

Message #41

Exodus 21:12-36

One of the things that many of us love is our animals. Just a couple of weeks ago, I had gone into the bank and when I came out an older woman was taking pictures of our dog, Molly, who was sitting in the passenger side of my car. As I approached the car, she said I hope you don't mind, but that is a beautiful dog and I wanted to get a couple of pictures of her. I said, "No, I don't mind, in fact, I will open the window so you can get a better picture. So she took two more pictures. Now this has changed our entire perspective of Molly. Now that she is a model in a new modeling career, we realize she needs more beauty sleep. We cannot expect her to look her best if she is out prowling around all night. So we make her take her naps so she can continue to be at her best with this new career. **Truth is we humans love our animals. But another key truth comes out of this text and that is if you own an animal, you are responsible for it.**

God made humans and God made animals. There are ways that humans are to relate to other humans and there are ways that animals are to relate to humans. It is clear when you come to this passage that He cares about both forms of life because He actually includes a series of rules and laws concerning injuries in regard to people and to animals. **In a God-honoring society, there is respect for both humans and animals and there is legal responsibility.** What we see here is this:

GOD'S LAW DEMANDS THAT INJURIES AND DEATH PERTAINING TO HUMANS AND ANIMALS BE JUDGED AND PUNISHED ACCORDING TO HIS PRESCRIBED PENALTIES.

In a society where God is honored, there is respect when it comes to humans and also when it comes to animals. There are right ways things are to be handled and in this section there are legal ways, judgment ways in which God demands that things be handled.

Now since we know that according to Paul, the O.T. Law is still good to use against those who are lawless, such as kidnappers, which are named in this very text in Exodus (I Tim. 1:8-10) and since the implementation of the Law in the Grace Age has been turned over to government (Rom. 13:1-3), we would suggest that any judicial system that would choose to actually follow these laws in their society would discover that God would, in fact, be pleased and would bless that nation because these laws do come from His Holy and Heavenly Mind:

O.T. LAW JUDGMENT #1 – The laws of intentional and unintentional homicide. 21:12-14

In these verses, we get a look at the matter of homicide or we could word it another way: murder. There are three rules to be followed in regard to this matter:

Rule #1 - If the person premeditated the murder he is to be executed. **21:12**

God's Word sets forth a punishment and that is if someone premeditates a murder and strikes a person so that he dies, he is to be put to death. In other words, in a society that honors God, the death penalty is a form of punishment for a capital offense.

God's Word demands the death penalty but of course we are not a nation really interested in obeying the Word. That is why when it comes to the death penalty in the United States, 32 states have it but 18 don't have it. We don't have the death penalty here in Michigan and naturally they don't have it in the District of Columbia.

Most states that have the death penalty use lethal injection. New Hampshire permits hanging. South Carolina and Virginia lets a prisoner choose between lethal injection and electrocution. Utah permits firing squad. The state of Washington gives lethal injection unless a prisoner requests hanging.

Rule #2 - If the person did not premeditate the murder but it was accidental or unintentional without intent or preplanning, then the person should move away to another area to live. **21:13**

For example, if some wagon accidentally broke loose and killed someone or a person was working with a hammer and the head flew off and hit and killed someone and it was not premeditated, then the person was to move to a designated area to live and if he made it before the family killed him, he was safe.

Rule #3 - If a person preplanned some crafty murder, he was to be executed. **21:14**

If someone tried to make it look like an accident when it was actually a careful plot, he is to be executed.

Last year in the United States, 14,827 people were murdered. In Flint, Michigan, according to FBI statistics one of every 1613 residents was a homicidal victim. Of course, we don't have the death penalty in Michigan, so killers can live out their lives with us paying for their existence. In fact, last year (2013) there were 39 executions in the entire United States. Since God's Word is not being followed in this country we certainly cannot expect it to follow this law.

