

EXODUS 21:28-36 (THE PRICE OF A LIFE)

What does a passage about oxen goring people, animals falling into pits, and oxen causing the death of other oxen have to do with Christ Jesus? Well in one way or another it all points to Him. We have the finer points of the law which show us how burdensome the law really is.

We have things that are expected of us and when we fail at them, we are held accountable for our actions. We have valuations which are set according to animals and people, free men and slaves. There are so many little points to consider.

In the end, and if nothing else, the law continues to show us that even things which we do wrong and which may not even be intentional can still bring guilt upon us. When this happens, we may have to make restitution, or we may even forfeit our lives.

A truth concerning Adam, sin, and death is actually seen in the final few verses of Chapter 21 today. They are verses about an ox which causes the death of another ox, and yet they reveal a truth that Paul wrote about 1500 years later...

Text Verse: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— ¹³ (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come." Romans 5:12-14

How can it be that an owner's responsibility concerning the death of another person's ox has anything to do with Adam, the law, and Jesus? The answer is that

even seemingly obscure passages about normal, physical life still contain spiritual truths. This is the wonder and marvel of the Bible.

It is a story which reveals the very heart of God towards His creatures and it's all to be found in 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. A Reckoning for the Lifeblood of Man (verses 28-32)

The final portion of Exodus 21 deals with laws in relation to animals which are owned and to which a responsibility is connected. Some of this will deal with the animals owned by an individual which causes harm to another, and some will deal with harm which has come to an animal owned by another.

The animal is a man's property and often his livelihood. And so laws needed to be given in order to ensure that the rights of property, as well as the rights of those who interact with it, are maintained.

²⁸ "If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall surely be stoned,

In this passage, we are given a fuller insight into the sanctity of human life than that first defined in Genesis 9:5. In Genesis 8, after the flood, Noah built an altar and sacrificed to the Lord. The Bible makes no note of wrongdoing on Noah's part and, in fact, the opposite is true. Upon making his offering, we next read this -

"And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, 'I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination

of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

²² "While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
Cold and heat,
Winter and summer,
And day and night
Shall not cease." Genesis 8:21, 22

The fact that an animal had its life taken from it was acceptable to the Lord. After that note, the focus was on man and on the grace that the Lord would bestow upon him. Immediately after this came the first words of chapter 9 -

"So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. ² And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move *on* the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. ³ Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.'" Genesis 9:1-3

Concerning animals, several things of note are seen. First, there will be a marked difference in how the animals responded to man. Fear and dread of man would be on them. The implication is that this was not the case before the flood.

Secondly, the animals of the earth were, at this time, given into the hand of man. The verse is clear in that "every moving thing that lives shall be food for you." Animals are given into man's hand for his benefit. The life of the animal is wholly at the discretion and taste of the man. Chinese continue to fulfill this precept absolutely. They have a saying, "If it flies in the sky, if it walks or crawls on the earth, or if it swims in the ocean... we will eat it."

At this point in time, no distinction was made between what could be eaten and what was forbidden. If the man was hungry and the animal looked nummy, then the animal was ready for the oven. Although this is a side issue, not pertaining to the verses we're looking at, it needs to be addressed from time to time.

The only dietary restrictions concerning animals are those which belong to the Law of Moses. For this reason, two things are to be inferred from this. First, *only* the Israelite nation, and *only* until the fulfilling of the law in Christ, were these restrictions in force.

And secondly, the eating of meat, meaning any kind of meat, is both acceptable and approved of by God. If someone wants to only eat vegetables, that is their prerogative. However, no person should ever be placed under such a dietary restriction by a religious edict.

Such a tenet is contrary to the Bible and it usurps what God has allowed. It isn't just bad doctrine, but it is heretical to so force such a tenet on others. Reinserting the law, or adding a precept not commanded by God, is to be utterly rejected.

