

EXODUS 21:1-11 (THE LAW OF THE HEBREW SLAVE)

On 28 October of 2003, I decided to put my commitment to Christ in writing so that I would always have it to refer to in the future. I even took it to the bank and had my wife and a notary witness it. It deals with the passage that we're looking at today.

Subject: An Awl Through My Earlobe

To: My Master and Redeemer, Jesus Christ

As your bondservant, it is my heartfelt desire to give my life entirely to you forever. In accordance with Exodus 21:5 & 6, I declare the following:

I love you as my Master. I and my wife and children have committed our lives to You and do not want to go free from Your presence. May my signature below be acceptable as an awl through my ear into You, the Door of Salvation.

When You brought me out of spiritual Egypt and called me as Yours, it was with the love of a caring and gracious Master. Since that time, you have blessed me in every way. May my every breath and step be in line with Your wishes. When I stray, rebuke me gently and have mercy on my family and me. May Your Holy Spirit indwell me at all times and continue to fill me with each passing moment. I look forward to eternity with You, ever mindful of my position as Your lowly and humble bondservant.

Emlen S. Garrett

A Bondservant of Christ

Text Verse: "*We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,*
¹⁶ knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in

Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified." Galatians 2:15, 16

Exodus 21 is a part of the law, a law which is annulled in Christ. And so it would seem that my letter to the Lord would not be fitting. We are under the New Covenant, not the Old. But what this Old Testament passage pictures is actually revealed in Christ Jesus in the New Testament. And so it applies.

When I typed that letter, I was young in the faith and my doctrine was still undeveloped, but I realized even then that every word of the Bible points to Jesus. I never in my wildest dreams would have thought that I would be preaching on this passage to you all at the Superior Word today. It seems unimaginable to me that this would be the case.

But the greatness of God is revealed in the fact that He can use a guy as unworthy as me to preach His word. I mean,,, this is an amazingly great God. And I thank Him for His grace and His tender mercies on my life and on that of my family, just as I requested those 13 long years ago.

Well, let's get into this passage and see what got me all stirred up about it back in 2003. Wonderful stuff from His superior word! And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Lord's Freed Man (verses 1-6)

¹“Now these *are* the judgments which you shall set before them:

Immediately following the giving of the Ten Commandments came the people's request to Moses to not let them hear the words of the Lord any longer, lest they die. Directly following that, it says that Moses drew near where God was in order to continue to hear what the Lord would direct for the people.

The first words from Him closed Chapter 20 with a further prohibition against idolatry and the instructions for the earthen altar. Now, Chapter 21 begins a long list of instructions which will form the basis of the regular conduct of the Israelite society. It will comprise most of this and the next two chapters after it.

The words to begin the chapter and the instructions say, *v'elleh ha'mishpatim asher tasim liphnehem*. The word rendered here as "judgments" is *mishpat*. It indicates justice and comes from the word *shaphat*, a verb meaning to "govern" or "judge."

This word is widely translated as laws, regulations, rules, ordinances, decisions, legal decisions, rights, etc. Matthew Poole gives the full meaning of the word with the paraphrase "the rules which shall guide judicial decisions." These judicial decisions belong to both civil and criminal law, but they are also used to guide both moral and religious rulings as well.

It has to be remembered from this point on, that the government is established as a pure theocracy. In other governments, humans made the laws and humans decided whether they were violated and what type of punishment to inflict.

This is not the case with Israel at this time. Instead, the laws are given by God and the punishments for violations are often mandated by Him as well. However, He also allows the people to render judgments. When a case was not covered by His words, it could be brought directly to Him.

God is giving Israel general statutes to resolve particular cases under His theocratic rule. It is the first stage of Israelite society and it will continue through the time of the judges in this particular fashion. It will fail due to the people's inability to keep the laws and be obedient to God, and the type of rule will change to a kingship under a human king.