O.T. LAW JUDGMENT #2 – The laws against assaulting or cursing parents. **21:15, 17**

There are two rules to be followed in regard to parents:

Rule #1 - If a child violently hits his father or mother, he is to be put to death. **21:15**

We are not discussing here the murder of a father or mother; God is discussing the striking or hitting of a father or mother. Now the type of attack being described here is a violent attack or violent striking.

The “hiphil” stem of the Hebrew verb “strike” would seem to suggest the idea of striking parents with the idea of “causing” great harm. So this is not just a reference to a slap, although that certainly would be dishonorable. This is a reference to an assault that is out to cause harm.

Rule #2 - If a child cursed his father or mother he is to be put to death. **21:17**

Now there is quite a debate over what it means to curse a father or mother. If, for example, in a moment of heated emotional rage a child said to his parents “I wish you were dead,” would that constitute the death penalty?

The verb “curse” is in the piel stem in Hebrew. This particular stem emphasizes the idea of busying oneself in eager action (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, p. 141). It would seem from this that the idea here is that if a child aggressively cursed his parents desiring harm to come to them and did not care what happened to them, but wanted them out of the way and would not obey them or care for them, then those children were to be executed.

O.T. LAW JUDGMENT #3 – The laws against kidnapping . **21:16**

Kidnapping is a capital crime. God considers someone who takes another person from their family and home to be a criminal who deserves the death penalty. By the way, be sure to observe that this judgment and punishment against kidnapping is for a non-homicidal kidnapping.

In other words, if a person kidnapped another person and the person were alive and found, the kidnapper is to be executed. God does not take lightly someone who traffics in other humans. Kidnappers are to be tracked down and executed.

Last year, in Cleveland, Ariel Castor was caught having kidnapped and raped three girls. He held them hostage for ten years and his sentence was life in prison without parole. Fortunately for all concerned, one month after he was sentenced he hanged himself with bed sheets in prison and gave himself the death penalty.

O.T. LAW JUDGMENT #4 – The laws concerning life-threatening injuries . **21:18-21**

There were three basic rules to be followed on this point:

Rule #1 - If someone is hurt in a fight and does not die, the one who hurt him is responsible to pay all expenses until the person gets completely better. **21:18-19**

Rule #2 - If someone physically punished someone for disciplinary purposes and the person who was punished dies, then the one who did the punishing is guilty of murder. **21:20**

Rule #3 - If someone physically punished someone for disciplinary purposes and the person who was punished was out of work for a day or two, then the one who did the punishing was not liable. **21:21**—not subject to complete compensation rules.

O.T. LAW JUDGMENT #5 – The laws concerning one who caused permanent injuries. **21:22-27**

There are three rules that were to be applied in different situations:

Rule #1 - If a pregnant woman got hit but it did not harm her baby or cause permanent damage to her, then the person who hit her must pay the husband damages that he determines. **21:22**—There was to be a fine.

Rule #2 - If a pregnant woman got hit and her baby was injured or she was injured, the person who hit her was to be repaid in exact conformity to what was done. **21:23-25**

Now it is very clear here that God equates a fetus in a woman as being a human because if you killed the woman or the baby, you yourself were to be executed. Both the woman and the fetus were two lives and if you killed one, you yourself were subject to the death penalty.

The goal of this law was to impose a penalty that was equal to the injury. This law has come to be known as the “talion law.” Talion in Latin means tooth. This is where the “eye for eye, tooth for tooth” law stems.

For example, “life for life” meant that if one killed someone else then that person would forfeit his or her own life, too. The problem comes with things like “eye for eye”; “tooth for tooth”; “hand for hand”; “foot for foot”; burn for burn”; wound for wound”; “bruise for bruise.” How do you implement or enforce this?

This has prompted many people to assume that these laws should not be interpreted literally. So the phrases instead of being interpreted literally were interpreted idiomatically or metaphorically. So in the case of “an eye for an eye,” some suggested that what it meant is that there needed to be a penalty given to the person that would hurt just as much as not having an eye. They argued the point of this is that full justice was always meted out, but it did not have to be literal judgment.