With that issue out of the way, we can return to the principle line of thought here. The animal is in a different *category* than man and is given for the benefit of man. If an animal were to cause the death of a person, then its life is forfeit. This is first seen in Genesis 9:5 -

"Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man." Genesis 9:5

The words of this first verse today are given to further define what those words meant. In this, the ox is taken as the prime example for us to consider, probably

because it was a common animal and because it would not be unusual for an ox to gore a person.

The ox then stands for any animal that would bring death to a person, and the horns are to be taken in place of any other way an animal could kill a man - by teeth, by stomping, or whatever else caused a man to die.

The verb for "gores" is *nagakh*. This is its first of 11 uses in the Bible. It means "to butt with the horns," but figuratively, it is also used to mean "to war against." It is used in this way in 1 Kings 22 -

"Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed.'" 1 Kings 22:11

The act of goring there was a metaphor for defeating the enemy in battle until they were finished off. In the case an ox goring a person to death, then that animal was to die the death of a murderer, the penalty of which was stoning. As it says *saqowl yisaqel ha'shor* - "stoning you shall stone the ox."

28 (con't) **and its flesh shall not be eaten;**

There are several suggestions as to why these words have been given. The first is that it is "laden with the guilt of murder" (KD). The second is that the animal would not have been "bled in the usual way, and would be 'unclean' food for Hebrews" (Ellicott). A third is that "he has become the symbol of a homicide, and so the victim of a curse (מִחָרָה)." (Lange).

The third is certainly the case. Although the animal was "laden with the guilt of murder," that doesn't fully explain why it wasn't to be eaten. And the fact that it

hadn't been bled in the usual way only prohibited those of Israel from partaking in it. These two options are both refuted by verses 34 and 35.

If it were simply a matter of meat, then the dead animal could be sold to a non-Israelite. Rather, the animal has been placed under the ban of *kharem*, or a "thing devoted to God to be destroyed." This then explains the words of Genesis 9:5 - "Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it."

²⁸ (con't) **but the owner of the ox *shall be* acquitted.**

It's the natural instinct of an ox to hook with its horns. Because of this, it would be impossible to foresee every time this would happen. And so, it would be impossible to prevent it from happening.

It would be unjust to hold an owner responsible for his ox's actions if it had no previous record of harming others, or if there were negligence on the part of another who should have known better than to get too close to an ox, irritate it, or whatever.

In such a case, the person was to be released from guilt and considered blameless in the matter. However, if the circumstances were different, then the outcome would also be different...

²⁹ **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 term "in times past" is *mitemol shilshom*, or literally "from yesterday, to the third." It is an idiom which means "in times past," as it is rightly translated. Unfortunately, the rabbis left the obvious use of the term and invented an abusive system of legalities in regards to this command of the Lord. As John Gill explains -

"Concerning this testimony Maimonides (n) thus writes, 'this is a testification, all that testify of it three days; but if he pushes, or bites, or kicks, or strikes even an hundred times on one day, this is no testification (not a sufficient one): three companies of witnesses testify of it in one day, lo, this is a doubt, whether it is a (proper) testimony or not; there is no testification but before the owner, and before the sanhedrin:'"

In other words, the obvious nature of the intent of the verse was discarded and in its place came a convoluted set of rules and exceptions. This is exactly what Jesus argued against concerning their mishandling of the law.

The verse is clear on its surface. The verb for "gores" of the previous verse is here exchanged for an adjective, *naggakh*. It is only used two times in the Bible, here and in verse 36. It reflects a sentiment that the ox was *prone to goring* but it was left unrestrained, despite the owner's knowledge of it.

This would be comparable to someone having a dangerous pit-bull who had been known to attack in the past and yet it was allowed to roam around freely. In such a case, the owner is guilty for whatever harm the pit-bull causes.

In the case of this bull and the resulting death, it would pertain to a free man, not a slave. In the case of the death of a slave, the later verses in this section will provide more direction.

