

Plan and Purpose Bible Lesson #III-18—Judgments and Ordinances

Murder is the most serious of man against man sins. Of course death is the judgment for murder. This is verified in Ex. 21:12-14; Lev. 24:17; Num. 35:16-21; Num. 35:30-34 and Deut. 19:11-13. Is killing another person always murder? Not necessarily. There is the unintentional killing and the accidental killing. However, these types of killing still bear a judgment. Ex. 21:13 says, **“if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand”** God will appoint a place where the slayer can flee. Num. 35:22-28 tells us that if a man accidentally kills another and was not his enemy, neither sought his harm, then the congregation will judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood and the congregation shall deliver him out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and shall restore him to his city of refuge and he shall abide in it until the death of the high priest. However, if the slayer goes outside the bounds of that city before the death of the high priest, and the revenger of blood finds and kills him, the revenger of blood will not be held guilty for his blood.

We mentioned briefly the cities of refuge when we discussed the statutes. These were cities belonging to the Levites, set aside specifically for those who had killed someone, but were not guilty of murder, to go to for safety. We’ll discuss a little later the different types of death sentences there are, but in the case of murder, the murderer is to be killed by the revenger of blood. Presumably, this is a next of kin to the victim. Anyone killing someone is entitled to a trial, but to have it he must be able to reach a city of refuge before the revenger of blood catches him. If he reaches the city, he can stay there until the trial. If the congregation determines, at the trial, he is guilty of murder, he is given into the hand of the revenger of blood. If the killing was not murder, he is delivered back to the city of refuge where he has to stay until the death of the high priest. His family can be with him and he is responsible for his own living, but he is safe so long as he stays there. If he leaves after the death of the high priest, the revenger of blood cannot touch him without himself being guilty. (Deut. 19:4-6)

There are rules for the trial, however. Deut. 17:6-7 says that there has to be at least two witnesses before a person can be put to death for any crime. Num. 35:30-34 verifies this. Not in the case of murder, but in all other cases, the hands of the witnesses shall be the first to put the sinner to death.

Deut. 19:16-21 tells us that if a false witness rise up against a man to testify against him falsely, then the judges are to diligently enquire to determine the truth. If they find the man to have testified falsely, then he is to receive whatever judgment the man he testified against would have received, if he had been found guilty. If it is the death sentence, then he would be killed. Verse 21 says, **“And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.”** Basically this means that the penalty shall fit the crime.

Deut. 24:16 tells us the fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children for the fathers. Every man is to be put to death for his own sin.

Another example of killing a person that isn’t considered murder, it found in Ex. 22:2-4. If a thief is caught in the night, and is smitten that he dies, then the one killing him will not be guilty of murder. However, if the same thing happened in the daylight, then the one killing the thief would be guilty of murder.

If a man smites his servant so that he or she dies in the process, the man is to be put to death. But, if the servant lives for a day or two, he is not to be punished. His loss of property is his punishment. (Ex. 21:20-21)

If an ox gores a man or woman that they die, the ox is to be stoned. But if the ox had a record of trying to gore people, then the owner is to be put to death unless the next of kin are willing to accept a ransom for his life. If the one killed is a servant, the owner is to pay his or her master 30 shekels of silver. But the ox is to be stoned regardless. (Ex. 21:28-32)

There are a number of other capital crimes, or non-restorable crimes, which are crimes requiring the judgment of death. A man who smites his father or mother shall be put to death. (Ex. 21:15) The same applies to he that curseth his father or mother. (Ex. 21:17; Lev. 20:9)

A witch, wizard, or one with a familiar spirit is to be stoned to death. (Ex. 22:18; Lev. 20:27) A prophet or dreamer, who tries to lead people away from God is to be put to death. (Deut. 18:20-22) Even if one's brother, son, daughter, wife or friend tries to lead one away from God to other gods, they are to be put to death. (Deut. 13:6-11) One who lives among you, who has gone and worshipped other gods is to be stoned to death. (Deut. 17:2-5) He that sacrificeth unto any god except unto the LORD only is to be destroyed. (Ex. 22:20) The same applies to anyone sacrificing their children to Molech. (Lev. 20:1-5)

