

Is Slavery Always Wrong? Exodus 21:1-11, etc.

INTRODUCTION:

- Gentiles are not under the Law-Galatians 3:23-25, Romans 7:1-4

²³ But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. Galatians 3:23-25

¹ Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? ² For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. ³ So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man. ⁴ Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. Romans 7:1-4 (NASB)

- Some OT laws still reflect God's moral will for mankind.
- Some OT laws reflect wise principles that can be reapplied in our culture.
- Slavery, as legislated in the OT, was very different from the US historical practice of slavery.

¹⁶ "He who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death. Exodus 21:16 (NASB)

I. OT Laws Concerning Slavery

A. Slavery fulfilled a number of functions in Israelite Society.

1. It was a means of paying off debt and getting financially re-established (Lev. 25:39,47)

³⁹ 'If a countryman of yours becomes so poor with regard to you that he sells himself to you, you shall not subject him to a slave's service. Leviticus 25:39 (NASB)

⁴⁷ 'Now if the means of a stranger or of a sojourner with you becomes sufficient, and a countryman of yours becomes so poor with regard to him as to sell himself to a stranger who is sojourning with you, or to the descendants of a stranger's family, Leviticus 25:47 (NASB)

2. It was a humane way of treating victims of war (Josh. 9:22-27; 1 Sam. 4:9)
3. It was a specialized form of arranged marriage (Exodus 21:7-11)

B. You could not take an Israelite male into permanent slavery (Exod. 21:2-3; Lev. 25:40-42)

² "If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years; but on the seventh he shall go out as a free man without payment. ³ "If he comes alone, he shall go out alone; if he is the husband of a wife, then his wife shall go out with him. Exodus 21:2-3 (NASB)

1. Male slaves could voluntarily choose permanent slavery (Exod. 21:5-6; Deut. 15:16-17)

⁵ "But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man,' ⁶ then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently. Exodus 21:5-6 (NASB)

2. Female slaves were permanent members of the household (Exod. 21:4,7)
3. Non-Israelites could be made permanent slaves (Lev. 25:44-46)
4. At the end of six years the Israelite male was set free with starting capital (Deut. 15:13-14)

¹³ "When you set him free, you shall not send him away empty-handed.

¹⁴ "You shall furnish him liberally from your flock and from your threshing floor and from your wine vat; you shall give to him as the Lord your God has blessed you. Deuteronomy 15:13-14 (NASB)

C. OT Laws protected slaves.

1. Corporal punishment of slaves was allowed but murder was a crime (Exod. 21:20-21)
2. Physical dismemberment was cause for automatic freedom for slaves (Exod. 21:26-27)
3. Slaves were not to be treated severely (Lev. 25:43)
4. Runaway slaves were not to be returned to their master (Deut. 23:15-16)

II. Transferable Principles.

A. Societal: It is desirable to have financial systems that allow people to work off their debt and to escape poverty.

B. Individual: Slavery is a situation where you lose personal freedom in order to benefit someone or something else.

1. Modern forms of involuntary slavery are evil.

2. One voluntary form of slavery is debt.

⁷ **The rich rules over the poor, And the borrower *becomes* the lender's slave.** Proverbs 22:7 (NASB)

3. Some voluntary forms of slavery are good.

²⁵ **But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and *their* great men exercise authority over them. ²⁶ "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."**
Matthew 20:25-28 (NASB)

¹⁹ **For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.** 1 Corinthians 9:19 (NASB)

¹⁶ **Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.**
Romans 6:16-18 (NASB)