

Message #43**Exodus 22:16-23:9**

God's Word presents some basic laws that were designed to govern basic everyday life for Israel. When you work your way through all of these laws, sooner or later Israel will be forced to admit and so will we that we have not measured up. We have not met the standard.

The Apostle Paul, in discussing the Law of God, said that the O.T. Law proves that we are all guilty, it establishes that we are all sinful, it shuts every one of our mouths and it shows that we all deserve the wrath of God (Rom. 3:19-20; 4:15).

Now Paul was once a rigid Jew who was dedicated to the Law. So if his assessment is accurate, then as we systematically journey through the O.T. Law we should be able to see our own guilt.

So any person, any nation, any group who honestly looks at the O.T. Law will be forced to conclude we have missed the mark and we have not measured up to the righteousness of God. This is exactly why Jesus Christ came to this world. We cannot possibly have a relationship with God based on our attempts to keep the Law because we have not kept all of it. This is why we may only have a relationship with God by faith in Jesus Christ.

THE LAW OF GOD CONTAINS RIGHTEOUS LEGAL MANDATES AND ORDINANCES FOR HIS PEOPLE REGARDING EVERY PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS SPHERE OF EXISTENCE.

Now the Law is good. It is right. It is of God. The problem is not with the Law. The problem is with people. We are going to look at 13 more ordinances here.

So far, we have looked at **10 commandments** in chapter 20;

Then we looked at **2 main labor laws** pertaining to slaves in the first part of chapter 21 with **9 different legal regulations** and

Then we also looked at **6 more judgments** about things pertaining to human life and animal life in the last part of chapter 21.

Last week we looked at **9 more property regulations** in 22:1-15.

So by my calculation, we are so far in **Exodus at 36** laws and we are adding to that **13 more** tonight, which will bring our Exodus total to 49.

Journeying through these laws will prove we are guilty as a nation and guilty as individuals and perhaps the guilt will be established by the 13 ordinances we see in this section of Scripture.

Now when God's Word is governing things in society, there are two ways of dealing with those who violate the Word depending on what they do. It is not incarceration; it is either by A. execution/elimination or B. restitution.

ORDINANCE #1 – God’s ordinance pertaining to pre-marital sex. **22:16-17**

It is very clear that one of the key areas of life is sex. Sex is, in fact, from God. It is a good gift from God. When two people engage in physical intimacy, they become one flesh. As we will see there are all kinds of laws and ordinances pertaining to this subject. There were a variety of actions involving sex that are addressed in the O.T. Law.

This particular ordinance had to do with premarital sex with an unengaged virgin. Now the Law here pertains to a man who seduces a woman. If a man got together with an unengaged virgin and had sexual relations with her, he needed to pay a dowry price to the father and take the girl to be his wife. **In God’s world there is no such thing as a one night stand with no accountability.**

Now suppose the father of the girl did not like the guy and did not want his daughter marrying the guy. Let’s say the guy was a bum or a loser. This is important to see because in neither the O.T. or the N.T. does the Bible demand that the people who had sexual relations have to marry. There is responsibility and there is to be accountability, but there does not necessarily have to be marriage.

If a father did not want his daughter to marry the man, then the man who seduced the virgin was still responsible to pay the dowry price to the father. The dowry price was actually honorable to the value of a woman. The father would determine whether or not he wanted the man for a son-in-law and if he didn’t the guy still had to pay the price.

Now think about this for a moment. If you seduced the girl, you are having to look at her father and not only admit to it, but pay a price for the action. If a society would function this way, people would probably learn their lesson that there is expense and accountability involved with sexual activity.

ORDINANCE #2 – God’s ordinance pertaining to someone in witchcraft. **22:18**

The next three ordinances do not require a dowry penalty; they require the death penalty. If a person were a witch or sorceress, that person was not to be permitted to live. In other words, this was a sin that demanded capital punishment.

The reason why this is so serious is because Satanism leads people away from God toward Satan. Occult practices are evil and demand the death penalty.

Sorcery is condemned all throughout the Bible—Deut. 18:9-14; Acts 19:19. God’s Word does not offer freedom of religion to witches; it demands execution from life.

ORDINANCE #3 – God’s ordinance pertaining to bestiality. **22:19**

When a human being reaches this level of depravity, there is absolutely no sense of decency and morality. Although, thankfully, this practice was not practiced a great deal, and I suspect isn’t practiced much today, there were some who got involved with this horrible evil perversion. In fact, Douglas Stuart said there were some perverted Canaanite fertility rituals that promoted this type of godless behavior (*Exodus*, p. 514). If someone had sexual relations with an animal, God demanded that person be put to death.

ORDINANCE #4 – God’s ordinance pertaining to the worship of false deities. **22:20**

This was also another death penalty sin. If someone sacrificed to any false deity other than to the God of the Bible, they were to be destroyed. All false religions involved offerings and sacrifices and if any offering or sacrifice was made to anything other than to the true God of the Bible, the one who made the sacrifice was to be executed.

Can you imagine how many people would be killed if this law were obeyed? Millions of people are involved in false religions and worship false deities. There will come a day when God will destroy every one of them.

ORDINANCE #5 – God’s ordinance pertaining to the disadvantaged. **22:21-27**

Now in these verses we get a glimpse as to how we are to treat the disadvantaged. God never wants His people to treat disadvantaged people in an unfair way.