Anyone working on the Sabbath is to be put to death. (Ex. 31:12-17; Ex. 35 2-3; Num. 15:32-36) A stranger coming near to the tabernacle was to be put to death. (Num. 18:7) Anyone who blasphemed the name of the LORD was to be stoned to death. (Lev. 24:14-16)

Anyone guilty of practicing homosexuality was to be put to death. (Lev. 20:13) The same applied to one guilty of sodomy. (Ex. 22:19; Lev. 20:15-16) The daughter of any priest who profaned herself by playing the whore was to be burned with fire. I believe this means burning the body after death by stoning. (Lev. 21:9)

A stubborn and rebellious son who would not obey his father and mother, even when chastened, was to be stoned to death. (Deut. 21:18-21)

If a man married a wife and felt he had found her not to be a virgin, he was to bring her to the elders. It was up to her parents to prove that she was a virgin. If they failed to do so, she was to be stoned to death. If she was a virgin, the husband was to be fined 100 shekels of silver and the fine paid to the father and mother and the woman was to be his wife and he could not put her away. (Deut. 22:13-21)

Deut. 21:22-23 discusses the judgment of executing someone by hanging them on a tree. It does not tell us what sin is worthy of this type of death, but it does tell us that one killed this way was accursed. I think that the fact that Jesus Christ took on all the sins of the world, thus technically making him the very worst of criminals and was hung on the cross, I presume this was the judgment for the very worst of criminals. One who dies in this manner was not to have his body left on the tree overnight. He was to be buried on the same day.

In Deut. 13:12-18, we have a death penalty judgment that is to be carried out on a whole city. If certain men, children of Belial, have gone into a city and drawn the inhabitants of that city to serve other gods, then a diligent search is to be made to see if it is so. If it is so, then the people are to go into the city and kill every living thing in the city, man and beast and burn it completely and not rebuild it.

That we might better understand all that Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, we need to fully understand these death penalties including which method of execution was to be used for each type of crime.

Once we see a principle established in God's Law, I believe we can rely on that principle to explain what is often unexplained. As we have already seen and will continue to see as we study, the principle of God's Judgment laws is simply restitution. Applying this to the death penalty, it is at first a little difficult to see how the death of the criminal can restore the damage done by murder, rape, blasphemy, etc. But if we keep in mind that there will be an ultimate judgment, by God Himself, of all that men have done, would it not be reasonable to assume God can devise a judgment that can be restorative in nature? I believe He can, and will, even though we don't understand now how He can do it. If we are correct in this assumption, would it not be reasonable to also assume that the death penalty is more a "reserving for judgment" than the actual judgment itself. If effect, the death penalty might be a favor to the one who is guilty of a non-restorable crime, in that it limits to that point, what that person will have to answer for to God. Certainly, God can and does forgive, but we have to seek that forgiveness and be forgiving. One who does not do this, but continues to ignore God's laws, heaps more and more judgment upon his head. I think we need to consider this when we discuss the death penalty.

We're also told that the death penalty accomplishes a couple more things. First, it takes evil from the land. Second, it acts as a deterrent by making each of us more mindful of God's Law.

Let's look at some more judgments dealing with man damaging man physically. We'll see that the principle of restitution is applied everywhere possible. However, there are times when restitution is not appropriate and actual punishment of some kind is. That punishment may be quite severe, but keep in mind the intent is to deter sin.

Ex. 21:18-19 tells us that if one man injures another in a fight, but does not kill him, the one inflicting the injury is to pay all his medical cost, plus reimburse him for time lost.

If In the case of men striving together, a pregnant woman is injured in a manner that causes her to abort her baby, and there is no other problem, the man hurting her is to be punished according to the dictates of her husband and the judges. If there are other problems or mischief, then there is to be life for life, eye to eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. (Ex. 21:22-25) As I have mentioned before, this is simply saying that the punishment is to fit the crime.