29 (con't) **the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death.**

These words further define both the demand upon the animal and the demand upon the man who owns the animal which was originally given in Genesis 9:5 -

"Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man." Genesis 9:5

There is a difference in the punishment though. It only says that the ox was to be stoned as the ox is the principle in the murder. However, the means of execution of the man is not specified. It only says that he "shall be put to death."

This law of the animal is not unique to Israel. Several scholars comment on various practices which are comparable to this law given by Moses. A guy named Pausanias is said to have noted two cases where statues caused the death of people. One was cast into the sea, and the other was ceremonially purified.

Plato would have an animal, or even an inanimate object, which had killed a man tried. If guilt was found, they were to be expelled from the country. In the case of the animal, it would first be slain and then expelled. Whatever good that would do!

In Rome, it is said that hay was twisted around the horns of any dangerous cattle so that the people could see it and be cautious to not approach the animal. And finally, the scholars at Cambridge note that, "In mediaeval Europe animals charged with causing a death were often tried in a court of law, and, if found guilty, killed." They note that a cow was executed in this manner in France in the year 1740.

It appears that the substance of the words of Genesis 9:5 have continued to be remembered by nations around the world long after they were spoken to Noah. The general concept continues to be held to in the modern world today, but unfortunately, there are those who would prefer saving the life of such an animal even after the loss of a human life.

When we learn to place the value of animal life above that of human life, we upturn the mandates of God and we show both disrespect towards Him directly by acting against His word, and indirectly by disregarding the rights of His image bearers.

³⁰ If there is imposed on him a sum of money, then he shall pay to redeem his life, whatever is imposed on him.

In the case of being the owner of a bull known to be aggressive and which took the life of another, a ransom for his life could be made. This verse records the only time in the Law of Moses where a covering could be made for a capital offense.

This was then both as an allowance of mercy by the family of the person who was killed, and a way for them to being recompensed for their great loss. Rather than demand the offender's death, they could impose on him a sum; a ransom.

The word is *kopher* and it has a wide range of meanings which are all interrelated. It can be translated as bribe, pitch, ransom, satisfaction, sum of money, village, and even as the dye known as henna. All of the words carry the same connotation of "covering."

If you live in a village, you live in a *covered* area. If you use pitch as Noah did, you use it to *cover* the leaky spots in a vessel. If you use henna, you *cover* your skin

like a tattoo, and if you pay a ransom, you *cover* over an offense in the eyes of the offended with the exchanged money.

This word, *kopher*, comes from the verb *kaphar* means to appease, or atone. And this is exactly what is implied in such a ransom - a covering in order to atone for wrongdoing. Understanding these unusual connections between the various uses of such words opens up a great deal of understanding in *why* such words are used throughout the Bible.

And so we go right from the *kopher*, or sum of money, to the words which the NKJV translates as "to redeem his life." This is translated from the noun *pidyowm*. This is the first of three times it will be used and comes from the verb *padah* meaning "to ransom."

As it is a noun, the NKJV gets a demerit in their translation. It should say something like "for a ransom of his life" rather than "to redeem his life." Though the final meaning is understood in both, it is more in line with the original to call it "a ransom for his life" as an exchange is being made between the two - the sum and the life. And that exchange is "whatever is imposed on him."

Many scholars insert here that the sum was up to the judges to decide. For example, Ellicott says the fine was imposed -

"Primarily, by the aggrieved relatives; but in the case of an exorbitant demand there was, no doubt, an appeal to the judges, who would then fix the amount."

However, this is incorrect. The family of the dead person had the right of the avenger of blood. Thus they also had the right of granting the mercy. The man's life is already forfeit, and so there is *every reason* to assume that *any* amount, up to *all* of his possessions, could be demanded.

