

## Laws on Social Justice (Exodus 21:28-23:9)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Exodus

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### I. Review from the Previous Lessons

- a. The Lord has just spoken the Ten Commandments to the Israelites gathered at the foot of Mount Sinai, about two months after departing Egypt.
- b. Now the Lord gives additional laws to Moses, which the Israelites are to follow when they reach the land of Canaan.
- c. In the previous lesson, we discussed how Eusebius, writing c. 320 AD in *Proof of the Gospel*, book 1, had explained the spiritual path in terms of three levels:
  - i. The *lowest level* was the way of life of the pagans.
  - ii. The *second level* was the life of the Jews, embodied in the Law of Moses. Eusebius referred to this as a “first step” of spiritual progress.
  - iii. The *third and highest level* was the way of life that Jesus calls his followers to embrace. This is found in his gospel teachings.
- d. Eusebius said, “those of the circumcision” (the Jews), through the Law of Moses “have *reached the first step* of holiness”. This is in contrast to the Christians, “those who have *ascended by the stair of gospel teaching*”.
- e. Paul used a different analogy in **Galatians 3-4**, to make a similar point. The Law was given as a guardian or tutor of a child to bring him up only to a certain point, “until the time appointed by the father”.
- f. Paul said in **Colossians 2** that the Law of Moses was nailed to the cross with Jesus. We are no longer bound by its requirements.
  - i. However, he says that the Law of Moses contained things that were “a *shadow* of things to come” that have been replaced now by the “substance” or “realities” we see now in Christ.
  - ii. If you first saw the *shadow* or silhouette of someone like Abraham Lincoln, you would likely be able to recognize the *actual person* later, when he or she arrived. Likewise, seeing the shadow first (in the Old Testament) makes it easier to recognize the realities that later came through Jesus Christ.

- g. Therefore, while the miscellaneous Laws of Moses are no longer binding to us like they were to the Jews, we should read them anyway.
  - i. As Paul said, “For *whatever things were written before* were written *for our learning*, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” (**Romans 15:4**, NKJV)
  - ii. In the Law we find the first step of the stairway (it gets us started and pointed in the right direction, even though that is not our destination).
  - iii. If we dig deeper, we may be able to see some of the “shadows” that foreshadowed the “substance” or “realities” that Christ would bring later through His life, His redemption and His teaching.

## II. More Miscellaneous Laws

- a. Read **Exodus 21:28-36**.
  - i. Responsibility vs. what was an accident. The human tendency might be to want to punish someone and take vengeance for an offense or a loss, *regardless* of whether what happened was intentional or the result of an accident.
    - 1. However, that is *not* how the Lord sees it.
    - 2. The person’s intent (or lack thereof) makes a significant difference!
  - ii. While most of us might have difficulty relating to the case of a bull goring someone. However, if we think of a pit bull dog or a Doberman attacking a child, perhaps we could more easily relate to the intention of this command.
    - 1. In this instance, God holds people more responsible if they were aware of the danger and did nothing about it to protect others.
    - 2. God does not just look at the outcome, but also to the heart behind what took place. This reveals much about the heart of God.
- b. Read **Exodus 21:37-22:4**.
  - i. If a person steals, he or she must repay multiple fold; not just restore exactly what was stolen.
  - ii. **Question:** Previously, in the case of an injury, God allowed retribution for the crime no greater than the original offense: “eye for eye, tooth

for tooth, etc.” (**Exodus 21:24**). So why does the Lord insist on a thief paying back *multiple times* what was stolen?

1. **Possible Answer:** This kind of penalty would tend to discourage theft. After all, if a potential thief reasoned, “What’s the worst thing that could happen if I get caught? I would just give back whatever I took”, this would not discourage him from a life of theft!
2. This story also reminds me of Zacchaeus
  - a. “Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and *if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.*’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham...’” (**Luke 19:8-9**, NKJV)
  - b. As a good-hearted man, Zacchaeus wanted to repay *much more* than whatever he had taken illicitly in the past.
- c. Read **Exodus 22:5-14**.
  - i. Again, God is assessing boundaries of justice based on the level of a person’s responsibility regarding the loss or injury.
- d. Read **Exodus 22:15-26**.
  - i. God hates sorcery.
    1. Don’t ever get involved in the occult. Don’t waver and be tempted through curiosity. Have nothing to do with this!
  - ii. God hates bestiality (having sexual relations with an animal).
    1. **Question:** Why would God feel it necessary to specifically address this particularly depraved sin?
      - a. The nations who lived in Canaan were involved in all kinds of wickedness and depravity.
    2. Read **Genesis 15:13-16**.
      - a. The timing of the return to Canaan, after 400 years of servitude, was coordinated with the spiritual decline of the inhabitants of that land.