If a man smites his servant so that he or she loses an eye or a tooth, he is to release the servant for his or her eye's sake or tooth's sake. (Ex. 21:26-27)

There are times when corporal punishment is a necessity, though we aren't given a specific example of what would happen for this to be the case. Deut. 25:2-3 tells us that forty stripes is the maximum amount that can be given.

Lev. 24:19-20 tells us that if a man causes a blemish in his neighbor, it is to be done to him as he has done, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, etc.

Deut. 25:11-12 tells us that when men strive together with each other, and the wife of one attempts to help her husband and she reaches and take hold of the other man by "the secrets". Then her hand is to be cut off, and God says, **"thine eye shall not pity her."**

There are some principles of law, dealing with destruction or damage to another's property, that are expressed in several of the Judgments. Ex. 21:33-34 says that if a man digs a pit and does not cover it, so that an ox or ass falls therein, the owner of the pit is to pay the owner of the animal for the animal and then the dead animal is his.

If one man's ox kills another man's ox, they are to sell the live ox and divide the money and the dead ox. However, if the ox had a history of being aggressive and his owner did not keep him penned up, he is to pay for the dead ox and the dead ox would be his. (Ex. 21:35-36)

If a man starts a fire that damages another's property, he that starts the fire is to make restitution for all the damage. (Ex. 22:6)

Ex. 22:14-15 tells us that if a man borrows an animal from his neighbor and it gets hurt or dies, the owner not being with it, the borrower is to pay for it. If the owner is with it, the borrower does not have to pay for it. If it is hired. It came for his hire.

Lev. 24:18 says, **"And he that killeth a beast shall make it good; beast for beast."** Lev. 24:21 confirms this.

We discussed in our look at the statutes the judgment of "cutting a person off from his people." It might be wise to review it again here. We're not told what all this means, or the duration, which leaves us to do some speculation. In several of the situations where this term is used, the crime is a non-restorable one, requiring the death penalty. Of course, one executed is cut off from his people. But one who is cut off for uncleanness, such as having touched a dead body, and hasn't gone through the cleansing process, would logically be cut off only as long as he remained unclean.

AS I stated before, I have concluded that being cut off basically is, in effect, having one's citizenship privileges cut off. If this is correct, the short-term effect is being cut off from the tabernacle, the presence of God and possibly missing a vote in a matter of community business. The long-term effect is being disinherited by God. The promises and the covenants, which convey the inheritance to the heirs, are made with the nation, not the individual. Therefore, if one is not in good standing as a citizen, using our current day terminology, he would not receive the inheritance when distributed in accordance with the promises and covenants. Basically, the ultimate distribution of the inheritance will be made to those having part in the first resurrection. It would seem logical then that anyone who dies in the cut-off state will not receive the inheritance.

It becomes incumbent upon us then to be sure what constitutes a sin that will cause one to be cut off. I might point out that most seem to be judgments that man is responsible to carry out, but not all. There are some that God Himself says He will do the "cutting off."

We can assume that all of the death penalty judgments constitute a cutting off. Let's look at some others. Lev. 7:22-25 says that anyone eating the fat that is supposed to be burned in the sacrifice of a beast, shall be cut off from his people. Lev. 7:26-27 and Lev. 17:10-14 tells us anyone eating blood, whether it be of fowl or beast, is to be cut off. Lev. 17:1-7 adds he that who kills an ox, lamb, or goat and who doesn't bring it before the door of the tabernacle to offer an offering unto the LORD. Again, to the list is added he who offers a burnt offering, but does not bring it before the door of the tabernacle. (Lev. 17:8-9)

Lev. 18:28-29 refers to all of the sins of incest, sexual relations with a woman in her menstrual period, adultery, sacrificing children to Molech, homosexuality, and sodomy as grounds for being cut off.

Anyone eating of the peace offering, after the second day is to be cut off according to Lev. 19:5-8. Lev. 20:6 adds anyone that turns after such as have familiar spirits and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, shall be cut off.

