build on this we see here that if there was some kind of disagreement between two people and they were arguing over something both believing it was theirs that it was to go before the judges and the judges would then in turn determine what was right and the other was to pay double to his neighbor.

So if you had animal or clothing or any item at all and both of the people claimed it was theirs and clearly someone was in the wrong there was to be a trial to determine the facts and the judges would be the ones to determine who was right and who was wrong.

If an animal was given to someone and it got away then the two would take an oath before the Lord and if it was determined the neighbor had not done anything wrong or stolen then the owner was to accept that the animal was simply lost and they were not to expect any compensation.

However if the judges found the neighbor was in the wrong and they were responsible then they were to pay restitution to the owner.

So for you and I this would be like a small claims court situation. Unfortunately, in a fallen world we all have things that come up and thankfully we here in the US have a court system in place that helps find out what is fair and just...you might think of someone like Judge Judy as someone that would take care of matters that are described here.

Verses 14-15 say ¹⁴ **“And if a man borrows *anything* from his neighbor, and it becomes injured or dies, the owner of it not *being* with it, he shall surely make *it* good. ¹⁵ If its owner was with it, he shall not make *it* good; if it was hired, it came for its hire.**

If you were to borrow something from someone and it ended up dying or becoming injured then you were expected to make it good...however if the owner was right there with it and they saw it take place then you were free from penalty...and if you paid to use something and it broke that was just considered a normal operating expense when you have a business.

Verses 16-17 say ¹⁶ **“If a man entices a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he shall surely pay the bride-price for her to be his wife. ¹⁷ If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money according to the bride-price of virgins.**

Well in this situation we are talking about a man that ends up committing adultery with a woman...this is not rape we are talking about here...if this was done notice that the expectation was that the two would get married...

A man was to pay the family for the loss of their daughter by paying a bride price or a dowery and this was to be kept in case the woman was later divorced, she could then return to her family and have the means to take care of herself.

We also see here that if the father didn't like the man then he had the option to refuse to give her and the man still had to pay the bride price...Now I appreciate this because the father still had the final say

in the matter...just because a daughter made the decision to sleep with someone didn't automatically mean she was going to get married.

Verses 18-20 say ¹⁸ **“You shall not permit a sorceress to live.**

¹⁹ **“Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death.**

²⁰ **“He who sacrifices to *any* god, except to the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed.**

Now all three of these verses really had to do with pagan worship...sorcery is tied to the casting of spells or witchcraft and that was not to be tolerated at all in the camp of the Israelites and then this is gross but you could not lie with animals and again this was something that took place in the worship of false gods and then in verse 20 we see again the Lord alone was to be worshipped. And the penalty for the worship of false gods was to be utter destruction.

Verses 21-24 say ²¹ **“You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.**

²² **“You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child.** ²³ **If you afflict them in any way, *and* they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry;** ²⁴ **and My wrath will become hot, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.**

In verse 21 the Lord wants to remind the Israelites to take care of strangers. Hospitality was expected and really the Lord wanted them to treat those travelling through with great respect and honor...God even appeals to them that they should remember that they also were

strangers in the land of Egypt...The Lord wanted them to treat others the same way they would have wanted to be treated.

The widows and the fatherless were also to be taken care of and notice that God had a special place in His heart for them as He says that He would hear their cry if they were afflicted and His wrath would be hot against them and He would kill them with the sword. It was serious in the eyes of God to come against those who were defenseless.

Verses 25-27 say ²⁵“If you lend money to *any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest.* ²⁶ If you ever take your neighbor’s garment as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down. ²⁷ For that *is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin. What will he sleep in? And it will be that when he cries to Me, I will hear, for I am gracious.*”

This would be great wouldn't it? To have a need for financial help and a neighbor would give it to you free of interest. Can you imagine if the banks of the world took just half of the interest they take now? Instead of looking to fleece people and take advantage of them God was saying take care of them, look to bless them, watch over them and don't just look to make a buck or two when people are in need.

There may also come times in the society of Israel where someone might need a loan for a day to buy some bread or something and as a pledge they would leave their garment and the idea was they would bring the money back by the evening or very quickly...and if it happened they couldn't pay it back the idea was that you were to go ahead and give them the garment back anyways so they could be

warm when they slept...and notice if someone cried out to the Lord because they weren't taken care of the Lord said He would hear them for He was gracious.

Perhaps we should remember that God has been so very gracious to us and we in turn should be gracious and compassionate to those around us.

Verses 28-30 say ²⁸ **"You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.**

²⁹ **"You shall not delay to offer the first of your ripe produce and your juices. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me. ³⁰ Likewise you shall do with your oxen and your sheep. It shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me.**

There was to be a high respect placed upon God and simply said the people of Israel were never to criticize the Lord nor insult Him nor be abusive to Him...Man, I can't imagine doing that to the Lord as He has done so much for me personally but I know that the unbelieving world is always coming against the Lord and certainly the Israelites complained against Moses and the Lord.

I suppose when we think about it we can in a way revile the Lord, perhaps when we face trials and difficulties these kinds of things can take place. Instead, we should have a high respect for the Lord and His great work on our behalf.

We can also see here that there was an expectation that the first of the produce and the first of the juices and the firstborn of the sons

were to be given to the Lord and that the livestock had the same expectation.

And then finally if you look at verse 31 it says ³¹ **“And you shall be holy men to Me: you shall not eat meat torn by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.”**

Notice that God had the expectation that the men of Israel would be holy unto Him. I think it's really the same for us today, isn't it? Jesus has paid for us, He has redeemed us and the expectation is that you and I will live fully surrendered lives unto Him.

It is only reasonable that God would expect us to do that which is good and right in His eyes, that we would put Him first in all things that we do.

God has standards for us in life and He has given those to us in His Word.

Now I know tonight is not an easy study that we have done but I do want to just point out that these scriptures before us in a way are really the backbone of our society today. There is such a thing as justice in our country or at least there used to be as our nation was built upon Biblical principles.

I think we would all agree that something tragic has happened in our nation as our morals have been lost and our nation has lost sight of simply living according to what the Word has revealed to us.

If men and women and children everywhere would live holy unto the Lord our society would be in an incredible place wouldn't it? I would simply remind us in closing that if we as children of God are not living

properly before the Lord then how would we ever expect the world around us to be changed and made into the image of Christ.

It was the same way for the children of Israel...they were to be the example to the world around them...they should have been different, they should have demonstrated to everyone else what it meant to live properly before God Almighty and as they did so they should have been a witness to the world just like you and I should be.

Let me pray for us as we close tonight.