

Exodus 21-23

At the foot of the holy mountain, God bestowed on Israel the promises of the covenant and provides them with a rule of conduct by which they may lead a holy life

Exodus 21:1

“Now these are the judgments which you shall set before them:

PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT

Romans 13:1-7

*Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are **appointed** by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for **he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.** Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.*

Government has been appointed by God

This is true both in the sense that God is the one who created government and that those who rule are allowed to do so by God. In scripture we have the historical record of God putting rulers in power. We see this with both righteous and unrighteous rulers. At times the people are given the ruler they deserve

This same truth is reaffirmed elsewhere in Scripture

Proverbs 8:15-16

By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice.

By me princes rule, and nobles, All the judges of the earth.

Government is appointed in order to exercise judgment on those who misbehave.

Modern government is seen as that which creates law, in God's economy He has already given the law and government is designed to enact that law. In Israel's case all laws were to be seen in light of the law that had been divinely given.

Avenger - punisher

Wrath - punishment

1 Peter 2:13-14

*Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the **punishment of evildoers** and for the **praise of those who do good**.*

Peter reaffirms the purpose of government stating that it has been established to punish evil doers

Peter exhorts the Christian not to practice those things that will be judged by governments

1 Peter 4:15

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.

He then adds it is also designed to praise those who do what is right

We put a great emphasis in our nation upon individual rights. This is partly do to the fact that our founding fathers had a biblical worldview and the bible places an emphasis upon individual right and responsibility.

"If we are going to have rights, we must have right." (Ravi Zacharias)

To accomplish this goal in Israel, God established judges to rule over the people.

Deuteronomy 16:18-20

*“You shall appoint **judges** and **officers** in all your gates, which the Lord your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment. You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. You shall follow what is altogether just, that you may live and inherit the land which the Lord your*

The job of the judge was to enact the law as it was prescribed by God. All cases would be taken to Exodus 21-23 and compared to "case law"

Mark 10:42-45

But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

It was always God's intent for rulers to be servants of people the rule

The New Testament speaks to the Christian regarding our proper behavior as those under authority

Titus 3:1

*Remind them to be **subject** to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work,*

Be subject to authority

1 Timothy 2:1-4

*Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, **prayers**, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

Pray for our leaders

It is worth noting that the ultimate reason for obedience is based on God's desire to save all men.

Exodus 22:28

*"You shall **not revile** God, nor curse a ruler of your people.*

Acts 5:29

*But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to **obey God** rather than men.*

When government enacts laws upon us that contradict the law of God, we must obey God. He is the ultimate authority and judge to whom all men will one day give an account

Acts 17:30-31

Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

1 Samuel 8:6-7

But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.

As Israel lost sight of God they wanted more from their government.

It was the failure of the judges to behave in a righteous manner that led Israel to desire a king

1 Samuel 8:3

But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.

Samuel explained clearly what they would get if they selected a king to rule

1 Samuel 8:9

Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them."

1 Samuel 8:11-17

*And he said, "**This will be the behavior of the king** who will reign over you: **He will take your sons** and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. **He will take your daughters** to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. **He will take a tenth** of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take a tenth of your sheep. And **you will be his servants.***

It might be worth noting that it was this passage of Scripture that Thomas Paine used to insight the colonies to revolt against England. He viewed the English monarchy as a violation of the God's ordained order of individual right and responsibility. His work, "Common Sense" which fueled the colonist to war is in many ways his own commentary on 1Samuel

A nation must have a standard by which to govern.

After giving the two tablets of stone containing the Ten Commandments, Moses was given a set of what we might call "case law" to use for the enacting of the law. One example, the commandments forbid murder, these laws will define murder and explain the consequences that will befall the guilty

It is worth noting that God did not set a king over Israel but a law. Even the king is subject to the law of God

Another ancient law code dating back to the time of Abraham is known as the code of Hammurabi

"Hammurabi, the exalted prince, who feared God, to bring about the rule of righteousness in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil-doers; so that the strong should not harm the weak; so that I should rule over the black-headed people like Shamash, and enlighten the land, to further the well-being of mankind."

The list includes laws regarding many subjects, my favorite is

"2. If any one bring an accusation against a man, and the accused go to the river and leap into the river, if he sink in the river his accuser shall take possession of his house. But if the river prove that the accused is not guilty, and he escape unhurt, then he who had brought the accusation shall be put to death, while he who leaped into the river shall take possession of the house that had belonged to his accuser."

