

Slavery in Biblical Times

Was **SIMILAR** and **NOT SIMILAR** to slavery in American History.

SIMILAR

- The master had absolute control over the slave.
- The slave had no rights to object to the direction of the master.
- Some slaves were mistreated by mean or evil masters.



NOT SIMILAR

- Slavery was not racially motivated. Every race had slaves and were slaves.
- Oddly, some slaves even had slaves (figure THAT one out!).
- Slavery was not normally a permanent condition.
- People became slaves for a variety of reasons (unlike the capture by slave-traders in Africa):
 - war
 - sold by family
 - babies deserted by their families (a form of ancient infanticide) were often claimed and turned into slaves by the “finder.”
 - when people could not pay their debts
 - some had such a poor quality of life that enslavement was an improvement, and they volunteered for slavery
- Slavery in ancient times included doctors, teachers, accountants, sea captains and overseers -- not just field or house slaves. Education for slaves occasionally occurred.
- Ancient slaves sometimes inherited the status of life of their masters. They were not always viewed as “low class” in their communities.
- A slave of a Roman citizen could become a Roman citizen upon release.
- Slavery was the bedrock of Greco-Roman society. Thirty to fifty percent of the population were slaves.

Christian Teaching

THAT UNDERMINED THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SLAVERY

- **Love your neighbor as yourself. Do not “own” or “enslave” your neighbor.**
 - ◆ *Matthew 22:39* “Love your neighbor as yourself.”
- **The Golden Rule should rule all relationships.**
 - ◆ *Matthew 7:12* “In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”
- **Be imitators of God (God does not force us to follow Him. Nor should we force others.).**
 - ◆ *Ephesians 5:1* “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children.”
- **Jesus washed the feet of His disciples and encouraged us to serve those who are “lower” than us.**
 - ◆ *John 13:14* “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.”
- **There is no sense of a hierarchy in the church structure. The Body of Christ has equality.**
 - ◆ *Galatians 3:28* “There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.”
- **Self-righteousness is condemned in the Bible. There is no place for thinking you are “better” than someone else.**
 - ◆ *Romans 12:3* “Because of the privilege and authority* God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don’t think you are better than you really are.”
- **All human beings are created in the image of God.**
 - ◆ *Genesis 1:27* “So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”
- **All human beings are sinners who need the grace of God.**
 - ◆ *Romans 3:23* “For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”