

How Do We Govern Ourselves? Part 1

Exodus Chapter 21

What is important to God as He sets up Civil Laws?

Exd 21:1 "Now these are the ordinances which you are to set before them:

- God speaks these things to Moses and Moses in turn speaks to Israel.
- The next 3 chapters (21, 22 and 23) are social legislation that will govern Israel.

Exd 21:2 **1) Concerning The Slave** v. 1 - 11

Respect Even for the Lowest

The Slave

It is interesting these civil ordinances begin with the lowest in the society. This shows God's care for those in difficult situations.

"If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years; but on the seventh he shall go out as a free man without payment.

- In these ancient days there was no Chapter 11 or Bankruptcy.
- If a man find he cannot pay what he owes he could easily find himself paying the debt by serving as a slave until the debt is paid.
 - In extreme poverty, they might sell their liberty (Leviticus 25:39).
 - A father might sell his children into servitude (Exodus 21:7).
 - In the case of bankruptcy, a man might become servant to his creditors (2 Kings 4:1).
 - If a thief had nothing with which to pay proper restitution (Exodus 22:3-4).
- But God also regulates this in that the Hebrew slave can only serve for 6 years. The 7th he is free.

Exd 21:3 "If he comes alone, he shall go out alone; if he is the husband of a wife, then his wife shall go out with him.

- If the man became a slave alone he would leave alone but if his family came with him into slavery then the whole family will leave when he leaves.

Exd 21:4 "If his master gives him a wife, and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall belong to her master, and he shall go out alone.

- If the slave receives a wife from the master and has children, at the 7 year mark the freed man cannot take the wife and children. They will stay with the master.

Exd 21:5 "But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man,'

The Bond Slave

Exd 21:6 then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently.

- God provides a beautiful way for the freed slave to remain with the master he love as well as his wife and children.
- Before God or judges (Hebrew = *elohiyim* can mean judge, ruler, divine one, God)
- and at the door he pierces his ear with an awl as an permanent sign of his choice to serve forever.
- This slave becomes a BONDSERVANT.
- This is the picture of the Christian. We owe a debt we cannot pay, He paid a debt he didn't owe. He then frees us, no longer calling us servants but a friend. (John 15:15)
- Yet the writers of the New Testament found plenty of glory in simply being considered *bondservants* of Jesus
 - Romans 1:1 "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called {as} an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,"
 - James 1:1 "James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,"
 - 2 Peter 1:1 "Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,"
 - Jude 1:1 "Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,"
 - Psalm 40:6-7 of Jesus "Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired; My ears You have opened (or digged); Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required. Then I said, "Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me."

The pursuit in this life is not to find riches but to find the right master. Who or what do you serve? (Focht)

Exd 21:7
The Female
Slave

"If a man sells his daughter as a female slave, she is not to go free as the male slaves do.

- The female slave does not have the same 7 year go free option.
- This may sound unfair but actually if a man who to satisfy his debts sells his daughter is not a man who cares for his daughter. If the girl is free after 7 years she very likely does not have a good support system to return to.

Exd 21:8 "If she is displeasing in the eyes of her master who designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He does not have authority to sell her to a foreign people because of his unfairness to her.

- If the master wanted her for his wife but then decides not to marry her; her rights to be redeemed and not sold to a foreign people are still to be honored by the master.

Exd 21:9 "If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters.

Exd 21:10 "If he takes to himself another woman, he may not reduce her food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights.

- The similar rights exist for the woman given to the son. Even if the son marries another woman.

Exd 21:11 "If he will not do these three {things} for her, then she shall go out for nothing, without {payment of} money.

- If the son doesn't (provide food, provide clothing, provide conjugal rights) she is then free and all debts are forgiven.

Exd 21:12 **2) Concerning Violence and Injury** v. 12 - 27

Values Life

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

- This is premeditated murder. This is breaking the 6th commandment.
- God has given the state the right to execute judgment on those who break laws.
- Genesis 9:6 " *Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man*"
- Romans 13:3-4 " *For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.*"

Exd 21:13 "But if he did not lie in wait {for him,} but God let {him} fall into his hand, then I will appoint you a place to which he may flee.

- If this was involuntary manslaughter then there was a way of escape.
- There will be established in the Promised Land "Cities of Refuge". (Numbers 35)
 - If a man was killed the family who suffered the loss would go after the accused. The one who came after the accused was called the "avenger of blood".
 - The accused would flee to the "City of Refuge" to receiving a ruling as to his intent. Was the slaying premeditated or involuntary? This would depend if he was welcome inside the safety of the city.
 - The "avenger" could not come into the "City" to avenge. The man accepted into the city until the high priest dies. The man was required to remain in the city or the "avenger could slay him. Upon the High Priest's death the accused can then go free.
- This is a picture of the Christian. Accused with an avenger of blood on our heels to kill us. But God has given us a "City of Refuge" where we are accepted. Here we stay and the High Priest, Jesus has died and we are free.

