

Friday, July 22, 2022 ▫ Read Exodus 21:1–11

Questions from the Scripture text: What are “these” (v1)? What is Moses to do with them? Whom might they end up buying (v2)? How long would he serve? What happens in the seventh year? What if he became a servant by himself (v3)? What if he had been married when he came in? But what if his master gives him a wife (v4)? What other option does the servant have in this case (v5–6)? What affection must there be between him and his master? His wife? His children? How long will he be a “servant” in that case? What may a man do with his daughter (v7)? But what is the implication of what is happening in this case (v8)? And what if the recipient is not taking her as a wife for himself (v8)? And what if he took her as a wife for his son (v9)? Even if he does not marry her, what portion and place is she to have in the household (v10)? And if he refuses, then what (v11)?

What will God’s new society be like? Exodus 21:1–11 looks forward to the evening sermon on the coming Lord’s Day. In these eleven verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **the Israelites were to apply God’s moral law by having a civil law that blessed, rewarded, and fostered righteousness even in a fallen world.**

The beginning of Israel’s civil case law. God has already declared His moral law that is to govern their hearts and actions before His face. But He has also now gathered Israel as a church and a nation. As a church, they would need ceremonial law. As a nation, they would need civil laws. Unsurprisingly, even before Sinai we have seen the need for various regulations and for hearing and deciding cases among the people.

Now, with Moses receiving from God the ongoing instructions, this passage begins “these are the judgments which you shall set before them.” In this formula, the word ‘judgments’ (or “ordinances”) refers to case laws based upon previous laws that have established foundational principles.

Slavery goes first. This surprises us, but it was probably less surprising to them. God had introduced the Ten Commandments reminding them that He brought them out of the house of bondage. Now, He introduces the case law by showing just how different this new society would be. We don’t have the option of thinking judgmentally about God’s civil laws; rather, we can acknowledge as Christ did that laws responding to or managing sin are not necessarily laws that condone or approve that sin (cf. Mat 19:8)

Our society could learn something from theirs about dealing with debt and economic hardship. For instance, this system required the debtor to labor for the good of his creditor and the creditor to care for the needs of his debtor. But even our post-Christian society is superior in this area to the other societies of their time. In them (as in Egypt), manservants were treated worse than beasts, and maidservants were kept for violating and abusing. Here, then, was a place where they could quickly learn just how distinctive were the principles of their new society, principles like: liberty, love, and dignity.

Liberty. Six years max. Many embark on a college/grad education that takes longer and buries them in crippling debt. When the seventh year comes for a Hebrew servant, he doesn’t go back to his debt but has a fresh start. This was revolutionary!

Love. If a master wanted to keep a servant, he had a path forward for that. Treat him in a way that fostered love. And then, if he’s single, find him a wife that he will love. The servant doesn’t have to take her, of course. And he knows the risks, that if he leaves this master, he would lose this wife. The strangeness of the regulation gets in our way a little. But if we think about it a little, we can see what this case law is encouraging—even for the six years.

Dignity. For a female servant, the implication in v8, 9 is that she is taken as a wife (either for himself or for his son). Here too, however, there must be love, and if not love at least dignity. Otherwise, she is either released (if she was to be his, v8) or adopted (if she was to be his son’s, v9). And the implication in her release from marriage is that she continues with just as much status as if she had continued as the wife (v10).

Liberty, love, and dignity as foundational principles for governing slavery? This is obviously not the sort of slavery about which we are accustomed to thinking about or reading about. Rather, it is a way of dealing with economic realities in a fallen world among people who have been redeemed (and therefore, liberty), who acknowledge that marriage is a divine institution (and therefore, love), and who recognize about every human that he is made in the image of God (and therefore dignity).

What three principles underlay these regulations for slavery? Where did they come from? What did they say about this society as compared to others? Where should Christian nations find the principles for their laws?

Sample prayer: Lord, we are so selfish that we forget about Your glory in thinking about economics and laws. Forgive us, and grant unto us to think about these things from Your word instead of from our flesh, with priorities and principles that come from Who You are and what You have done for us. For we ask it through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP184 “Adoration and Submission” or TPH164 “God Himself Is with Us”

For more Hopewell @Home devotionals, please visit bit.ly/harpCHAH

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Exodus 21 versus 1 through 11. These are God’s words 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 it comes in by himself. He shall go out by himself.