- b. God would wait until the right time, when the sin of the Amorites was “filled up”.
3. Read **Wisdom of Solomon 12:3-11**.
- a. The Canaanites, who the Israelites were told to drive out, were involved in *extremely wicked* behavior.
    - i. The text mentions orgies, murder, child sacrifice and even *cannibalism* among the Canaanites.
    - ii. This is why the Lord insisted that the Israelites not intermarry with nor adopt the practices of the Canaanites.
  - b. However, note that God cared even about the most wicked people, the Canaanites. He sent in the insects (the hornets) first, to give them an opportunity to repent.
    - i. If they did not repent, the Israelites would wipe them out.
- iii. Don't mistreat aliens and strangers. Don't think you are better than them. You were an alien as well, in Egypt.
1. We (Christians) are aliens and strangers here, also, as Peter says in **1 Peter 2:11**.
  2. We also must be kind to those who are aliens, those who are helpless or vulnerable.
    - a. Living as aliens in a foreign country, in Tirana, Albania, my wife and I experienced what it was like to be strangers living in another land. Soon after arriving we were locked out of our apartment, in the dark, with no friends nearby. Also, we did not speak the language. A friendly older man, who spoke no English, saw we were struggling and stopped to help us in our time of need.
      - i. We never forgot that friendship from a stranger, when we were in another land.
    - b. Based on God's desire for us to look out for the aliens and strangers, some have claimed that Christians should be at the forefront of advocating for more liberal government policies regarding immigration to the US (open borders, free health care, free education,

guaranteed income, etc.). Policies like this are advocated by some political groups in the US, particularly on the “left” side of the political spectrum. However, there are other things to consider. For example:

- i. While the Bible calls us to “practice hospitality”, I don’t know any Christian who advocated opening up their home to feed dinner *to the entire world* every night.
- ii. If we adopted total open-borders, unlimited immigration, and free-everything-for-everyone policies, the US would be overrun with people from poorer countries, and even more bankrupt than it currently is!
  1. No country has ever tried to do that, for obvious reasons.
- iii. I don’t know what the limits should be regarding government policies. However, clearly we Christians need to be kind to aliens and treat them in the way we would want to be treated if we were in their land.
- c. This is just another application of the second greatest commandment: *to love others as we love ourselves*.
- iv. Take care of widows and orphans
  1. God cares about them very much, and wants us to be looking out for them as well.
  2. “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” (**James 1:27**, NKJV)
    - a. Most religious groups will focus on either holiness (being separate from the world) or charity (looking out to meet the needs of those who are in need). However, as Christians we need to do *both*!
- v. Be concerned about the poor.
  1. *You* help him, voluntarily sacrificing of yourself and your own means. This is not socialism (coveting what the wealthy have, and using the state to forcefully redistribute wealth).

2. John the Baptist called people to prepare for the coming of the Lord. When the people asked, "What shall we do?", he replied by addressing what they did with their wealth.
  - a. Read **Luke 3:7-11**.
  - b. To prepare for the coming of Jesus, John the Baptist calls his hearers to use their possessions to take care of those in need.
3. Jesus taught about this directly in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, in **Luke 16**.
4. Read **Matthew 25:31-46**.
  - a. Jesus said, "Whatever you did (or did not do) to the least of my brother, you did for Me."
  - b. This involves taking care of those who do not have what we have (those who are poorer).
  - c. This includes feeding the hungry, clothing those without clothes, taking in strangers, visiting the sick and shut-ins, visiting those in prison, etc.
- e. Read **Exodus 22:27-30**.
  - i. In the LXX, **Exodus 22:27** says, "You shall not speak against *gods*" (plural), which may seem odd to us.
    1. In the Masoretic Text it says, "You shall not revile *God*."
    2. However, consider **Psalm 82** (designated **Psalm 81** in the LXX) where humans are referred to as "gods". Jesus quotes from that passage in **John 10**, in responding to the Jews who protested that Jesus was making Himself equal to God.
      - a. "Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your law, "I said, You are gods?"' (**John 10:34**, NKJV)
    3. Perhaps this passage in **Exodus 22** is appropriating the term "gods" to those who are called to be *judges or rulers* among the people.
  - ii. Don't speak against a ruler.
    1. Paul cites this passage from **Exodus** when he is brought before the council and the High Priest in Jerusalem.
      - a. Read **Acts 22:30-23:5**.