If the man had his own family, he would have to then decide, "Is my life worth my family's inheritance? Is it worth the poverty of my wife and children?" This is certainly the case. One of only two other times this word *pidyowm* is used in the Bible is found in the 49th Psalm. There, it is again used in connection with the word *nepesh*, or soul -

"Why should I fear in the days of evil,
When the iniquity at my heels surrounds me?
⁶Those who trust in their wealth
And boast in the multitude of their riches,
⁷None *of them* can by any means redeem *his* brother,
Nor give to God a ransom for him—
⁸**For the redemption** of their souls *is* costly,
And it shall cease forever—
⁹That he should continue to live eternally,
And not see the Pit." Psalm 49:5-9

Even Jesus in the New Testament raises the issue in a similar way. Though it is referring to a spiritual matter, the idea of making an exchange for one's soul, or life force, still applies -

"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? ³⁷ Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mark 8:36, 37

The choice for a man of Israel to continue to be redeemed from the grave *before* he dies, or the choice for a man to be redeemed from the grave *after* death both carry the thought of a high cost. And so the question is, "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

³¹ Whether it has gored a son or gored a daughter, according to this judgment it shall be done to him.

It is amazing to read varied opinions on why this verse is added. One scholar says this was added in order to show that a lesser value for the redemption is implied because they are youths. That has nothing to do with it.

This verse is given between the verse concerning a man or a woman and that of slaves to show that a free person, even if a son or a daughter, has full rights and is of equal value. Neither age nor sex has any bearing on the amount of the claim.

The same law is to be recognized whether a man, a woman, a son, or a daughter is killed. The life of the irresponsible owner is forfeit unless he is willing to pay whatever ransom is demanded. He cannot claim that it was "only a daughter" and thus it didn't matter. The child's life was held in the same esteem as any other.

³² 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.

As a slave is the property of the owner, no claim could be made by an avenger of blood. Therefore, in lieu of an arbitrary fine, a standard valuation was given for the life of a slave - thirty shekels of silver. In order to justify this amount as being appropriate, scholars show that people devoted to God were given a set value according to their sex and age in Leviticus 27 –

Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When a man consecrates by a vow certain persons to the LORD, according to your valuation, ³ if your valuation is of a male from twenty years old up to sixty years old, then your valuation shall be fifty shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. ⁴ If it *is* a female,

then your valuation shall be thirty shekels; ⁵ and if from five years old up to twenty years old, then your valuation for a male shall be twenty shekels, and for a female ten shekels; ⁶ and if from a month old up to five years old, then your valuation for a male shall be five shekels of silver, and for a female your valuation shall be three shekels of silver; ⁷ and if from sixty years old and above, if *it is* a male, then your valuation shall be fifteen shekels, and for a female ten shekels.

The idea is that the highest value considered was that of a male from twenty to sixty years - fifty shekels. Therefore, valuing a slave at thirty shekels was not undervaluing the life of the slave in comparison to a free person.

But this isn't entirely correct. If this standard of Leviticus 27 applied as they are inferring, then there would have been a set value on the life of the people who were gored in verses 29-31, but there was not. Therefore, it cannot be said that Leviticus 27 is an apple-to-apple comparison.

It is a different context with a different purpose. There, it is a set valuation on a person devoted to the Lord as an offering. It is not the valuation of the life of a person who is a servant. The reason this is important isn't really realized until we get to the account of Jesus' betrayal. In the book of Matthew, we read these passages concerning the price that was paid for the life of the Messiah -

"Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵ and said, 'What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?' And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him." Matthew 26:14-16

"Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, ⁴ saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.'

And they said, 'What *is that* to us? You see *to it!*'

⁵ Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.

⁶ But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, 'It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood.' ⁷ And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. ⁸ Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

⁹ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, ¹⁰ and gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me.'" Matthew 27:3-10

The valuation for the life of a mere slave in Israel was the value which the Lord, who gave them this same law, was valued at by His betrayer. Judas probably didn't see the irony in the exchange that the chief priests did as they weighed out the silver for that Servant of infinite value. That sale led directly to His death, a death as if gored by bulls and torn by lions. The 22nd Psalm describes the scene -

Many bulls have surrounded Me;
Strong *bulls* of Bashan have encircled Me.

