

# ZOOM STUDY: IMPORTANT BIBLICAL THEMES

## RETRIBUTION AND RESTITUTION

### Introduction

Particularly in the Old Testament God gave his people many laws about retribution and restitution for wrongs. What was their purpose? How should we understand such laws, and do they still apply to us in the New Testament? Let's investigate.

1.) How was the Old Testament body of believers different from the New Testament church?

**1 Samuel 8:6-7** When [the Israelites] said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.

**Deuteronomy 17:18-20** When [the king] takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.

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**Matthew 22:21** Then [Jesus] said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

**Romans 13:1, 4** 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. ...[The one in authority] is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

2.) God gave these civil laws to help guide judges. How do these laws impress a sense of fairness and seriousness about sin?

**Numbers 5:6-7** "When a man or woman wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the LORD, that person is guilty and must confess the sin he has committed. He must make full restitution for his wrong, add one fifth to it and give it all to the person he has wronged."

**Exodus 22:1** "If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep."

**Exodus 21:23-25** "If there is serious injury [to the in-utero baby], you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise."

**Numbers 35:19** "The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death."

**Leviticus 19:15** “Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.”

4.) How did God’s laws prove to the Israelites that they could never make sufficient restitution for their sins on their own?

**Leviticus 4:27-29, 35** “If a member of the community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD’s commands, he is guilty. When he is made aware of the sin he committed, he must bring as his offering for the sin he committed a female goat without defect. He is to lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and slaughter it at the place of the burnt offering. ...In this way the priest will make atonement for him for the sin he has committed, and he will be forgiven.”

5.) Jesus suffered the exact retribution we owe for our transgressions. How did he do it?

**Psalms 69:4** [The crucified Christ cries out,] “I am forced to restore what I did not steal.”

**Isaiah 53:5** He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

**Luke 23:41** [The believing thief said,] “We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

6.) What then is the only way God has received restitution for our sins?

**Romans 3:25-26** God presented [Christ] as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

**2 Corinthians 5:21** God made him who had no sin to be sin for us.

7.) Since we are personal recipients of God’s mercy in Christ and have insight into the eternal scope of his grace, how should we react when we are wronged? What recourse do we have?

**Romans 12:19** Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.

**Romans 13:4** If you do wrong, be afraid, for [the one in authority] does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

**Matthew 5:38-40** “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.”

**1 Corinthians 6:1,4** If any of you has a dispute with another... appoint as judges even men of little account in the church!

8.) In the Athanasian Creed, which is an accurate confession of our Christian faith, it says, "At [Christ's] coming all people will rise with their own bodies to answer for their personal deeds. Those who have done good will enter eternal life, but those who have done evil will go into eternal fire." In what way might a person misunderstand this statement? What is the proper understanding?

**Matthew 25:34-36** "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

**Revelation 20:12,15** I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ...If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

*Closing Prayer: Savior, we thank you for receiving the damnation we deserve and praise you for giving us the righteousness we need to be holy in God's sight. Send your Spirit into our hearts and minds through your holy Scriptures so that we live in a way that honors you in all we do. Amen.*