So if a judge wanted to say the equivalent loss of an eye is so many months in jail, this would be appropriate. However, let us keep this point in mind; when God gave these laws, there were no jails and they were to be literally applied. If someone did something that crippled a person for life, they were not to just be able to go through life un-crippled themselves.

God's law demanded that they also suffer for the rest of their lives just as they inflicted suffering on someone else. So we do believe this was literal. Exact equitable punishment was to be given.

Rule #3 - If an owner physically abused a slave in any way, he immediately forfeited that slave and the slave was to be set free. **21:26-27**

Punishment was legitimate but if you so much as knocked out a tooth, your slave went free. These laws were designed to keep an owner from physically abusing a servant.

O.T. LAW JUDGMENT #6 – The laws pertaining to injuries caused by an animal or to an animal. **21:28-36**

Now it is very clear here that God expects people who own animals to be responsible owners. They are responsible to take care of the animal and see that the animal does not hurt or do damage to someone else. There are eight laws regarding animals:

Law #1 - If an ox kills a human and the owner of the ox did not know the ox would do that, the ox is to be put to death. **21:28**

Law #2 - If an ox kills a human and the owner of the ox knew the ox would do that, both he and the ox are to be put to death. **21:29**

Law #3 - If an ox kills a human there were certain circumstances that would permit an owner to pay a redemption fee to save his own life. **21:30**

Let's say, for example, that the owner lent his ox to someone and the ox was known to have an unfriendly temperament. Let us say that the ox killed someone. The family of the one killed could come up with a redemption price they would accept that would keep the owner from the death penalty. So there was some flexibility on this law.

Law #4 - If an ox gored a son or daughter the same rules applied. **21:31**

So clearly the lives of children were just as sacred and significant as the lives of adults.

Law #5 - If an ox gored the slave of someone else, then the owner of the ox would give 30 shekels of silver to the owner of the slave and the ox was to be executed. **21:32**

Now we must make an assumption here. If a servant or slave was doing a job that was authorized by the master and the ox gored him, then it was a work-related accident and therefore the owner was not subject to the death penalty. However, he was subject to make financial remuneration.

For example, if someone is doing their job at Consumers Power and a terrible accident occurs and a person is killed, then you do not execute the manager. But there does need to be some financial remuneration.

Law #6 - If a man did something that caused the death or fatality of an animal such as an ox or donkey, he is responsible to make financial restitution to the man who lost the animal. **21:33-34**

Many animals were open range animals. In other words, most owners could not build corrals, so they just let their animals free graze on the land. Now if someone dug a pit knowing these animals were there and then the ox or donkey fell into the pit and was killed because the person did not try to mark it off by a fence, then he is liable.

The liability was limited to the value of the animal and he could keep the meat of the dead animal.

Law #7 - If a man's ox kills another man's ox and was not known to be a goring ox, then they shall sell the live ox and divide the money and also divide the meat of the dead ox. **21:35**

Law #8 - If a man's ox kills another man's ox and was known to be an ox that gored others, then he must pay the full price of the ox, but he gets to keep the meat. **21:36**

What is very clear from these laws is that life is very sacred to God.

Now let's for a moment open up a State of Michigan can of worms. In this state we have what is called "no fault insurance." We have come up with a legal system that almost says when there is an automobile accident there is minimal fault.

We do not ever see a person who was responsible for a motor vehicle homicide executed for their negligence. In fact, in most cases, people who kill others in a vehicular don't even get life in prison.

We live in a culture in which no one wants to take responsibility for what they do or for the damage they caused. Well, it doesn't work that way when it comes to God's world.

If we have animals we are responsible to care for those animals and we are responsible for what those animals do. We are human beings and we are responsible for what we do and how we relate to other human beings.

Life is a sacred gift of God to human beings and animals and it is to be protected, and wise is the society who views it that way.