The statutes will continue to be in effect, at that time, but the time of the kings will be used to show that, once again, man fails to adhere to God's perfect standards of justice. Every step of the way, the time of the law is given to show us our need for something else. Only in the coming of Christ is that need filled. Concerning these rules of governance, Adam Clarke notes the following -

"There is so much good sense, feeling, humanity, equity, and justice in the following laws, that they cannot but be admired by every intelligent reader; and they are so very plain as to require very little comment." Adam Clarke

Despite his comment that these laws require very little comment, Clarke commented quite a bit on them. Such is the joy of reading Clarke and knowing that his comments often override his own comments in his joy to search out the word.

And so let us begin our look into these equitable and just laws which the Lord will now utter. It is these same rules of governance that Moses is instructed to set *liphnehem*, or "before their faces."

² If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years;

The term "Hebrew" is used only 34 times and 14 are in Exodus. Not only that, but it was last used in Exodus 10:3. That was 30 sermons ago, and now this is the last time it will be used in Exodus. It won't be used again until Deuteronomy 15:12.

It is then of singular importance to understand that this word is being used for a specific reason. The name Hebrew means "to cross over." The use and its meaning are tied directly to the reason for these instructions now.

The word for "servant" here is *ebed*. It means a servant or a slave. In the context of what is being relayed, it is referring more to a bondman, or a slave, than it is a mere servant. There is no pay involved and the means of one becoming indentured show that this is not mere servant-hood.

The Lord begins these rules of society with slavery probably for at least three reasons. The first is that this physical slavery pictures spiritual slavery. This has already been the case and it will continue to be seen in the Bible's pages.

The second reason is that the Israelites had been slaves themselves in Egypt. Now, just a couple months later, they were organized as a nation of free people, but some of whom may be brought into slavery for one of various reasons. As this was expected, the new masters who were once under the yoke of slavery would be instructed how to properly handle this issue themselves.

The third reason is that the slave was more likely to be an offender within the household than a member of the household, and the slave was also more likely to be mistreated within the household than anyone else. In order to ensure that none would be mistreated and to ensure the master's rights were also known, the issue is raised right at the beginning of the judicial laws.

The idea of slavery is taken as an axiom here. It was an existing institution and it would continue under the time of the law. In the New Testament, there is nothing which prohibits the idea of slavery, and it is noted in the New Testament without regards to whether it is right or wrong. It simply exists and is a part of the human experience.

However, there is a truth which needs to be addressed concerning slavery before we actually consider this verse. No man is free. According to the words of Jesus, such as in John 8:34, and elsewhere in the words of the New Testament, we are either a slave of sin, or we are a slave of Christ and to His righteousness. Paul goes into great detail in Romans 6 on this subject.

Concerning Hebrew slaves, there are at least six different reasons why a Hebrew might become a slave: **1)** If someone became extremely poor, they could sell their freedom. This is found in Leviticus 25:39. **2)** A father might sell his child. An example is found in Nehemiah 5:5. **3)** A debtor who couldn't pay his debts could become the slave of the creditor. An example of this is found in 2 Kings 4:1. **4)** If a thief didn't have enough to pay a fine levied on him, he was to be sold to pay the fine. This is found in Exodus 22:3. **5)** A Hebrew might become a slave when captured in war. **6)** A Hebrew who was ransomed from a Gentile might then be sold by the one who ransomed him to another Hebrew. This is found in Leviticus 25:47-55.

The circumstances concerning the slave in each of these will vary based on how they became slaves and to whom they were enslaved.

² (con't) **and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing.**

One of the greatest protections for the Hebrew slave, even if he was a slave because of a crime such as theft, was that they were to be released in the seventh year of their bondage. This means no more than six years of bondage and then release at the beginning of the seventh. There is a dispute as to what this seven year period actually details. In Exodus 23, there is what is known as the Sabbath year -

“Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce,¹¹ but the seventh *year* you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard *and* your olive grove.¹² Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed.” Exodus 23

Because of this Sabbath year, some scholars say that Hebrew slaves were to be released in this year whether they had been slaves for one year or six years. In other words, a Hebrew could serve *no more* than six years at the outside.