¹³ They gape at Me *with* their mouths,
Like a raging and roaring lion.

¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
And all My bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax;
It has melted within Me.

¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd,

And My tongue clings to My jaws;
You have brought Me to the dust of death.

¹⁶ For dogs have surrounded Me;
The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.
They pierced My hands and My feet;

¹⁷ I can count all My bones.

They look *and* stare at Me.

¹⁸ They divide My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots. Psalm 22:12-18

It was His people who sold him to His death and it was men, portrayed as animals, which tore at Him as He died for them. And then, concerning this same group of people who so willingly sold away their Lord for such a pittance, Adam Clarke notes this -

"And in return, the justice of God has ordered it so, that they have been sold for slaves into every country of the universe. And yet, strange to tell, they see not the hand of God in so visible a retribution!" Adam Clarke

Adam Clarke rightly noted that as they sold Christ for the price of a slave, so they were sold to be slaves among the nations, exactly as the Bible prophesied. What he wasn't alive to see is that just as they were sold, they are now being bought back. The irony of it is that that they are being redeemed by the very One whom they sold off. Isaiah gives us a beginning clue with these words -

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

The suffering Servant who was sold for servant's wages gave His life to redeem those who sold Him. The Servant has become their Master and those who were His masters have become His servants.

*For thirty pieces of silver was sold my Lord
For the price of a slave was His life taken away
But the suffering Servant did this to fulfill the word
And to usher in for us a glorious new day*

*For thirty pieces of silver was He betrayed
And then He was beaten and hung on a tree
But in His death, God's wrath towards me was stayed
Yes, for thirty pieces of silver, Christ died for me*

*Oh that such a thing as this is true!
That God allowed the hands of the wicked to purchase Jesus
For thirty pieces of silver, He redeemed me and you
Yes, for the price of a slave God did this for us*

II. Making Good on One's Responsibilities (verses 33-35)

³³ “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,

These final verses pass from the value of human life to the value of non-human property. Here in this verse, two different concepts are given. The first is if a man

opens a pit that already existed. Such a pit would have been kept covered for the reason we will see.

The second concept is that of a man digging a new pit and leaving it uncovered for some reason. Maybe he was still in the process of digging it, or maybe he had taken his animals to it and made them aware of where it was so that they wouldn't later fall into it.

In either case, however, he is considered negligent in his actions towards the animals of another person, and he becomes liable for any damages that occur such as the loss of his ox or donkey. These two are surely selected because of their high value, but the precept would remain true even if a less valuable animal fell in, such as a sheep or a goat.

Pits were, and still are, used for numerous things. They may be cisterns where water comes out. This is seen in the account of Jacob arriving in Padan Aram in Genesis 29:1-3 -

"So Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the East. ² And he looked, and saw a well in the field; and behold, there *were* three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks. A large stone *was* on the well's mouth. ³ Now all the flocks would be gathered there; and they would roll the stone from the well's mouth, water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the well's mouth."

A pit could also be used for trapping animals, or for storage such as grain. If such a pit existed and it was uncovered by someone, they were under obligation to cover it back up as a safety measure. If they failed to do so, it became their liability to make any damages right. To emphasize the value of the matter, Jesus even gave this example in Matthew -

"Then He said to them, 'What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift *it* out?'"
Matthew 12:11

The care of an animal and the cost of it to the owner, made it justifiable to even do what would otherwise be considered work on a Sabbath day. It is for this reason that...

³⁴ **the owner of the pit shall make *it* good;**

The word for "owner" here is *baal*. It means "master" or "lord" and so by implication, the translators say "owner." This may not be the best translation because a pit may have common use, such as the example earlier of Jacob at the well in Padan Aram.

