

**The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe**  
**Week #24 – Adult Bible Study**

**Exodus 20:18 – 23:19**

**April 2 & 3, 2024**

---

**Exodus 20:18 – 21**

1. This is a conclusion to the theophany (appearance of God) scene that is described more fully in 19:16-20, and as such completes the story of the giving of the 10 Commandments
2. The people want Moses to continue to be the Mediator between them and God
3. Notice: the people are afraid and need assurance that they are safe in the context of God's presence

**Exodus 20:22 – 23:19**

1. Here begins a collection of laws often called the Book of the Covenant
2. This is material that developed over time within Israel's history and is inserted here as a refinement, reflection, and expansion of the 10 Commandments
3. Put another way, this is a more detailed description of how the 10 will be applied in specific situations
4. Important Considerations:
  - a. These laws are meant to provide for good order within the community – such order being one of the many blessings of God
  - b. These laws – most of which do not deal with specifically “religious” issues – nevertheless are understood to be necessary and logical outcomes of Israel's relationship with God, therefore, we must say that all of life, religious or not, is lived from a religious basis
5. Fundamental Principles of the Laws:
  - a. Equality of all persons under the law
  - b. No special consideration for socioeconomic status
  - c. Respect for the rights of the weakest members
  - d. Value of human life over property
  - e. Complete intermingling of sacred & secular, indicating no distinction between the two within God's plan & design for the world

**Exodus 20:22-26**

6. The connection between worship, loyalty to God, and actual outcomes in everyday life
7. Israel is to be loyal to God and God will be loyal to Israel
8. The act of living rightly is derived from the fact of a right relationship between God and people
9. The emphasis on natural materials here is meant to prevent a focus on the setting of worship and promote a focus on the subject of worship, who is God
10. The concern about nakedness stems from nudity as part of pagan worship
11. Note that altars are to be built only where God has appeared
12. Worship is not to be careless, formless, without particular attention to its purpose
13. God promises to be present with and for the people within worship

**Exodus 21:1 – 23:19**

Note: What follows is a thematic consideration of the material

14. God is specifically mentioned throughout this section, and pictured as being intimately involved with the application of the law, indicating that:
  - a. The law remains in God's hands
  - b. Fulfilling the law involves relationship with God
  - c. Law itself is not merely derived from human common sense or creation, but comes from God, or stated differently, law is a theological matter
  - d. The judicial and religious spheres of life are inextricably interconnected
15. God is very involved in justice for all people and justice on a social level

16. Though slavery is an accepted institution, God's law produces an historical development of concern for the rights of slaves
17. Human life is protected
18. Human responsibility for others and for the community as a whole is upheld
19. Israel is to remember its own history as enslaved, oppressed, poor, powerless people – to treat others as they were treated in Egypt is to “violate its own history”
20. Israel is a holy people and as such is expected to act accordingly
21. Israel is to be concerned about the least among them, about resident aliens, widows, and orphans
22. The remembering of their history and the focus on protection/respect for all will lead to a continuing development of new laws as new situations in life arise
23. Even the rights of enemies are to be protected
24. Proportional Justice is upheld here: eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and as such is an improvement on disproportional retribution common in other societies of the time
25. Care for creation is expressed by specific care for animals – all of God's creation is to be nurtured and protected
26. Consecration of firstborn and gift of firstfruits are expressions of God's claim on all of creation
27. Specific instructions are given for the worship life of Israel, linking worship and the living of daily life and including the presence and concern of God in every aspect of life

### Questions for Your Life Today

- A. Where do you see places in our society today where new laws might need to be written?
- B. How do you personally help to maintain “law and order” or hinder it?
- C. In what ways does our worship uphold the place of law in our lives?
- D. What dangers do you see in separating God from everyday life?
- E. Where do you see perversions of justice taking place in our world today?

Notes by The Rev. Dr. Jack Baca, Senior Pastor, The Village Church, Rancho Santa Fe, California

#### Resources:

- a. Interpretation Commentary on Exodus, Terence E. Fretheim, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1991
- b. The Communicator's Commentary Series, Old Testament, Exodus, Maxie D. Dunnam, Word, Inc., Waco, TX, 1987
- c. The Old Testament Library: Exodus, Brevard S. Childs, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1974