

Day 98 - SATURDAY: February 11th

Exodus 21

Exodus 21:1-36 NKJV

"Now these are the judgments which you shall set before them: 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,' 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. "And if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. 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. And if he has betrothed her to his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters. If he takes another wife, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights. And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without

paying money. "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. "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. "And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. "He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death. "And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. "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, 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. "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. Notwithstanding, if he remains alive a day or two, he shall not be punished; for he is his property. "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. But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. "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. 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. "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. If there is imposed on him a sum of money, then he shall pay to redeem his life, whatever is imposed on him. Whether it has gored a son or gored a daughter, according to this judgment it shall be done to him. 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. "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. "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.

Daily Deep Dive:

Verse 1 – John Gill’s commentary states: “The judicial laws respecting the civil state of the people of Israel, so called because they are founded on justice and equity, and are according to the judgment of God, whose judgment is according to truth; and because they are such by which the commonwealth of Israel was to be judged or governed, and were to be the rule of their conduct to one another, and a rule of judgment to their judges in the execution of judgment and justice among them”.

Verse 7 – Adam Clarke’s commentary states: “This the Jews allowed no man to do but in extreme distress – when he had no goods, either movable or immovable left, even to the clothes on his back; and he had this permission only while she was unmarriageable.” John Gill’s commentary adds a few additional details: “ne that is under age, that is not arrived to the age of twelve years and a day, and this through poverty; he not being able to support himself and his family, puts his daughter out to service, or rather sells her to be a servant”.

Verse 8 – John Gill’s commentary states: “she being at age, and fit for marriage, and her master not caring to marry her, her father shall redeem her”.

Verse 9 – Adam Clarke’s commentary states: “He shall give her the same dowry he would give to one of his own daughters. From these laws we learn, that if a man’s son married his servant, by his father’s consent, the father was obliged to treat her in every respect as a daughter.”

Verse 12 – Not to continue to belabor this point, but these laws had long been in existence. Genesis 9:6 states “Whoever sheds man’s blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.”

Verse 13 – Adam Clarke’s commentary states: “From the earliest times the nearest akin had a right to revenge the murder of his relation, and as this right was universally acknowledged, no law was ever made on the subject; but as this might be abused, and a person who had killed another accidentally, having had no previous malice against him, might be put to death by the avenger of blood, as the nearest kinsman was termed, therefore God provided the cities of refuge to which the accidental manslayer might

flee till the affair was inquired into, and settled by the civil magistrate.”

Verse 14 – Adam Clarke’s commentary adds: “Before the cities of refuge were assigned, the altar of God was the common asylum.”

Verse 20 – John Gill’s commentary states: “or condemned to the punishment of being slain with the sword, as the said Targum and Jarchi explain it: this law was made to deter masters from using severity and cruelty towards their servants.”

Verse 21 – This verse ends in the NKJV by saying, “for he is his property”. This appears to be a bad translation. This Hebrew word for “property” is almost always translated “silver or money”. The point is brought out by John Gill’s commentary: “is good as money, and therefore it is a loss sufficient to him to lose him; and it may be reasonably thought he did not smite his servant with an intention to kill him, since he himself is the loser by it.”

Verse 22 – John Gill’s commentary says: “the husband might propose what fine should be paid, and might ask it in

court; and if the smiter agreed to it, well and good, but if he judged it an exorbitant demand, he might appeal to the judges; for the husband might not lay what fine he pleased: this, if disputed, was to be decided by the judges, and as they determined it, it was paid;”

Verse 32 – It’s worth noting here that the price of a slave was 30 shekels of silver and this was also the price given to Judas for betraying Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:15).

The UCG reading plan states: “When God gave the Ten Commandments, “He added no more” (Deuteronomy 5:22). It was a complete spiritual law. Still, God knew that for a physical nation, there would have to be a civil administration with much more detail about what constituted crime and what judgments to execute against specific violations. He had already given capital punishment in Noah's day. It is not known if He had related any other judgments at that time, although it seems likely that He would have. Frankly, judgments were needed because God knew people would not remain chaste and law abiding (see Exodus 22:16). He knew that they would take advantage of others wrongly (22:25) -- and He provided for

these eventualities. The judgments exist because of human failings. Penalties would not be needed if people always obeyed. But they don't – and this could wreak havoc in a national setting. So besides the tablets of the Ten Commandments, God here gives Moses the judgments. These judgments were based on God's law of love and pertained to relationships between the people.

God allowed slavery, but in a much different way than one may perceive today. An Israelite may have become a slave due to poverty, debt, or crime. After six years of servitude, God commanded that he be given freedom and help to reestablish himself so as to better avoid getting in the same situation again (Deuteronomy 15:12–15). Israelite slavery was similar to a state of indentured servitude. The purpose was not intended to be heavily punitive. The intention was to enable a person to make a new start and help him succeed in life. God also gave laws regulating the treatment of slaves. In fact, it was expected that some would be treated so well that they would want to stay with their masters even after the time came for them to be set free (verses 16–18).

It was a capital crime to curse or hit one's parents. This judgment was based on the Fifth Commandment, "Honor

your father and mother." While the punishment may seem cruel and unusual to our 21st-century minds, its intent was that Israel not raise a nation of rebellious children, as we see so frequently today in our supposedly enlightened societies. This law, like many others, acted as a safeguard for society as a whole. If a rebellious child showed so little respect for authority that he would lash out and strike his own mother or father, there would be little to prevent him from striking out and injuring or killing others. Thus this law helped remove those who scorned authority and lacked the will or desire for self-control before they became too great a threat to innocent people around them. When this law was enforced, society as a whole was kept safe from young, out-of-control thugs who had chosen to live in a way that made them a danger to everyone else.

The words "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" were not intended to encourage vengeful feelings. Nor were they to be taken literally (although "life for life" and "stripe for stripe" *could* be literal). The principle was that the punishment should fit the crime and not go *beyond* it. On occasion, capital punishment had to be imposed. But in other cases, we read that there were various ways the guilty party could be redeemed.

God's laws are not given as a burden to His people. On the contrary, they are imposed to *prevent* problems from occurring. All people shared a responsibility in both preventing and solving problems. We will be reading much more about God's laws, comprising commandments, statutes, judgments and ordinances. God revealed them to define what He means by love. Love is the fulfilling of the law (Romans 13:10).”