In this case, it may be better to think of it as the person responsible for the pit, whether he is the owner or not. It may be that one joint-owner of a pit isn't the one that uncovered it. If that were the case, then it would be wrong to penalize him as responsible for someone else's negligence.

Rather, it is the man who uncovers or digs the pit who is to make good on the loss. It was his responsibility when he uncovered it and then failed to cover it back up. And this extended to any location. Several scholars say that this only applied on public property. Here's how Matthew Poole states it -

"...to wit, in a public way, as the reason of the law shows; for if it were done in a man's own house or ground, there was no danger of such an accident, except the beast transgressed his bounds, and then the man was not culpable." Matthew Poole

This is wholly incorrect. The liability extended to the loss of the animal regardless of where it fell into a pit. A good verse to substantiate that private property still had to protect the well-being of others is found in Deuteronomy -

"When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it." Deuteronomy 22:8

You might ask, "What was someone doing on someone else's roof?" That is of less matter than the protection of someone on the roof. Even if houses were joined together and walking on the roof between them was a commonly accepted practice, it still occurred on one's private property, just as would be the case with an animal falling into a private pit.

³⁴(con't) **he shall give money to their owner, but the dead *animal* shall be his.**

In such a case, the one who uncovered the pit and failed to cover it again was to pay for the loss of the animal, but the dead animal would be his as a fair exchange. This verse and the next one show that the animal that gored a human in verse 28 was under a ban from being eaten.

It wasn't because it wasn't properly bled that it couldn't be eaten, but because it was devoted to God for destruction. However, in the case of an animal that fell into a pit and died, it still had value to the owner as it could be sold to a foreigner to help recoup the loss he faced through his own stupid negligence. This is seen here -

"You shall not eat anything that dies *of itself*; you may give it to the alien who *is* within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a

foreigner; for you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God." Deuteronomy 14:21

The meat could be sold for non-Israelite food, and the skin could be sold to a tanner for leather, a donkey blanket, or whatever else such a hide could be used for. As you can see, even though he had to bear the penalty for his negligence, he was still given a sort of grace in the process.

³⁵ "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;

This is an especially fine aspect within the law. One ox has hurt another and death has resulted. This is the natural order of things and there is nothing offensive or repulsive about the animal. It could even be that the two animals were sparring over a lovely female as oxen will do.

In this case though, the animal is to be sold, not kept. What this implies is that there is now a stain on the ox and it is to be replaced with another which has no fault in it. And isn't that a beautiful picture of Christ replacing Adam. There was guilt in Adam and so he had to be replaced with another which bore no guilt.

The money was to be divided between the two owners and then they were to do with it as they wished. If they wanted a new ox, they could use the silver from the defective one towards another. Likewise, they were to take action concerning the dead ox...

³⁵ (con't) and the dead ox they shall also divide.

When we started today, I mentioned the value of animals in regards to humans. This is another verse which shows us this precept. When an ox gores a human and the human dies, it was to be stoned and not eaten. Nothing was mentioned about selling it, or dividing it, or anything else.

It was simply to be stoned and that was that - it received a murderer's penalty. It bore the bloodguilt of man. This makes a spiritual picture which is explained in 1 John 3 -

"For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, ¹² not as Cain *who* was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.

¹³ Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love *his* brother abides in death. ¹⁵ Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."
1 John 3:11-15

However, when an ox were to cause the death of another ox, then the live ox was to be sold and the money for it was to be divided between the two. Along with that, the dead ox was to be divided. Again, the dead animal still had value, even if an Israelite couldn't eat it. The proceeds from the dead would help to make up the difference towards buying a new ox.

If you think about it, it is a great picture of what is going on in the world. There is the devil who became the owner of this world. All men were under His power. There is death *in* Adam, but life also comes *through* Adam in the sense that Christ came *from* Adam.