Other scholars disagree, saying that there is nothing specific to justify this interpretation. I would agree with this. However, there is also what is known as the Year of Jubilee. This is found in Leviticus 25. Any Hebrew slave, with but one exception, was to be released in the fiftieth year, the Year of Jubilee, *regardless* of how many years he had been a slave, one or six.

The word translated as "free" is *khopheshi*. It is an adjective used for the first of just 17 times in the OT. It comes from the verb *khaphash* meaning "to free." But not only was the slave to be set free, the Lord includes the word *khinnam*. He was to pay nothing on the way out the door. Any further debts he had were to be wiped clean. But even more, provisions for the freed Hebrew slave are noted in Deuteronomy 25 -

“If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you.¹³ And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed;¹⁴ you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. *From what* the LORD your God has blessed you with, you shall give to him. Deuteronomy 15:12-14

The reason for this care of the Hebrew slaves is explicitly stated at the end of Leviticus 25 -

"For the children of Israel *are* servants to Me; they *are* My servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God." Leviticus 25:55

In viewing slavery as the consequences of sin, those words give us a lovely lesson to remember. The people of God have been redeemed from that life, and so we are to then interact with others as redeemed sinners rather than righteous saints. This is why the master was to treat his fellow Hebrew slaves so generously.

And this limitation on the length of bondage is certainly making a picture of man's bondage to the devil. The Bible shows that all people are born under the devil's power. Our sin is inherited and John says that "He who sins is of the devil" (1 John 3:8). As all have sinned, then all are born under the devil's power and authority.

But the good news is that Jesus came to correct this. In it's entirety, 1 John 3:8 says -

"He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3:8

When we call on Christ, we move from the bondage of the devil to being servants of a new Master. And so the six years of slavery, followed by the seventh year of freedom, surely has a dual purpose. First, it pictures our time before coming to Christ and then the freedom we have in Him. This follows in picture from the six days of work followed by the seventh day of Sabbath rest.

And secondly, it is a picture of the six thousand years of man, living in the world of sin from the time of the fall. This is followed by the final thousand years which we call the millennium. It is a time where Christ will rule over all the nations. It is a time of liberty from the yoke of the devil and rest in Christ.

³ 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.

Why would the Lord specify this? If this verse seems peculiar at first, it clears up with a moment of thought. Should a man come in single, it would be obvious that he would leave single unless he got married while a slave. This is further explained in the next verse.

However, if he were married when he came, the master could not say, "Hey, you still owe me from when you stole from me. I'm keeping your wife as my final payment." In other words, a wife was not considered as property which could be bought and sold by the slave owner.

It is a protection of the family unit and of the woman who belonged with her man. It goes all the way back to the very beginning of the Bible where this is recorded -

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Genesis 2:24

The bonds of a free marriage for a Hebrew were to be considered binding, even above the bonds of slavery. If a woman wanted to follow her husband into his bondage, she was to be allowed to follow him again into his freedom.

As a squiggle for your brain, the word for "by himself" here is *gaph*. It is used just four times in the Bible and three of them are in verses 3 and 4. The only other use is found in Proverbs and is translated in a completely different way -

"She has sent out her maidens,
She cries out **from the highest places** of the city," Proverbs 9:3

The word comes from a root which means "to arch." From this comes the idea of the back, which we can arch our back. And from this comes the idea of the body of the person which alone belongs to the person. Thus it means "by himself" or "alone." In the case of Proverbs, the arches of the building would be the highest places, where wisdom *alone* cries out.

⁴If 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.

This verse may seem contrary to our modern sensibilities, but it is perfectly logical and appropriate. When it was time for the slave to claim his freedom, it does not follow that another slave could also claim theirs.

From this, we see that birth follows the belly. In Genesis 21:10, Abraham was told to dismiss his maidservant Hagar and his son Ishmael went with her. The bond between the woman and the child was to take preeminence.

As she was a slave and the property of the master, then he had a right to keep her and her children just as the owner of the tree has the right to the fruit it bears. If in his kindness to the Hebrew he wanted to allow him to have her for a spell, it didn't change the right of ownership. Both she, and any children she bore, would belong to him.