This law code gives us insight into many of the practices of the day.

Exodus 21-23 will become the case law for Israel.

When a crime is committed Israel, the judges can turn to Exodus and determine the proper punishment based upon the law.

- We will read about treatment of slaves, the poor, the fatherless and the widows
- We will read about murder, manslaughter and death caused by animals or irresponsible people, theft and loss, Kidnapping, rebellion, sexual misconduct, sorcery, idolatry, a fair court system, sabbaths, feasts and more.

Any crime committed in Israel would be taken to this text and the proper judgment handed down

The first subject addressed under the law was the proper treatment of Hebrew slaves.

Exodus 21:2-5

If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing. 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. 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. But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,'

A few important things to keep in mind regarding the law regarding slaves

- The Bible did not invent slavery. It has been going on since the dawn of man and has been prevalent in places beyond the scope of the narrative of Scripture. God did not invent it but the word of God does regulate it.
 - Hebrews were enslaved to Egypt
 - Assyrians took whole people groups as slaves
 - Rome's slave population surpassed that of its citizens
 - Slavery still exists today
 - According to CNN, "Walk Free Foundation's Global Slavery Index has found that globally, almost 36 million people are subject to modern slavery." (2015)

While incidences of slavery were found in every one of the 167 countries surveyed, five countries -- India, China, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Russia -- accounted for nearly 22 million people (61%) suffering in bondage. The worst offender, India, accounted for an estimated 14.29 million people.

- According to an article by the BBC,

"The most common form is called collateral debt bondage, which involves people who have borrowed money pledging themselves and their family as bonded labourers to the loan shark or slaveholder, which can carry on through generations until the debt is paid."

- The slavery described in Exodus 21 is very different than the forms of slavery we are horrified by today.
 - African slave trade was caused by African tribes conquering one another and selling the victims to European slave traders who treated the people worse than animals

Exodus 21:16

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

- The Hebrew slaves were more like indentured servants.

This servitude was not based upon race, color or other ways we choose to discriminate. The servitude was a way for the poor or the debtor to find work

Four ways a person became a Hebrew slave

1. Poor
2. Debt
3. Broke the law and could not pay restitution
4. A young woman might become a slave as part of the process involved in betrothal

Slavery in Israel was for a limited duration.

Slavery lasts 6 years

- If a person gets married to another slave, his spouse will not be released until her 6 years have been accomplished

- If a person wants to remain a slave he was to go through a public ceremony involving ear piercing as a symbol of dedication
- If a woman is sold into slavery as part of a betrothal and the groom changes his mind she is to be released. If he marries another she is to continue to be provided for

Instruction is given regarding a person who does not want to be set free from slavery.

Exodus 21:5-6

But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' 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.

This is a good illustration of the New Testament concept of a bond servant. Those who have met Christ, and been set free from sin are willing to voluntarily submit themselves to Him and His service. Paul understood the concept of freedom much better than most of us do. He wrote:

Romans 6:16-18

*Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, **you are that one's slaves whom you obey**, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*

True freedom is found in surrendering to the right master. If you submit yourself to pleasure, possessions, relationships you will find the, to be good servants and terrible masters

The philosopher ??? taught that true freedom is found not when we follow our desires but when we voluntarily submit ourselves to a set of laws above and beyond ourselves. This sounds a bit like the philosophy of Paul who wrote;

Galatians 5:16

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

The second subject addressed are capital crimes.

Exodus 21:12-13

“He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. 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.

The law forbids murder. Moses now seeks to define murder and describe its consequences.

Murder is described as being **premeditated** and the penalty is death.

Premeditation - planning of an act beforehand that shows intent to commit that act

The Hebrew word also carries the idea of "seething" or being enraged.

Crimes that led to death and involved planning or were driven out of rage were punishable by death.

A person who committed these crimes would be executed even if they fled to the altar for protection.

The altar, like the cross was a place for atonement from sin, but that did not excuse the actions of a person not did it always remove consequences for their actions.

Today, jail house conversions are beautiful and many men and women who have come to Christ in prison have gone on to be wonderful additions to the church. That does not mean that when a person comes to Christ they no longer owe a debt to society.

A place is referred to where a person who killed another without premeditation could flee for safety

Numbers 35 describes these place where they could flee if the death was accidental and gives further description of what constitutes murder.