Lev. 22:2-7 tells us, speaking of Aaron and his seed, **“Whosoever he be of all your seed among your generations, that goeth unto the holy things, which the children of Israel hallow unto the LORD, having his uncleanness upon him, that soul shall be cut off from my presence, I am the LORD.”** The leper, he that has a running issue, he that touches anything unclean by the dead, a man whose seed goes from him, anyone touching any creeping thing whereby he may be made unclean, or touching a man who is unclean, are all included in those who are unclean. Certainly, with the exception of the leper or one that has a running issue, for most of these, we’re told a man can wash his flesh with water and he shall be clean when the sun goeth down. But, if he fails to do so, he remains unclean. Lev. 22:9 says they shall keep His ordinance, lest they bear sin for it, and die if they profane it.

Num. 15:30-31 says that he who sins presumptuously (or intentionally) shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.

Num. 19:11-22 lists anyone who is unclean by reason of the dead having touched the body, the grave or anything that might have touched the dead, and says, they shall be unclean seven days. Cleansing is by being sprinkled with water mixed with the ashes of the red heifer on the third and seventh day, and washing himself and his clothes. Failure to do so means being cut off from the congregation.

Looking at some of the other judgments, Ex. 22:16-17 and Deut. 22:28-29 deals with something few people realize today. They both tell us that if a man entice a virgin who is not betrothed and lie with her, she is his wife and he may not put her away. He is to pay her father fifty shekels of silver. I believe this tells us that regardless of ceremony or lack thereof, marriage was initiated with the sexual act. When we have the promiscuous society we have today, according to this law, we have many couples technically married to each other who in turn commit adultery by marrying or having affairs with someone else. I fear God has not hidden His face from this wickedness.

Another judgment having to do with marriage is found in Deut. 25:5-10. It concerns a man who marries and then dies before having any children. His wife is not to re-marry outside of the family. Instead, she is to marry the man’s brother and their first son is to take the name and inherit the inheritance of the first husband of the woman. The judgment comes if the brother refuses to do so. If this be the case, she is to state to the elders what has happened. If the brother tells them he refuses to marry her, then the woman is to come into his presence, loosen his shoe from off his foot, spit into his face and say, **“So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother’s house. And his name shall be called in Israel, the house of him that hath his shoe loosed.”**

There are also instructions to the judges. Lev. 19:15 says, **“Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor.”**

If a matter was too difficult to be solved locally, they were to take it to a higher court, so to speak. Deut. 17:8-13 says to take it to the place where the LORD shall choose, to the priest and the judge.

We also find here the judgment for contempt of court. Whatever the judge and the priest gave as a sentence, it was to be carried out. The man who refused to do so was to die.

Also a person hears or sees an event or who has taken an oath about an event he has witnessed, if he will not tell what he witnessed, it is a sin to him and Lev. 5:1 tells us he shall bear his iniquity. In the same light, someone who has heard and/or delights in something injurious to his neighbor by it being reported, but hides the truth is guilty. (Lev. 5:4) They are to bring a sin offering and a burnt offering to the priest for their sin. (Lev. 5:5-13) Deut. 24:17-18 says not to pervert the judgment of the stranger, the fatherless or the widow. Deut. 25:1 instructs the judges to justify the righteous and condemn the wicked in cases brought before them.

There are a number of times that God will be the judge and will deliver the judgment. Ex. 20:7 and Deut. 5:11 tells us God will not hold anyone taking His name in vain guiltless for doing so. Ex. 20:12 and Deut. 5:16 indicate God will prolong the life of those who honor their father and mother.

God says He will kill with the sword if He hears the cry of affliction from the widow or the fatherless. (Ex. 22:22-24) He also says He will hear those who have been oppressed by those charging usury and taking pledges for loans from the poor. (Ex. 22:25-27)

Ex. 23:24-25 says God will take away sickness and bless their bread and water when Israel serves her God. Lev. 26:3-13; Deut. 7:12-16; Deut. 11:13-17 and Deut. 28:1-14 promise great blessings if Israel obeys God. But Lev. 26:14-39 and Deut. 28:15-68 promise severe curses in judgment if they do not hearken to His laws and obey them. However, if He brings these curses upon them and they be driven from their land; if they humble themselves before Him and confess their iniquity, He will remember His covenant with Jacob, Isaac and Abraham and He will remember the land. He promises never to utterly destroy them, or to break His covenant with them. (Lev. 26:40-45; Deut. 4:29-31)

However, Deut. 4:25-28 and Deut. 8:19-20 says that no matter how long they are in the land, if they make a graven image, or the likeness of anything and do evil in the sight of God, He will cast them out of the land and they will be scattered among the nations.