Exd 21:14 "If, however, a man acts presumptuously toward his neighbor, so as to kill him craftily, you are to take him {even} from My altar, that he may die.

- There is no place for the one who premeditates murder at the altar. He is taken away from the altar to die.

Exd 21:15 "He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

- This is not honoring one's father and mother. This is breaking the 5th commandment. Just for striking.

- Exd 21:16 "He who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death.
- Kidnapping is a capital offense.
- Exd 21:17 "He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.
- Cursing you parent is not honoring one's father and mother. This too carries a death penalty. This is breaking the 5th commandment.
 - Protection for the child is listed in Deuteronomy 21:18-21. The parent cannot execute this penalty. The parent must take the child to the elders and judges.
- Exd 21:18 "If men have a quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or with {his} fist, and he does not die but remains in bed,
- Exd 21:19 if he gets up and walks around outside on his staff, then he who struck him shall go unpunished; he shall only pay for his loss of time, and shall take care of him until he is completely healed.
- There was no workman's compensation. So if a man injures another and he is out of work, the guilty is required to take care of the injured until COMPLETELY healed.
- Exd 21:20 "If a man strikes his male or female slave with a rod and he dies at his hand, he shall be punished.
- The master cannot be cruel to his slaves. This also shows that slaves had basic human rights as God see them. Other cultures considered slaves as non human / property to be disposed as the master saw fit.
 - Yet the punishment is not listed. But we will see that the punishment fits the crime. See verse 23-27.
- Exd 21:21 "If, however, he survives a day or two, no vengeance shall be taken; for he is his property.
- Exd 21:22 "If men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she gives birth prematurely, yet there is no injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman's husband may demand of him, and he shall pay as the judges {decide.}
- Exd 21:23 "But if there is {any further} injury, then you shall appoint {as a penalty} life for life,
- Exd 21:24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,
- Exd 21:25 burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.
- This is speaking about justice.
 - This punishment fitting the crime is interesting when you see the context is concerning unborn child. (*but if there is any further injury*).
 - God put this value on the life of an unborn child.
- Exd 21:26 "If a man strikes the eye of his male or female slave, and destroys it, he shall let him go free on account of his eye.
- Exd 21:27 "And if he knocks out a tooth of his male or female slave, he shall let him go free on account of his tooth.
- The monetary debt owed is not as important as the parts of a man's body.

Exd 21:28 **3) Concerning Animal Control** v. 28 - 36

Values Responsibility

- "If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall surely be stoned and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall go unpunished.
- Exd 21:29 "If, however, an ox was previously in the habit of goring and its owner has been warned, yet he does not confine it and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death.
- The two examples here differ between neglect and intent
 - The 1st example is an example where the animals behavior was unpredictable and the owner could not have known. Yet the penalty is the animal is put to death and the meat cannot be used.

- The 2nd example show that the owner realizes that the animal is capable attacking and does nothing to prevent someone being hurt. Both the ox AND the owner are punishable. Both are put to death.

Exd 21:30 "If a ransom is demanded of him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is demanded of him.

- The victim can ask for monetary restitution in exchange for the owner's life.

Exd 21:31 "Whether it gores a son or a daughter, it shall be done to him according to the same rule.

- The rule applies even if the animal hurts a child.

Exd 21:32 "If the ox gores a male or female slave, the owner shall give his {or her} master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

- The rule changes if it hurts a slave. The owner's life is spared, the ox dies and monetary restitution is made for the slave.
- Thirty shekels of Silver what a gored servant is worth = God's Servant Jesus was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver.

Exd 21:33 "If a man opens a pit, or digs a pit and does not cover it over, and an ox or a donkey falls into it,

Exd 21:34 the owner of the pit shall make restitution; he shall give money to its owner, and the dead {animal} shall become his.

- "You Break It - You Bought It" If an animal is killed through a person's negligence the person is responsible to make restitution.

Exd 21:35 "If one man's ox hurts another's so that it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and divide its price equally; and also they shall divide the dead {ox.}

Exd 21:36 "Or {if} it is known that the ox was previously in the habit of goring, yet its owner has not confined it, he shall surely pay ox for ox, and the dead {animal} shall become his.

- This is similar to verses 28 + 29 except a person is not hurt. Only another person's animal. The same intent principal is in effect but in this case the owner of the goring ox does not pay with his life. But he will pay monetarily.

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