Numbers 35:9-10

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan,

Numbers 35:26-28

But if the manslayer at any time goes outside the limits of the city of refuge where he fled, and the avenger of blood finds him outside the limits of his city of refuge, and the avenger of blood kills the manslayer, he shall not be guilty of blood, because he should have remained in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest. But after the death of the high priest the manslayer may return to the land of his possession.

A person who fled to the city was only safe if he remained in its borders or until the High Priest died and his crime was then pardoned.

What a picture of salvation. We run to Christ for safety from sin. It is there and there alone where we will be safe from the judgment of God. Now that Christ has died all sins have been pardoned.

The law goes further to describe other crimes worthy of death, including :

- Striking parents
- Kidnapping
- Cursing parents
- Vs 23, striking a pregnant woman and killing her child

This is where we read the famous verse

Exodus 21:23-24

But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,

It is abundantly clear from this text that God considers the death of an unborn child as murder and will hold those culpable who exercise this act.

This passage is repeated

Leviticus 24:19-20

'If a man causes disfigurement of his neighbor, as he has done, so shall it be done to him— fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he has caused disfigurement of a man, so shall it be done to him.

Justice is to mete out an equal penalty for the crime committed

Deuteronomy 19:21

Your eye shall not pity: life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

If a person falsely testified of another's action seeking to have them punished, justice required they have the punishment they sought for others meted out on them

Vs 29, if an animal kills a person and has been known to be violent, in the past yet has not been properly kept the owner is culpable for the death caused by the animal. It was possible to redeem this person by paying a fine determined by the judges.

Exodus 22:18

*"You shall not permit a **sorceress** to live.*

Exodus 22:19

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

Exodus 31:14

*You shall keep the **Sabbath**, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be **cut off** from among his people.*

Leviticus 20:2

*“Again, you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘Whoever of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who gives any of his descendants to **Molech**, he shall surely be **put to death**. The people of the land shall stone him with stones.*

Leviticus 20:10-16

*“The man who commits **adultery** with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death. The man who lies with his **father's wife** has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them. If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death. They have committed perversion. Their blood shall be upon them. If a **man lies with a male** as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them. If a man marries a woman and her mother, it is wickedness. They shall be burned with fire, both he and they, that there may be no wickedness among you. If a man **mates** with an **animal**, he shall surely be put to death, and you shall kill the animal. If a woman approaches any animal and mates with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood is upon them.*

- Adultery
- Incest
- Homosexuality
- Bestiality

Leviticus 24:16

*And whoever **blasphemes** the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name of the Lord, he shall be put to death.*

Deuteronomy 13:5

*But that **prophet** or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.*

It is important to keep in mind the things God considered to be capital offenses. It will give us clarity regarding the value system of God. He is clearly opposed to;

Murder, irresponsible death, idolatry, false teaching or twisting His word, sorcery and sexual misconduct.

While the earthly penalty for such actions may have changed the fact that God opposes these things is as true today as ever.

The cross provides forgiveness for all these sins and more for all who come to God through faith in Christ

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

DEATH PENALTY ONLY ENACTED WHEN ATTESTED BY WITNESSES

Deuteronomy 17:6

*Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the **testimony** of two or three **witnesses**; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness.*

to ensure the validity of the witness testimony they were involved in the exercise of the penalty for the crime

Deuteronomy 17:7

*The hands of the witnesses shall be the **first** against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put away the evil from among you.*

DEATH PENALTY ENACTED BY STONING OR HANGING

Deuteronomy 21:22

“If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree,

ANOTHER KEY PRINCIPLE

Deuteronomy 24:16

“Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin.

DEATH PENALTY DESIGNED TO PURIFY THE NATION

Deuteronomy 22:23-24

“If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor's wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you.

KEEP IN MIND THAT THE DEATH PENALTY WAS NOT ALWAYS ENACTED

We know that David committed murder and was not executed.

Jesus set in motion a different standard for the New Testament believer

Matthew 5:38-42

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

It is important to note the differences between what the law instituted and what Jesus said. The law was given to a nation to deal with civil and criminal action. The principle of turning the other cheek was given to the church and individual believer. A nation can no more function without penalty for lawbreakers than a Christian can if he attempts to take the law into his own hands. As believers we should seek to forgive. As citizens we should seek to encourage legislation that will enact fair punishment upon those who break the law.