Further, this ownership implies that she is not a Hebrew. If she were, she would have to be released in her seventh year of bondage as well. Rather than being unfair, this verse shows grace by the owner to allow his Hebrew slave to enjoy companionship during the time of his bondage.

⁵ But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,'

By a voluntary act of the will, the servant is given a choice about his status as a slave. Note that the love of the master is mentioned first. The giving of the wife came from the gracious hand of the master. The children who only temporarily belonged to the slave could only have come through the kindness of him as well.

Therefore, it is a devotion *to the master*, first and foremost, to which the rest logically follows. He loves his wife, given to him by his master, he loves his children who came from the wife given to him by his master, and therefore he desires to not be freed from his master. If this is the case, then there are provisions to allow this...

⁶ then his master shall bring him to the judges.

The term here is *el ha'elohim* or "to the God." This is why some translations say that he is to be brought "to God" rather than "to the judges." In what this pictures, the term "to the God" is certainly correct, even if it is earthly judges who will witness the affirmation.

Even the Greek OT understood this and translates this as *pros to kriterion Theo*, or "to the judgment of God." In the end, it is God who will see the act and accept it. The wording is specific and necessary for us to see what is being pictured.

6 (con't) He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost,

el ha'delet ow el ha'mezuzah - to the door or to the doorpost. The door is the access point of the home. It signifies the way in. The doorpost is what holds the door. The doorposts were first mentioned at the time of the Passover when the blood of the lamb was sprinkled on them. That signified an open profession was made in the sufficiency of the death of the lamb to save.

6 (con't) and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl;

The master is the one to pierce the servant, thus laying claim on the ownership of him and everything that he would possess from that point on. The word for "pierce" is *ratza* and it is only used here in the Bible. The word for "awl" or *martzea* is derived from *ratza* and it is only used here and in Deuteronomy 15, which says -

"...then you shall take an awl and thrust *it* through his ear to the door, and he shall be your servant forever." Deuteronomy 15:17

In that verse, the words "ear" and "door" are parallels. The two are tied together, as if they have become one.

6 (con't) and he shall serve him forever.

v'abadow l'olam - The servant-hood is a permanent action described by the word *l'olam*, or "to forever." Rather than a long time, it is to never be undone. The act is a declaration that the man belonged to the house as long as he lived.

So what is this account picturing, if anything? The answer is that it pictures the work of Christ for each of us. It is we who are being pictured here. We, the bondservants of Christ.

Scholars agree that this boring through the ear is what is being referred to in Psalm 40:6, even though a different word is used which is translated as "open." Psalm 40 is a messianic psalm which speaks of Christ's work. There in Psalm 40, we read this -

"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire;
My ears You have opened.
Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.
⁷ Then I said, "Behold, I come;
In the scroll of the book *it is* written of me.
⁸ I delight to do Your will, O my God,
And Your law *is* within my heart." Psalm 40:6-8

These words are again used to describe the work of the Lord in Hebrews 10. However, there the author of Hebrews modifies the psalm just enough to show us that Christ's work *is* what is being pictured here. In Hebrews 10:5, it reads this way -

"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.

Instead of "My ears You have opened," it says "a body You prepared for me." The ears are being used in parallel with the entire body. Thus, the piercing of the ear to the door is a picture of Christ's crucifixion and thus our being crucified with Christ, who is the Door of salvation as He claims in John 10 -

"Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture." John 10:7, 8

The slave willingly gave up his freedom and his rights in one economy and transferred them to another. When he was a free man of Israel, he was bound to the Law of Moses. As Paul shows in Galatians, the law is bondage. It is what shows us our sin and it is what condemns us. The law is not freedom; it is bondage -

"Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. ²³ But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, ²⁴ which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar— ²⁵ for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children— ²⁶ but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all." Galatians 4:21-26

The very thing that we think is freedom is in fact only another type of bondage. But for the slave of his master, it is *his master* who was bound to the law and the slave is bound to his master *under the law*. It is a picture of Christ fulfilling the law on our behalf. He is the Master, we are His slave and we are crucified with Him. Paul could not be clearer in this. In Galatians 2:19-21 we read -

"For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain."

