

LESSON 11: EXODUS 21-24 NOVEMBER 2, 2011

OVERVIEW

- . Are these laws to be applied today?
- . The "Book of the Covenant" – Exodus 21-23

ARE THESE LAWS TO BE APPLIED TODAY?

- . How do we determine how much of the Civil Law is to be observed today
 - . Who are we to say that some of the laws are to be observed and some are not
 - . Yet we live in a time when performing sacrifices, as the Jews did, or even executing people for certain offenses, such as sorcery or blasphemy just don't seem appropriate
- . The traditional view
 - . Distinguishes between the three categories of law, moral, civil and ceremonial
 - . Moral Law – binding upon all people at all times, because it is an expression of the moral character of God in whose image we are made
 - . Very survival of society depends on adherence to the moral law
 - . Societies will change and therefore so will our laws on how to govern ourselves
 - . However, what scripture is showing us here is how to incorporate God's moral character, through His moral law, in to our civil laws in order to make us more civil
 - . Civil Law – the civil law (Exodus 21-23) was given specifically to the Israelites during this period, by God, to show them how the moral law was to be applied to specific civil issues of that time
 - . The nation of Israel, during this period, was a true Theocracy, ruled directly by God
 - . No other nation before or since has been a true Theocracy
 - . Although many of the civil laws outlined here do not apply to our societies today, the underlying principles do
 - . Ceremonial Law – most do not apply today
 - . Most of the ceremonial laws that we will discuss were designed to place a curtain of separation between God and His people – Exodus 26:31-33
 - . This was done deliberately by God to point to the future saving work of Christ, when that curtain of separation would be removed for all times – Matthew 27:50-51

- . Dispensationalism – a system of theology that sees God working with man in different ways during different dispensations
 - . In Exodus 20 -38, God is moving His people from a dispensation of Promise (Abraham – Moses) to a dispensation of law (Moses – Christ)
 - . The underlying principle of dispensationalism is that God is working with man in a progressive way
 - . Dispensationalists believe we are now in a dispensation of grace (Christ – Millennial Kingdom)
 - . Dispensationalists believe we no longer need the law because we are under grace
 - . However because Christ reaffirmed the law, Dispensationalists believe the moral law is always in effect as a guide, but we are no longer condemned by it since we have a savior that has overcome for us
 - . The problem with Dispensationalism is it implies believing in Christ is enough
 - . It de-emphasizes the responsibility to live a new life in Christ that calls us to be Holy. How Holy? As Holy as God!
 - . Dispensationalism is a growing movement, especially within the evangelical churches and is fueled by schools like the Moody Bible Institute and Dallas Theological Seminary to name a couple
- . Principles of guidance for Christians seeking a better understanding of how to apply these laws in today's world
 - . Avoid labeling yourself or others
 - . Stress points of agreement
 - . Focus on principles rather than specifics
 - . Take personal ownership – the Lord is ready and willing to work through you to help you better understand the wisdom of scripture

THE BOOK OF THE COVENANT – EXODUS 21-23

- . Laws concerning slaves – Exodus 21:1-11
 - . Slavery was a fact of ancient life in virtually all countries
 - . Over time Christianity altered the way free men and women came to regard the slave
 - . The basis for this radical moral shift begins to appear in Exodus
 - . No permanent, involuntary servitude
 - . A person could become a slave through debt, war or birth, but this was not to continue indefinitely
 - . “He is to serve for six years, but in the seventh year, he shall go free” – Exodus 21:2
 - . Not only was he to be set free, but he was to receive a share of the flock so that he could start a new life
Deuteronomy 15:12-15
 - . Respect shown to family

- . If a slave had a wife when he entered his time of service he had the right to take her with him when set free
 - . Right of slave to choose slavery permanently
 - . Sale of daughter as a servant
 - . A daughter sold to another as a servant had the right to food, clothing, sexual attention and to a husband and a home
- . Laws relating to personal injury – Exodus 21:12-36
 - . Unintentional homicide – Exodus 21:12-14
 - . Old Testament is rigorous when it comes to intentional homicide
 - . A murderer must be put to death, not because life is to be treated lightly, but exactly for the opposite reason
 - . A distinction is made, however, between murder, which is intentional, and manslaughter, which is killing without premeditation
 - . In the case of manslaughter, there is no specific legal penalty
 - . Because an accidental killer was in danger of retaliation, three asylums were set up on the east side of the Jordan (Deuteronomy 4:41-42) and later three more on the west (Joshua 20)
 - . Physical injury – Exodus 21:15-27
 - . In personal injury, no distinction between the various classes of society
 - . Protection granted even if person is a slave
 - . Injuries caused by animals – Exodus 21:28-36
 - . Common theme in these laws is negligence
 - . In all cases of damage to life or property, indemnity must be made
 - . It's interesting that in none of these laws is there any thought of a crime against the state
 - . The crime is always against the one injured and the demand is for restitution
- . Laws relating to personal property – Exodus 22:1-15
 - . The principle of restitution is developed even more strongly in this section
 - . Distinctions are made between losses that occur without malicious intent and losses that involve negligence, theft or dishonesty
 - . Accidents require no compensation be made
 - . Laws fall in to three classes in this section
 - . Laws concerning theft – Exodus 22:1-4
 - . Laws concerning damage to property – Exodus 22:5-6
 - . Laws concerning custody – Exodus 22:7-15
- . Laws concerning sexual and civic morality – Exodus 22:16-31
 - . At first glance this section seems to be a loose collection of laws with little or no relation to one another
 - . However, there are two central themes that tie these together
 - . In scripture, sexual relations are a picture of a believers relationship to God

- . The Lord is pictured as the rightful husband and bridegroom to His people
- . Only through our willingness to surrender ourselves to Christ are we able to enter in to the deep meaningful relationship with God that He desires
- . In the same way sexual intimacy is intended for two people who have surrendered themselves to each other through the union of marriage
- . Anything outside that union is a violation of God's intent
- . Our behavior to others is to mirror the treatment we have received at God's hands
- . "You are to be my holy people" – Exodus 22:31
 - . God's call to us over the ages has never changed – we are to be holy – Leviticus 11:44-45, 19:2, 20:7, 1 Peter 1:15-16
- . Laws of justice and mercy – Exodus 23:1-9
 - . Most of these laws concern justice in the courts
 - . "Do not help a wicked man by being a malicious witness"
 - . "When you give testimony . . ."
 - . Avoid bribes because they pervert justice
- . Sabbath laws and festivals – Exodus 23:10-19
 - . Sabbath laws – Exodus 23:10-13
 - . The land is to be given a Sabbath year's rest every seven years
 - . This was designed to rest the land to keep it from burning out
 - . This law was looking ahead to the occupation of Canaan
 - . The weekly Sabbath was imposed for similar reasons – to keep the people from burning out
 - . It was also designed to keep the animals and the slaves from burning out
 - . Festivals – Exodus 23:14-19
 - . Feast of Unleavened bread
 - . Festival marked the Exodus, beginning with Passover and lasting for seven days
 - . Feast of Harvest
 - . Called Feast of Pentecost in New Testament
 - . Seven weeks after the Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - . Feast of Ingathering
 - . Also called the Feast of Tabernacle, celebrated today as Succoth
 - . Comes in late fall and lasts for eight days
 - . Reminds people of God's goodness during years of wandering

NEXT LESSON IS WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2011: EXODUS 25-31