The division of the dead ox shows us this. The dead ox is Adam and his offspring, but because Jesus is a Son of Adam, life came from death pictured by the purchase of a new, unstained ox. The proceeds came from both the live, stained ox and from the dead ox.

It is the dual nature of man - physically alive and yet stained, and spiritually dead. Christ, the replacement, is both *alive* and *unstained* and so through Him we can move under His ownership. Like the oxen, there are at this time two owners of men.

This is the division in the world. One side is working death for death and one side is working death for life. The stream of Adam is divided leading to one purpose or the other. Either man stays under the original owner and remains dead, or he moves to the new Owner and is replaced with unstained life.

Even in a simple passage about one oxen causing the death of another, there are spiritual truths to be found. This is further defined in our final verse of the chapter and of the sermon...

***36 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.**

The chapter ends with this final thought concerning culpability. If the owner knew of the harm that the ox was capable of because of past events, then he became liable for the entire cost of a live ox and only the dead ox would be his. In this, it says *shalem ye'shalem* - "paying he shall surely pay."

The entire burden for the matter rests on him, and yet he is allowed at least to keep the dead ox. Again, it is a point of grace in an otherwise sad state of affairs.

But again, it points to a spiritual matter. It is a picture of remaining dead in one's transgressions.

A person who willfully acts against what he knows will bring life remains spiritually dead. Only through active obedience of what is *right* can one receive what is *life*. This person has walked away from that and only receives death.

However, as a matter of grace, he has been given this physical life, even if it is a life of spiritual death. The proceeds from it are only death, but they are the proceeds which he is granted by the law.

As was seen at the giving of the law, and as will be seen throughout the law, the law can save no man because no man can fulfill it. And yet, at the same time, the law is the *only thing* which can bring about salvation. And so, Christ came under the law and fulfilled it for us.

This is what we see in these verses again today. The proceeds of the law for one who has failed to keep the law are *death*. But the proceeds of the law for one who has met the standards of the law are life. As we are already guilty before the law, then in order to have that life we must yield ourselves to the One who has fulfilled it in our place. Thank God for Jesus Christ.

If you have never asked Him to simply forgive you of your sins and to take away the guilt you bear, do it today...

Closing Verse: "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin." Romans 3:19, 20

Next Week: Exodus 22:1-15 *Something important to relay to you* (The Responsible Thing to Do) (60th 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.

The Price of a Life

If an ox gores a man or a woman to death
Then the ox shall surely be stoned, as is fit
And its flesh shall not be eaten
But the owner of the ox you shall acquit
But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past
And to his owner with this knowledge he has been filled
And he has not kept it confined
So that it has a man or a woman killed

The ox shall be stoned as directed by Me
And put to death shall its owner also be
If there is imposed on him a sum of money
Then he shall pay, his life to redeem
Whatever is imposed on him
Whatever is fitting as it would seem

Whether it has gored a son or gored a daughter, either one
According to this judgment to him it shall be done
If the ox gores a male or female servant
He shall give thirty shekels of silver to their master
And the ox shall be stoned
For having caused this disaster
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, as is just, proper, and fit

He shall give money to their owner
But the dead animal shall be his, not just a loner
If one man's ox hurts another's
So that it dies, this I to you decide
Then they shall sell the live ox
And the money from it divide

And the dead ox they shall divide also
Such is how the affair shall go
Or if it was known that the ox
Tended to thrust in time past
And its owner has not kept it confined
Then you shall do this at last

He shall surely pay ox for ox
And the dead animal shall be his own
It was he who got himself into this box
Simple laws but which teach of other things
Pictures of Christ and of His work for us
And in them, O how my heart sings
Of the marvelous wonders of our Lord Jesus

Thank You, O God, for this hope You have given to us
Though in Adam we are dead in our sin
Through Your Son we are made alive, yes, through Jesus
A new and eternal life we have been granted to live in

Thank You! Thank You O God, hear our praise
That our hearts will sing to You for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...