- b. After being slapped, and then lashing out verbally at the High Priest, Paul backs down upon recalling the requirement of the Law: “Do not speak evil of the ruler of your people.”
    - c. This was Paul’s attitude, even when treated unjustly.
  - 2. Peter tells us to honor the king and the governors, as well.
    - a. “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.” (**1 Peter 2:11–17**, NKJV)
  - iii. Christians are called to honor those in authority. We must not speak evil of the ruler, or of those sent by them. This holds whether it is the President of the US, or the governor or those sent by them to enforce the laws (including the *police* sent by them).
    - 1. John the Baptist called out the sin of King Herod “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife” (**Mark 6:18**); and he lost his head for that.
      - a. John the Baptist was simply stating a fact here, and is calling the king to repent.
      - b. John is not trying to overthrow the king nor to start a revolution.
    - 2. We can respectfully call out sin, but need to be a submissive and respectful people. We disobey the governing authorities only when they contradict the directions of God, the Supreme Authority.

### III. Laws on Social Justice

- a. Read **Exodus 23:1-9**.

- b. Don't circulate a false report.
  - i. Rumors and "fake news" are constantly spread by the media, and *even by Christians* on social media. There is no excuse for spreading false information. We need to take the time to fact-check objectively, against reliable primary sources, rather than simply spreading news we have heard, which may be inaccurate.
  - ii. Spreading unverified information is gossip and slander; it produces ungodly division.
  - iii. Paul gives warnings against gossip in **1 Timothy 5:11-13**.
- c. Don't follow a crowd to do evil.
  - i. Recently there have been many people doing this very thing today: joining in with the crowd and joining mobs in looting in cities and committing acts of violence against innocent people.
  - ii. In churches, many Christians take the "easy way" of just going along with the crowd at church rather than having the courage to take a stand for what is true. Following the crowd, *even in a church*, can lead to evil as well.
  - iii. A man or woman of God *can't just go along with the group*. Being a Christian is not about finding the "right group" and staying in the center lane. It is about *seeking the truth and being willing to stand alone against the crowd*.
- d. Be kind, even to your enemy.
  - i. Once again, we see in the Law of Moses a first step in the stairway to the gospel teaching: here, to love our enemies.
  - ii. The Law of Moses says that if *our enemy's donkey* is in trouble, we need to help out that donkey.
    - 1. However, as Paul would ask the Corinthians regarding another oxen-related requirement of the Law of Moses, "Is it oxen that God is concerned about?" (**1 Corinthians 9:9**)
- e. Do not persecute the innocent and righteous with the wicked.
  - i. In war, the US government may call in a drone strike against a "bad guy" who may be attending a wedding or funeral in a village somewhere. Often many innocent people end up getting killed in the strike. The US government considers this just the unfortunate byproduct of a justified military strike, and calls it "collateral damage".

- ii. In contrast, God is *concerned about each individual*. He does not want to see the innocent perishing with the wicked. Even if your father and all the other members of your family were wicked, if you pursue righteousness the Lord is pleased with you (as explained in **Ezekiel 18**).
- iii. Marxism is based on *class analysis*. Rather than treating each person as an individual, everyone is categorized as part of *a class of people*.
  - 1. Marxists will ask, “Which class do you belong to, *the oppressed or the oppressors?*” For example,
    - a. Black versus white;
    - b. Rich versus poor;
    - c. Business owner versus worker; or
    - d. Male versus female
  - 2. However, God doesn’t look at a person’s outward appearance nor their “class”. *He looks at each individual’s heart*, and never wants the innocent to be punished along with the guilty.
    - a. “But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (**1 Samuel 16:7**, NKJV)
    - b. “Yet you say, ‘Why should the son not bear the guilt of the father?’ Because the son has done what is lawful and right, and has kept all My statutes and observed them, he shall surely live. The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.” (**Ezekiel 18:19–20**, NKJV)
- iv. Let us speak the truth today, to a world that does not always want to hear it. We must not lump in the innocent with the guilty.
  - 1. *Not every* white person in the US is a racist.
  - 2. *Not every* police officer is a brutal thug.
  - 3. *Not every* black person is a racist, either.