He tells Israel in Deut. 11:18-21, their days will be multiplied if they lay the words of God's Law in their hearts and minds, teach them to their children, and post them in their houses.

We'll end this study of the Judgments with Deut. 11:26-28, **"Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the ways which I command you this day, to do after other gods, which ye have not known."**

ORDINANCES

Before we look at the category of law the Bible calls "Ordinances," we need to understand why we have this category. The majority of what we call ordinances is found in the book of Leviticus. They seem somewhat separated from the Commandments, Statutes and Judgments. There is a reason for this.

If we go to Ex. 19 where we find God actually organizing this people who have descended from Israel, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, we read in verses 5 and 6, **"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation."** He puts forth the condition, **"if ye will obey my voice in deed, and keep my covenant,"** without

expressing at this point what his voice or covenant was. Yet the people seemed to have an idea because they, in verse 8, all joined together and said **“All that the LORD hath spoken we will do.”**

The apostle Paul makes the statement in Rom. 5:13, **“(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.)”** I John 3:4 tells us, **“for sin is the transgression of the law.”** Though this sounds somewhat contradictory I assure you it is not. For sin to have been in the world before “the law” there had to be law that was transgressed. I submit that at least the principle of the commandments, statutes and judgments have been in effect since creation. Cain was afraid of being killed because he had killed Abel, for example. God told Noah in Gen. 9:6, **“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.”**

However, the law was basically unwritten and no people or nation had been required to stand responsible to this law. But this changed on this very eventful day at Mt. Sinai. Here God was making a nation. The new nation of Israel that He was forming was to be responsible to His law and they as a people agreed to it. Now they were accountable to the law. As Paul put it, from here on their sin (transgression of the law) would be imputed or reckoned to them. God then codified, or wrote, the law out for them. He wrote the Ten Commandments in stone, and then gave the balance of the commandments, statutes and judgments to Moses instructing him to write them down and teach them to the people.

The Judgments of the law are designed to right the wrongs of man to man. If the Judgments are carried out properly, with the exception of the non-restorable crimes like murder, anyone who has been damaged will have the damage restored, sometimes two to five times over. For the non-restorable crime, the criminal is executed.

However, now Israel is responsible to God when they sin. Not only do they damage each other when they sin, they damage God as well. As we said above, the judgments rectify the damage man does to man. At this point, however, there is no way to rectify the damage done to God. Thus God added a new set of laws to rectify this damage. In Gal. 3:17, Paul speaks of the **“the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after.”** Then in verse 19 he tells us, **“It was added because of transgressions.”** Understanding that the law Paul is referring to here is the body of law called Ordinances, that was added because of the fact that Israel now became accountable to God for their sins, will help greatly in understanding what Paul is discussing in his letter to the Galatians.

But a statement Paul then makes in verse 24 should help us to an even better understanding of this body of law. **“Wherefore the law (these ordinances) was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”** In both Col. 2:17 and Heb. 10:1, these ordinances are spoken of as a shadow of things to come. So, I think we can understand that the ordinances were to teach not only of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ (through the doctrine of substitution—life for life), but also of the true Holy of Holies and being in the very presence of God in all His glory, the goal toward which we should all be striving. As we’ll see, the ordinances not only teach us the principle of the blood sacrifice for sin, i.e. the sacrifice of life for sin, but also the order and holiness of the Tabernacle.

One other thing we need to remember as we begin our look at the Ordinances is a statement Jesus made as recorded in Matt. 5:17, **“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”** Note He said “fulfill” instead of keep. While He certainly did the latter, more importantly He also “fulfilled” most of the laws we are about to discuss.

We will begin our next lesson looking at the Ordinances. JRL