Legal Principle #1 - Do not wrong or oppress a stranger. **22:21**

Strangers were not citizens of Israel; they were “resident aliens.” They could not own permanent land among the Tribes and they could not have family backing in legal matters and they could not be involved in political matters. God did not want His people treating these strangers in an abusive way. He did not want them treated in an alienated or discriminatory way. He wanted them treated decently and with respect.

Legal Principle #2 - Do not afflict any widow or orphan. **22:22-24**

These were two classes of people who could be easily taken advantage of. These were the kind of people who could be exploited. The widow had no husband to protect her and the orphan had no parents to protect him. Both of these groups were at the mercy of others for food and needs. If no one helped them, they could literally starve or freeze to death. God never wanted widows and orphans to exist like that.

In fact, God warns in **verses 23-24** that if they took advantage of these helpless people and exploited them, He would unleash a barrage of curses that would literally kill and exterminate them.

Legal Principle #3 - Do not lend money to someone and charge interest. **22:25**

It is not wrong to lend and borrow. This is part of doing business and it is not forbidden by God. What was forbidden was the exploitive interest charges for profit (Lev. 25:36-37). If God's people would lend money without interest, God promised He would abundantly prosper and bless the one who obeyed Him.

Legal Principle #4 - Do not keep a loaned coat after dark. **22:26-27**

Now this law is about collateral on a loan. Some people were so poor that all they had to put up for a loan was their coat. God says in **verse 27**, I am a gracious God and you make sure you get that coat back to him before the sun goes down. It is what keeps him warm.

ORDINANCE #6 – God's ordinance pertaining to attitudes about God and leaders. **22:28**

Now this ordinance demands respect for God-ordained leaders. We are not to curse a ruler God has raised up over His people. This particular law has to do with verbal attacks. Now we would say in our culture that we have unbridled freedom of speech to say anything we want about any leader we want. God's Law says, "no you do not." Now this principle is not just true for the O.T. Law, for the Apostle Paul actually cited it and applied it when he called the high priest, Ananias, a "whitewashed wall" (Acts 23:2-5).

Now the word "curse" is in the Piel stem and it has been debated as to the purpose of the stem. It seems to stress the fact that this is a serious, aggressive form of verbal attack with the goal of undermining or harming a leader.

ORDINANCE #7 – God's ordinance pertaining to offerings. **22:29-30**

Honoring God in a way in which God honors His people demands that His people give their offerings up front. **Offerings that honor God are not leftover; they are the first and the finest.** It is very clear that God keeps the offering records of each person. When a person withholds their offerings from God, they are in direct defiance of the Word of God.

All first fruit harvest offerings of grain and wine and all the firstborn sons and firstborn oxen and sheep are to be given to the Lord. Those who are right with God want to give God their best. They want God to have the best. People may think they will get more for themselves by not giving God what He really should have. But they will only cut their own throats, because God says in a Grace Age money passage—"He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully" (II Cor. 9:6).

ORDINANCE #8 – God's ordinance pertaining to field holiness. **22:31**

No dead animal found in the field that has been torn to pieces is to be eaten. It may be given to dogs for food, but it is not to be eaten.

God wanted a certain decency governing everyday life. He did not want His people looking and acting like a bunch of scavengers.

ORDINANCE #9 – God’s ordinance pertaining to verbal statements. **23:1a**

God’s people are not to bear false report. When we spread something false, we damage the individual and the community. False allegations, unproved speculations can do great harm to someone innocent. Wise counsel is do not start a false report, do not give a false report and do not spread a false report.

ORDINANCE #10 – God’s ordinance pertaining to following the majority. **23:1b-2**

God’s people are never to join in with a majority mob that is moving away from God and His Word and is out to do evil. Justice is never to be perverted even if the multitude of people is behind it. This is exactly what happened to Jesus Christ.

There are many people today who are in clear violation of this principle in their church. The church is moving away from a careful devotion to God’s written Word and the majority is okay with it. No one should ever just tolerate that because the majority wants it. They need to oppose it and get away from it.

ORDINANCE #11 – God’s ordinance pertaining to showing partiality. **23:3**

We are not to show partiality to a poor man in his disputes. The tendency may be to lean toward the rich person, God says no. Stand for what is right and just.

ORDINANCE #12 – God’s ordinance pertaining to neighbor’s livestock. **23:4-5**

If someone who is your enemy has an animal that wanders away or it is in a situation that is helpless, we are to help the animal get to its owner, even if that owner hates us. Now most people would be inclined to say, well, he is our enemy and he is getting what he deserves. Let his animal go. God says get it and take it back to him.

ORDINANCE #13 – God’s ordinances pertaining to what is just. **23:6-9**

The laws here have to do with fair and just principles:

Principle #1 - Justice is never to be perverted because someone is needy. **23:6a**

Principle #2 - We are to keep away from false charges. **23:6b**

Principle #3 - We are not to kill the innocent or righteous. **23:7**

Principle #4 - God’s people must not ever take a bribe. **23:8**

Principle #5 - God's people must not ever oppress a stranger. **23:9**

Now let's suppose as we have gone through these laws, you have come to realize you have broken a few of them. What hope do you have? Jesus Christ nailed that Law to His cross. When you believe on Him, all righteous demands are fully met.