- f. Do not show favoritism toward the poor (**Exodus 23:3**), nor take bribes in a dispute (**Exodus 23:7-8**).
- i. **Question:** Why would someone show favoritism *to a poor person* (in a dispute with someone who is wealthier)?
  - ii. **Possible Reasons:**
    1. Maybe they *resent the rich*, whether from coveting what the wealthy have, or as a result of having been treated badly by a rich person in the past.
    2. Maybe *they are poor and identify* more closely with someone who shares a similar state in life. They might favor someone they see as more like themselves.
    3. Maybe they always tend to “look out for the little guy”, or... whatever!
  - iii. Bottom line: in any dispute, God wants us to judge impartially, considering what *the truth* is. We need to ask *who is in the right*, regardless of the class (economic, racial or other) of the innocent or guilty party.
    1. At our courthouses, the statue representing ‘Justice’ is a woman wearing *a blindfold*. The idea is that true justice should be blind and objective (not influenced by race, wealth nor any other type of outward appearance).
  - iv. The material discussed in this text is extraordinarily relevant to what has been happening in the United States. Consider the Black Lives Matter (BLM) controversy that has been dominating the news recently.
    1. In current “debate” on BLM, all dissenting voices are silenced on the basis of class analysis.
      - a. White people who disagree with the BLM narrative are immediately branded as “racist”.
      - b. On the other hand, blacks who disagree are labeled as “uncle Toms” (collaborators with the enemy, a term borrowed from the book, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*).
    2. Recently a great injustice was done in Minneapolis, with a white policeman killing a black criminal suspect. Virtually everyone in the public arena agrees that what was done was a

terrible injustice, and that the policeman needs to be called to account and brought to justice.

3. I also am aware, based on conversations that my children and I have had with friends from diverse backgrounds, that there is *much fear in the black community* in Boston and elsewhere regarding the police and racism.
4. As a result of this recent injustice in Minneapolis and similar injustices elsewhere, there is much sincere outrage and sympathy for BLM and their cries for justice in race relations.
5. However, there is an agenda being pushed by BLM leadership.
  - a. Marxism, class analysis, class warfare.
  - b. Disruption of the nuclear family, and undermining the concept of a father leading the family.
  - c. Destruction of gender roles (transgender and LGBTQ flags, etc.)
  - d. Strongly pushing “reproductive rights” (pro-abortion).
  - e. Strongly pushing anti-capitalist agenda, full Marxist socialism (including forced redistribution of possessions and property).
6. What I am seeing in the BLM movement lately strikes me as extraordinarily similar to some of the things I saw over 40 years ago, when I was a college student in northern California during the Vietnam War.
  - a. At the time I was very much opposed to US involvement in the Vietnam War and was anti-war in general. (However, at that time I had *not yet* adopted consistent Christian non-interventionist convictions.)
  - b. While I definitely *was not* a Marxist nor a socialist (I was *far from* that), I noticed that the anti-war movement had many Marxists involved in organizing the demonstrations.
    - i. While most of the anti-war students at the university were opposed to Marxism, the Marxists used the issue as a wedge to push their anti-American agenda.

- ii. The Marxists tried (mostly unsuccessfully) to use the anti-war demonstrations as a platform to decry what they saw as oppression within the larger American society.
  - 1. While I *was not* a socialist, I lived among many of the anti-war socialists/Marxists in a semi-communal living situation (we tended to like the same kind of food). So I got to know what they thought and what they read. (But I argued with them on many points!)
  - 2. The Marxists tried to tie the war to capitalism and the free enterprise system, and to what they claimed was oppression of men, women, minorities, farmworkers, labor union members, and any others they identified as being in “oppressed classes”.
  - 3. Their solution to all of the problems was to overthrow the capitalist system and to institute a leftist, socialist alternative where “the people” (practically speaking, the government) would control everything.
- 7. The things I was hearing in the recent BLM movement recently struck me as eerily familiar to the kind of talk and strategies I heard from Marxists in the anti-war movement over 40 years ago. I checked out the BLM website to find out who their founders were and what they believed.
  - a. To no surprise, I discovered that the BLM movement is openly pushing a Marxist agenda (radical feminism, disruption of the nuclear family, anti-male leadership of the family, anti-capitalism, pro-abortion, LGBTQ+ agenda...pretty much a full *cultural Marxist* agenda!)
  - b. While the vast majority of people who have sympathy for civil rights and the proper treatment of black Americans may not be Marxists themselves, they are unaware of the goals and objectives of groups like this.
- 8. There is a very dark, anti-Christian agenda being pushed at this time. I believe it is no exaggeration to say that this is *Satanic*.

- a. My job is to warn Christians. We need to understand the times we are in and the dangers we currently face. Jesus called us to be “wise as serpents” (**Matthew 10:16**).
- b. People like these are “wolves in sheep’s clothing”.
- c. This *bears almost no resemblance* to the civil rights movement of the 1960s that was led by Martin Luther King Jr. and other Christian ministers.
- d. I encourage all to get educated, read up on these things, be aware and be prepared.
  - i. Don’t take my word for it, and you do not need to trust the popular media on either the left or the right.
  - ii. Go and check out for yourself what these people are advocating, in their own words and on their own websites!
- v. **Never Forget:** the Lord treats us *each as individuals*, not as members of some class. Furthermore, He *does not* want His people to punish the innocent with the guilty.