But there was always the chance that the master might have forced his slave to remain in bondage against his will. Who could tell if no public affirmation of his intent was made known? This is why he had to be taken *el ha'elohim*, or to the judgment of "the God."

The affirmation is one which is voluntarily made and openly witnessed. The slavery is not forced, but willingly accepted. This is an obvious picture of the free-will of man in his voluntary surrender to His Lord in the presence of "the God." Nothing could be clearer. We who are in Christ are free from the law because He fulfilled it on our behalf. As Paul says -

"For he who is called in the Lord *while* a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called *while* free is Christ's slave. ²³ You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men." 1 Corinthians 7:22

And this freedom we possess as the Lord's bondservants is, as this verse says, *I'olam*. This one word, used in connection with the marvelous verse, is an explanation of our eternal salvation. We actually need go no further to defend how long we are saved for, or if we could ever lose our salvation. The picture given to us from 1500 years before the coming of Christ tells us all we need to know. We are His servants forever. Hallelujah!

*I was a slave to the law which only pointed out my sin
I couldn't meet its expectations though I tried so hard
But in my place My Lord Jesus, the victory did win
Now my yoke is light and easy, not heavy and hard*

*And so with Him I desire ever to stay
As His slave may I forevermore remain*

*May the joy of serving Him begin right now today
I give up my freedom to sin and receive heavenly gain*

*My Master is tender and caring; to Him I will cleave
All of eternity in His presence I will stay
Who could say, "I don't want this and so I will leave?"
Why life under my Master gets sweeter each day*

II. Bondage to Whom? (Verses 7-11)

⁷“And if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do.

The five verses on the female slave seem to offend the senses of our modern society and are frowned upon by feminists who call them shocking, demeaning, etc. And yet, these verses actually provide *more* protection for the woman than the man. Both could be sold into slavery, but the women enjoyed extra protections.

Some translations say, "She shall not go free as male servants do." But the word isn't the same as with the man in verse 2. There it said, *yetse l'khapheshi khinnam* - he shall go out free. Here it says, *lo tetze ketzet ha'abadim* - "no she shall go out as do the menservants."

This isn't speaking of the man working six years and then being freed. Rather it is speaking of her treatment during the six years. She has a right to be freed earlier if certain conditions aren't met. This is evident from Deuteronomy 15 which says -

"If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you."

Deuteronomy 15:12

So any slave who is sold may go free in the seventh year, but the woman's freedom may come earlier. And the reasons for this become evident as we continue...

⁸ If she does not please her master, who has betrothed her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed.

The word translated here as "betrothed" shows the Elizabethan attitude of the translators. It is *yaad*, and this is its first use in Scripture. It means to agree or to designate. Some translations say "espouse" while others say "married." What it implies is that a sexual union took place.

A clearer explicit reference is found in verse 10. He has a right to her as his slave just as he had a right to give his female slave to his male slave in verse 4. The body of the slave belongs to the master. However, after whatever time with her he decides he's not keen on her, then he must allow her to be redeemed.

It doesn't specify any particular reason for being displeased. Maybe she wouldn't cook him his favorite meal, maybe she said she was excited about leaving at the end of the six years and it broke his heart. The reason doesn't matter. What matters are her protections. She could be redeemed earlier if this were the case.

The first time being redeemed was mentioned in the Bible was in Exodus 13, at the time of the Passover. Now the concept is reintroduced into the Bible concerning this slave woman's rights. This alone shows the care the Lord had for women. He designated that there must be a chance for her to be bought back.

8 (con't) He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her.

As a Hebrew, and as a woman that he has dealt deceitfully with, he could not sell her to anyone *not* of Israel. This word "deceitfully" is *bagad*. Again, a new word is introduced into the Bible here. The implication is that he is the offender and he has acted in a treacherous manner toward this woman; he has broken faith with her, not the other way around.