It 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. She also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost and his master shall pierce. His ear with an all, 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. You so have no right to sell her to 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 you take another wife, you shall not diminish her food, her clothing, her marriage rights, and if it does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free without paying money. So, for the reading of God’s inspired and and Aaron twerked,

So, the Lord has gathered his people, to Sinai. He’s given them his moral law or the summary that of his moral law is moral law. Of course, as we discovered was

all of the applications in our lives of the implications of who God is and how he made us.

As we went through the Ten Commandments, we discovered that everything there was already true already playing already binding from the garden and so he's given them his moral law and now is the time for giving those cases those examples for the application of how to punish good and reward evil.

No, that's America. How to reward. Good and punish evil. Yeah, the new redeemed society, God has gathered to people to himself. He brought them out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage. He's gonna bring them to a land of their own and now he's constituting them, not just a church, but also a nation, We know that he's constituting them a church because the primary purpose of this people is worship.

And he had told Pharaoh, let my people go that they may serve me and we can see how he constitutes them as a church because much of the law that he gives to Israel concerns, how to be kept. Holy how to be kept clean. What feasts, what religious feasts to observe, what types of sacrifices to offer, who will do it, where it will happen and so forth.

He the law is filled with how Israel can come near to God and worship God, which is why? When Jesus comes all those things, get thrown out the window, because Jesus is how to come near to God and Jesus's leadership from heaven. Those things that he does in his church on earth.

Those things that he has commanded for the worship of the church that he leads from heaven as our great high priest. That's how the church worships God. So Israel is no longer the church, that may be grafted back into the church and those who are in the church. And the church should be careful that they not be cut out of the church.

It's a great warning to each of us. And Israel is still is, well, this constitution of Israel is no longer a nation. God brought a decisive and final end to national Israel in 70 AD which Jesus himself prophesied was a penalty for their not knowing the time of their visitation.

They're not knowing that, they're God had come in the flesh. The Redeemer had come and their murdering the one who desired to gather them to himself who loved them to even as he prophesied. What would come upon them? The ending of their nation in 70 AD even as he did.

So he wept over them and and they murdered him. And so the Israel as a nation has been ended and Israel or Israel has a state maybe is better. Because as an ethnicity, as a special people from whom Christ came and through whom, the Lord gave us the bulk of the scriptures.

They continue and we even have some hope and in scripture that those who have been cut out will be grafted back in to what is their own tree? We're in their tree. We were invaders and not yet invaders because we have been adopted and engrafted as gods on children.

And as as if we had been native branches in Christ. But now, as the Israelite state is beginning for the first time, they have to have these judgments and statutes that make up how the moral law is to be regulated into the public life of Israel. Now, there's never been a state like this in the history of man.

Up until this point There have been associations of men. The first real state was Babel, The first real recorded state didn't go so well, that was man living by man's rules for man's glory. And they were all very united, which is why God confused the tongues. You know, those who talk about those wonderful days in the future.

When because of the evolution that's taken place and our discovery of the human spirit, the whole world will be united. Hey, I hope it's nonsense. But B, if you pay attention in the book of Revelation, it looks like there is a re-cooperating of the nation's that takes place, but the first cooperation wasn't good, it was Babel.

It was against God, he shattered and scattered. And So there have been other states. But now there is a state of those who have been redeemed from bondage, that's how chapter 21 and, and following connect to the Ten Commandments. And you remember, we began in chapter 20 and the Lord thy God who have brought the out of the land of Egypt out of the house.

Abundant. All of that helps us understand why he might give you know if you're gonna start the case law by which the state is going to be regulated. Why would Moses start with slavery? Well, one of the reasons. Moses starts a slavery is because this is going to be one of the ways in which Israel is very distinct from Egypt.

Remember what slavery was like in Egypt, it made these Israelites who were already descending into idolatry. We find out in other places in the Bible and we're not surprised because it's Israel and that's what they're like. And that's what we are. Like, they are like that because we are like that.

And that is a help to us in the Bible but so they're crying out. Not necessarily to Yahweh and yet, the Lord tells Moses at the bush, their cries have come up to me, the Lord listened to their cries. And so the hardship, the bondage the misery of their slavery in Egypt.

Both gives us an opportunity to see what's, how is God's society going to be different? And this is the particular point upon, which in Israelite, would especially want to know. And the great difference of course is that it's not power based, this is versatile. We'll get later today. It belongs to the next.