The third subject is regarding the area of personal responsibility

Exodus 21:28-29

*“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. 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.*

Exodus 21:33-34

*“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, the owner of the pit shall **make it good**; he shall give **money** to their owner, but the dead animal shall be his.*

Exodus 21:35-36

*“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. 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.*

God required the people to take responsibility for their actions as well as their property. If someone's animal hurt another person or animal they were culpable. If someone's property was not properly cared for and endangered others they were responsible for the damage caused.

Exodus 21:32

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.

It is difficult to read this passage and not notice the connection to Christ. The price of a slave was thirty pieces of silver, Jesus who lowered Himself to become a man and as a man, a slave and finally a sacrifice was also sold for thirty pieces of silver.

Chapter 22

The Law addresses responsibility for the property of others

Exodus 22:1-4

Responsibility for Property

*“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. If the **thief** is found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt for his bloodshed. 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**. If the theft is certainly found alive in his hand, whether it is an ox or donkey or sheep, he shall **restore** double.*

The commandments declared "**Thou shall not steal.**" Moses addresses what to do with a thief

Cultures in the past dealt with theft as a capital crime worthy of death.

- Hammurabi

any one steal cattle or sheep, or an ass, or a pig or a goat, if it belong to a god or to the court, the thief shall pay thirtyfold therefor; if they belonged to a freed man of the king he shall pay tenfold; if the thief has nothing with which to pay he shall be put to death.

- The law of the old west was to hang a man for being a horse thief

Pursuant to the U.S. Supreme Court's 2008 opinion in Kennedy v. Louisiana, the power of any U.S. state to impose the death penalty against an individual for committing a crime that did not result in the death of a human victim is now limited to crimes against the state (i.e., espionage, treason).

Some modern cultures still practice the death penalty for theft, but in the west the more common form of punishment is **incarceration**. In fact in most cases in the west imprisonment is the harshest sanction available, but this has not always been the case.

Historically prisons were a place where people were held before their trial or while awaiting punishment. It was very rarely used as a punishment in its own right.

Leviticus records a man who committed the crime of blaspheme, he was **incarcerated** until judgment was cast, then the penalty was enacted.

Leviticus 24:12

*Then they put him in **custody**, that the mind of the Lord might be shown to them.*

In Europe, shaming a victim was a common practice in the 15-17th century. Procedures included things like the dunking stool, the pillory, whipping, branding and the stocks.

This began to change in the 17th century when incarceration into hard labor camps became a form of punishment in itself. This was the predecessor to the modern penal system

God had another penalty in mind for those who broke the 8th commandment

Restitution - : the act of returning something that was lost or stolen to its owner, payment that is made to someone for damage, trouble, etc. (Webster)

The Hebrew word means to payback but also carries the idea of making peace.

Restitution for what was stolen not only punishes wrong behavior, it also teaches proper behavior and restores broken relations

Restitution was the penalty for:

- Theft - 22:1-4
- Damage -

Exodus 22:5-6

*“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.*

*“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**.*

Exodus 22:14-15

*“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**. If its owner was with it, he shall not make it good; if it was hired, it came for its hire.*

This seems to be a healthy way of deterring crime. If a person was caught stealing they would be required to pay back what they took. If

they could not they would become an indentured servant for 6 years to pay off the debt.

The Law also addressed moral issues

Exodus 22:16-17

Moral and Ceremonial Principles

"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. If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money according to the bride-price of virgins.

This was designed to protect women. If a man committed fornication with a young lady, he was responsible to marry her, care for her and provide for her unless her family objected. In that case he was to pay a dowry as if he was marrying her. This would curb much of the promiscuity which is so prevalent today

Starting with 22:18 Moses recorded the law differently. He has been laying out case law using the phrase, "If a man..." Now he returns to the model from the Decalogue (10 commandments) "You shall not..."

He will use this phrase 11 Times in the rest of 22 and into 23

You shall not:

- Permit a sorceress to live - 22:18
- Mistreat strangers in the land - 22:21
- Afflict a widow or the fatherless - 22:22
- Revile God - 22:28
- Delay your offerings - 22:29
- Circulate false rumors - 23:1
- Follow a crowd to do evil - 23:2
- Pervert justice - 23:3

Exodus 22:18

“You shall not permit a sorceress to live.

Sorcery was a form of idolatry where demonic spirits would be conjured up for guidance. This was forbidden because God and His word are designed to guide us. When we are distant from The Lord it is sometimes difficult to hear His voice. This happened to Saul who conjured spirits through the witch at Endor only to be met by the severity of God. His problem was not that he did not hear from God, but that his heart was hard and he would not obey.