He must let a person of Israel redeem her, or he must continue to care for her, or he must let her go without any further debt attributed to her. Were he to sell her to a foreign people, he would actually violate the theocratic law by stripping her of her rights under the law.

9 And if he has betrothed her to his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters.

If a man were to buy a female as a slave intending for her to be given to his son, then that means that he intended her to be within the family as a daughter. As this is so, then she would be entitled to the customary bride-price of a daughter. This is something entirely extra than a male slave would be entitled to. Again, it shows that the Lord has the minutest care for the weaker sex in mind.

Along with this right, she was to be treated as a daughter of the house, with all of the same benefits of a blood borne daughter - food, clothing, and etc.

¹⁰ If he takes another *wife*, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights.

The question is, who is this speaking of - the master of the house of verse 8? If so, then why wasn't this stated before verse 9? If it is speaking of the son of verse 9, then there has been a change in the subject without any indication of it.

Because of this, and because it precedes verse 11 which says "these three" which are speaking of her marital rights, this is speaking of either the master of the house or the son. Whichever takes her as a wife and then takes another wife, whether she is a slave or a legitimate wife, is still responsible to maintain her *sheerah, kesuta, v'onatah* - her food, clothing, and marriage rights.

Each of these is a rather unusual word. The *sheer*, or "food," is mentioned for the first time in the Bible. It means "a relative," as in a kin-folk, but in this case it is food which is related to the relative.

The *kesut*, or "clothing," is a word used only 8 times in the Bible and means a covering. And the *ownah*, or "marriage rights", is used only here in the Bible and it corresponds directly to Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 7 -

"Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband." 1 Corinthians 7:3

This refers specifically to her conjugal rights. He cannot deny her this without violating the law of the Hebrew female slave.

***11 And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without paying money.**

We conclude verse 11 with a question. Which three things is it referring to? Some scholars say it is the three things in verse 10 - giving her food, clothing, and marital rights. Others say he must do one of the three things of verses 8, 9, and 10, meaning that he is to either marry her himself, marry her to his son, or allow her to be redeemed according to the law.

If he didn't do one of those three things, then he was obliged to let her go out freely without her or her family owing him anything further. Based on what these verses are picturing, the answer is the three things mentioned in verse 10, but as they relate to the other three. In other words, the assumption is made that the woman is taken as a female slave *for* the purpose of a relationship.

Like the previous verses, these are not just telling us a set of laws for individual cases which might arise in Israel. They are also showing us a spiritual picture of how the Lord has dealt, and still deals, with His people. Specifically, this is referring to the people of Israel collectively.

They were purchased and taken in by the Lord becoming His possession. Unlike a male slave, the rights in this type of agreement are immediate and permanent. Thus, Israel is not to be dismissed without considering her rights.

The Lord purchased them in order to be a husband to them, and yet they were found to be displeasing to Him. This is testified to throughout the Old Testament. However, He has set the limitations by showing that He will remain faithful to them despite them not being pleasing to Him. He cannot just arbitrarily reject them.

Instead, He must allow them to be redeemed and He cannot simply sell them to a foreign people. However, as they are His people and as He is their Redeemer, only He can redeem them once again. Until He does so, He must continue to provide for them.

After this, the option is given that He would betroth them to His Son. In doing so, He must deal with them according to the customs of a daughter. And in fact, He did do this. He promised a New Covenant to them in Jeremiah 31:31. This covenant was *not made* with the Gentile church. Rather this is how the Bible reads -

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— ³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD."

It was Israel who was displeasing in His sight, and yet He promised them a New Covenant with them; a new marriage contract with them. As we know, it is with Jesus, the Son of God, and it is testified to through the shedding of His blood. The agreement was made, and God has promised to care for Israel as is according to the custom of a daughter. Isaiah 52 speaks of the daughter's redemption -

"Awake, awake!
Put on your strength, O Zion;
Put on your beautiful garments,
O Jerusalem, the holy city!
For the uncircumcised and the unclean
Shall no longer come to you.
² Shake yourself from the dust, arise;
Sit down, O Jerusalem!

Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck,
O captive daughter of Zion!

³ For thus says the LORD:

'You have sold yourselves for nothing,
And you shall be redeemed without money.'" Isaiah 52:1-3

Only He could redeem them and only He has redeemed them. And even more, He has offered them a New Covenant through Christ the Son of God. But, there is still another precept which is included here. It concerns the man taking another wife. Not only did the Lord take Israel, he has also taken a Gentile bride.

This is the reason for including this provision. Despite having received the Gentiles because of Israel's unfaithfulness, He has levied upon Himself the requirement to not diminish the rights of the first wife. It is the same wife, Israel, who has been unfaithful to the Lord, not the other way around. And yet, He has remained ever faithful to them.

They rejected Him and yet He redeemed them. He has offered to them every benefit and right that was promised to them. And now, as we draw near to the end of the church age, the redeemed of Israel are seeing that He never forsook them.

He has been there all along waiting for them to return to Him. The maidservant, the Daughter of Zion, has been unfaithful and displeasing in His sight, but He has never been unfaithful to them. Instead, He has fulfilled every provision of His word. What He has instructed man to do is only a picture of what He Himself has done and continues to do.

This same faithful God who looks out for the rights of even the poorest of maidservants also looks out for the rights of those He has redeemed. He will

never break His faithfulness with them and He will never let a word of His promises to them fail.

Though these verses today speak of things which seem almost foreign to us, they are actually as relevant to us now as they were when slavery was considered a normal institution of man. The reason is that we are all slaves to something. We are either slaves to sin or we are servants of God. If you have never called on Jesus, then you are a slave to sin and the devil is your master. His yoke is heavy and his burden will only lead to destruction. But Christ came to free us from that. If you have never called on Him but would like to, let me tell you how you can, even right now...

Closing Verse: "Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed.'⁹ So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham." Galatians 3:7-9

Do you wonder why the term "Hebrew" was brought by God into the verses today? It is because it pictures those who have crossed over. Abraham was noted as the first Hebrew. Now all who cross over are also sons of Abraham, by mere faith.

Next Week: Exodus 21:12-27 *How to keep from a lot of heck* (Keeping Violence in Check) (58th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Hebrew Slaves

Now these are the judgments which you shall before them set
They are new judgments which I have not spoken yet

If you buy a Hebrew servant

He shall serve six years

And in the seventh he shall go out free

And pay nothing, nothing is considered as left in arrears

If he comes in by himself

He shall by himself go out

If he comes in married

Then his wife shall go out with him, let there be no doubt

If his master has given him a wife

And she has to him sons or daughters given birth

The wife and her children shall be her master's

And he shall go out by himself, a free man on the earth

But if the servant plainly says

'I love my master, my wife, and my children too

I will not go out free

Then this is what you shall do

Then his master shall him to the judges bring

And you will together do the following thing

He shall also bring him to the door
Or to the doorpost, either will do
And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl
And he shall serve him forever; he will be a slave to you

And if a man sells his daughter
This I now instruct to you
To be a female slave
She shall not go out as the male slaves do
If she does not please her master
Who has her to himself betrothed
Then he shall let her be redeemed
Because she to him was loathed

He shall have no right to sell her
To a foreign people, this would not be right
Since he has dealt deceitfully with her
And only increased to her misery and plight

And if he has betrothed her to his son
He shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters
He shall treat her as if she were one
If he takes another wife

He shall not diminish her food
Her clothing, and her marriage rights
In doing such a thing, to her he would then be rude
And if he does not do these three for her
Then she shall go out free
Without paying money, for sure
These are my judgments and so shall they be

It's pretty wonderful to see God's plan of redemption
Revealed in such seemingly obscure places
But it is everywhere, in each passage we mention
And His plan is realized in all redeemed faces

Are you one of the redeemed of the Lord?
If so, given Him praise and thanks, let it flow from all of us
Let us forever hail God's incarnate Word
Yes, for ever let us hail, Christ the Lord, our Jesus!

Hallelujah and Amen...