Passage he who kidnaps? I meant verse 16, he who kidnaps a man and sells him or if he has found in his hand. So kidnaps, a man and he's still in possession of him shall surely. Be put to death. Okay, so verse 16 describes the sort of slavery that you see in every culture in every place throughout the history of the world.

You hear people talk today. It's like American Southerners or the only ones who ever had slaves and they had marched into the center of the African jungle to, you know, brutally kill and drag off. You know, that's all a lie, Africans, enslaved, Africans, and sold them a lot more to Arabs than to Westerners, who would take them to, to Europe or to America, but Westerners could not go inland into Africa because antibiotics didn't exist yet and Westerners who went to Africa and were inland more than a day, almost all died.

It was like, is a 90. Something percent mortality rate in the first month after they had spent a day inland, So it was Africans and who are in saving Africans. But that's because the kind of thing that gets the death penalty in verse 16 is the kind is the type of slavery with which the world has been associated.

This type of slavery in Israel, is the type of slavery that makes you say. With Deuteronomy chapter 4, you know, how marvelous is this nation with its wonderful laws and Israel to be a light for the nations. And then you come later into chapter seven, I think it is in Deuteronomy chapter 4 of Deuteronomy chapter 7 Deuteronomy.

Yeah. What, you know, how, you know, what a glorious nation that has its god. So near to it. And that's such good loss and so forth. So this slavery was built upon the foundation of liberty, love, and dignity. Now, if you heard someone say slavery is built upon the foundation of liberty and love and dignity.

You'd either think they lost their minds or you might be slightly more educated than the average American. But even then you'd say you're really stretching it,

you know, it's not exactly as has been characterized but it's pretty bad thing. And yes, in America is a pretty bad thing. And yet, you meet people who can find Anecdotes of Christian men, who treated their slaves like sons, who taught them, the Bible, who found them good wives, who the slave after he was freed, didn't want to go and loved his master and asked him to hire him.

And, Oh man in the sermon. We didn't have time. And now we don't have time either because I took so long on the exposition But you guys probably already know the stories of Lee and freeing his slaves and so that the Emancipation Proclamation didn't free them and educating them and giving them property and hiring them.

So that you, you know, Lincoln gives his speech, they split and a couple weeks later, they're back begging for their jobs back or Jaredo who spent some of his ministry in jail on false charges of having taught, the black people of the city to read. Because while he had he had taught and the elders held the congregation accountable for the the material and spiritual nurture of the slaves in their households.

What Gerardo did the entire afternoon in between services on the Lord's Day was educating catechize educate in the Bible and catechize slaves in the city, who weren't from households in his congregation and didn't have the daily benefits that you would have in a Christian home. I said, we didn't have time.

Now we're doing almost the entire second anecdote, but so slaves from other households would be residing catechism or huge sections of scripture. And their masters would be infuriated. Where'd you learn this? Oh Pastor. Jerdo, Reverend Jaredo. And John Jaredo to get arrested and he would go on trial and it would eventually be demonstrated that he hadn't actually taught them to read.

That was the charge. It was illegal, it was illegal for to teach them to read but he had taught them so much Bible and so much catechism. So accurately that people had a hard time believing that they could know that much without reading and it wouldn't have been bad for him to teach them to read.

He just had other priorities. So why? Why is it that in the history of slavery? There are some other examples for self-interest in Rome. There were slaves who were taken to be airs because people had stupid sons and they wanted smarter ones. So they would buy a slave to be a son or an heir.

That's more like adoption than slavery. But why is it that it is Christians in particular who even in the midst of a type of slavery, such as this in America, good. And that's because that a Bible which described a society made of Christians or believers in this case, as being different than any of the other societies of men and when they wanted to know what to do with a slave, they would come and obviously it can't be a one-to-one unless they're believers.

It's a lot closer and you find an Exodus 21 through 11 regulations for slavery. That are based on a found that are built on a foundation of liberty love and dignity. Now, we're not designed to be slaves. They're not going to be slaves in the new heavens and the new earth.

Your first Corinthians 7 urges people to get out of slavery if they can so that they can function as more entire slaves of Christ. So we're not saving. Slavery is good. Just like we don't say. Divorce is good, Moses gave laws for divorce. The Pharisees thought. Oh, well, then I could just put away my wife for whatever reason and they come and they asked Jesus about this, Perhaps they'd heard him preach on on marriage and thought.

Well, If we get him to tell the men that they are not able to divorce their wife, for just any reason, he'll lose all the all the rapport that he has with the multitudes and this you know, Jesus fad will be over. And so they asked him about divorce.