Sorcery may also have been forbidden for the practical reason that demons lie and their counsel cannot be believed. A friend of mine, before her conversion sought a medium who told her she was going to die. She lived in constant fear until meeting Christ. That happened more than 40 years ago and she is still alive and serving Christ

Exodus 22:19

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

Sexual perversion is a serious matter to God. He condemns fornication, adultery, incest, bestiality and homosexuality. None of these behaviors are acceptable to Him, but all can be forgiven.

Exodus 22:20

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

idolatry will be a constant stumbling block for Israel until the captivity. Idolatry seemed to be attractive to Israel for two primary reasons

- Idols are tangible. The nation's around Israel could not understand the concept of a God that could not be seen. As Israel drifted from God they too wanted a visible manifestation and erected images like the golden calf to help them conceptualize God.
- Idols had little or no moral code connected with worship. A person could worship an idol and behave however their flesh desired.

Exodus 22:21

“You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Exodus 22:22-24

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

The law was designed to protect the slave, foreigner, fatherless, widow and the poor.

The same is true of the law of love enacted by Christ for His church.

Chapter 23

The Law addresses how we treat one another

Exodus 23:1-9

Justice for All

*“You shall not circulate a **false report**. Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice. You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute. “If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it.*

“You shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute. Keep yourself far from a false matter; do not kill the innocent and righteous. For I will not justify the wicked. And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous.

“Also you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

The Law concerning Sabbaths and festivals

The final section of the law had to do with Israel's covenant with God and how they were to worship.

The Mosaic law can be divided into three sections.

- **Moral law** - including the 10 commandments were unchangable standards designed partially to establish principles upon which all laws could be established and partially to reveal to mankind our need for a savior. That is what Paul meant when he wrote

Galatians 3:22-24

But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

- **Civil Law** - these are the laws designed to govern the nation. These laws cannot be applied to the church since the church was never intended to be a government
- **Religious law** - these ceremonial laws directed Israel in the worship of God under the old covenant. While filled with types and pictures these were completed at the cross.

Colossians 2:16-17

So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

We can trace all of the Old Testament rites of worship back to Jesus. He is the substance that casts their shadow. This is true of the sabbath, the feasts, the sacrifices and all of the instruments and rituals of the Tabernacle

God set up a system that required the people to have times of rest and retreat where they would focus upon the Lord and relationship with Him.

The Sabbaths

God established a 6 day work week with a mandatory day off. This would not only provide a time of rest for Israel but would help to set them apart from the nation's around them.

In addition to the weekly sabbath, Israel was to give the land rest every seventh year. This would allow nutrients in the soil to be replenished as well as require Israel to exercise faith in the provision of God. Many of the laws and guidelines set up in scripture are designed to create an atmosphere that keeps us dependent upon God and His promises.

The Feasts

Three times each year all Israeli men were required to make pilgrimage to the tabernacle, later temple to celebrate the annual feasts.

The major festivals were, Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles or Ingathering).

After the exile, the Jews added memorial days for Purim, and the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah).

In addition, the Israelites observed the Sabbath every week and the feast of the New Moon every lunar month.

Whenever these feasts are observed in the Biblical narrative they are times of personal repentance and national reform

Israel's festivals were communal and commemorative as well as theological and typological.

- They were **communal** in that they drew the nation together for celebration and worship.
- They were **commemorative** in that they kept alive the story of what God had done in the exodus and during the sojourn.
- They were **theological** in that the observance of the festivals presented the participants with lessons on the reality of sin, judgment, forgiveness and relayed key characteristics about God and true relationship with Him

- They were **typological** in that they anticipated a greater fulfillment of the symbolism of the feasts. Each of the major feasts is in some way alluded to in the New Testament.

The chapter comes to a close with a description of the Angel of God and promises for the nation of Israel

Exodus 23:20-21

“Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him.

They were promised an angel who would bear the name of God.

Only a few Angels in scripture are named for us

This particular angel actually bears the name of God. This is probably a reference to Jesus Himself. He is often seen in the Old Testament as "The angel of the Lord." He is seen as above others by bearing the name of YHWH

You shall call His name Jesus - this name means YHWH is salvation

Moses is told that God himself will condescend to Israel to travel with them through the wilderness and lead them into the land of promise