Hey and he tells them basically can't divorce except for adultery. You don't end a marriage. You only recognize that a marriage has already been ended. No one. May end his marriage and they say, ah, Moses. Moses told us, we could the writer's certificate of divorce. And Jesus says, well, that's because Moses was giving statutes to regulate your wickedness is because the hardness of your heart that he gave you that law.

But from the beginning, it was not so well, what have we learned about the moral law, We've learned from the moral about the moral law that the moral law is that, which is there from the beginning, because it is the applications of the implications of who God is. Does you guys's things?

Start at 8:30. Someone look it up is the applications of the implications of who God is upon what we are. So Jesus that's from the beginning. It was not so Well, very similar to slavery. When will wrap up more quickly?

When he gives regulations here concerning slavery. It's not. That slavery is a good thing but it's managing the realities of sin, and its effect in a fallen world. And one of those realities is economic inequality, which will continue to the end of the world. Jesus said it would. Why?

Because their sin and because people are in different stages of sanctification. And so, there are lazy people and there are greedy people and there are wasteful people and there are generous people, they're the there's there are people in different states and sanctification what this slavery did was it allowed away for someone, who's in debt to access, a secret bank account themselves, they could hire themselves out as a slave.

They would get, They could only be six years long, it's a six years max. And then they're done, That was revolutionary completely different than slavery. That was lifelong or power-based, It allowed them at the end of six years to get a fresh start, the welfare system that we have to try to address the same thing.

It's no liberty. It usually ends up in slaving people for generations as words of the state and then there's love. Where's their love? Well, a guy who tries to get himself a good slave if he recognizes, he's a good slave. He knows he's got six years max with the guy unless He came in single and the guy who came in single, doesn't have to put his life on hold.

What does he do? As you say? Well, I guess it's six more years until I get married. No, he says if I work hard enough and if I'm good enough. So if he likes his master, if his master's miserably wouldn't want to bring a wife into that anyway. But the whole system is designed to incentivize loving your slave and finding him a wife and loving your master.

So that he'll find you a good one. You don't have to marry the the one that he wants for you. And and the goal is that there would be such a atmosphere of love in the household that he'd be willing to take the risk because he anticipates that when a time comes to go free, He will still love his master.

He'll still love his wife and he'll want to remain a part of that household forever. Now, When the government hand stuff out, there's no love at all. When the government encourages charity by people, with their neighbors with people, they know Then you have love between neighbors in generosity and gratitude and mutual reinforcement.

And if God's providence comes and the tables are turned and the old, the one who was rich becomes poor, and the one who was poor becomes rich. He now has opportunity to be generous with the other and, and that was built into other parts of the Civil law as we'll find out later.

So, there's a foundation of liberty. There's a foundational of love and there's a foundation of dignity. A woman who has taken as, as a female slave was taken as a wife. So she couldn't put be put away at six years. You couldn't like hire yourself, one wife, and after six years trade, her for someone else said.

Nope, she may not go out as the female ones go or as the male ones go out, she's still your wife and your son, may not do that either, and if your son tries to do that, you have to keep her as a daughter and she has all the status as a daughter.

And if you try to do that, she has all the status as a wife. And if you absolutely refuse to do that, Then she becomes eligible to be treated as a widow either by being redeemed out of your house or going free without any debt. So that she has a leg up on other widows and a better chance of remarrying.

So there's actually that's horrible. They could, they could pay money to, to get a wife as a site. Well you know what, a family that didn't have enough money to pay the dowry for a daughter they could actually get paid instead of paying their daughter would still get married and she would instantly have the same status and dignity as a girl who had come from a rich family.

This is very significant level of dignity for wives and for the poor. So, managing realities that exist because of sin. But definitely displaying in the way that it manages it that God's moral laws and control that this is a people who are to be different than everyone else on the earth.

Let's spray Our gracious gardener. Heavenly Father, thank you for your word. Thank you. That there's so much to consider in it that we would run ourselves. Even at a time, We pray that you would bless the rest of our day together. And we ask that you would be glorified by our being different by your moral law.

Informing how we interact with one another. And we do ask for our nation that you would bring such revival to the church with. Not just the refilling of churches, but the purification of worship and actual living, Christians filling the congregations, that it would so change our nation, that we might have laws that reflect your moral law, and be an example to the rest of the earth.

Granted a God we ask in Jesus name. Amen.