**BCM Bible Study: January 27/28, 2021**

**Exodus 22-23:19: The Law Part 2**

Getting Started

* See the instructions I emailed you about starting well. Take some time to do introductions and set the tone. Here are some questions to get everyone talking.
  + How was your break? What was your spiritual life like while you were home?
  + How are you feeling going into the semester? What are you hoping for? What are you worried about?

Review

During the fall, we were walking through the book of Exodus. A lot has happened so far – God delivered his people out of Egyptian slavery by means of miraculous events. Then Israel wandered in the desert as God trained them to be a people who trusted and obeyed him. Finally, Israel arrived at Mt. Sinai where God declared that he had redeemed them to be his holy people and his representative to the nations. A part of living as his representative was living in a way that showed the nations what God is like. This is where the law comes in. Before break, we discussed the first half of the law in Exodus. Today, we will discuss the second half.

In all this we been focusing on this theme in Exodus: “The Lord’s missionary commitment to make himself know to the nations.” As you read, think about how God is showing his glory among the nations through his relationship with Israel.

Personal Property: **Read Exodus 22:1-17**

* What is the general principle of this section?
* Verses 1-4 appear to advocate for self-defense in certain situations. In what situations is self-defense OK? When should we turn the other cheek? (See nerd notes and the note below)
* What does this section teach us about the Bible’s views of personal property? How do we balance this with the New Testament’s concern for giving to those in need and the church sharing everything amongst themselves? (See Matthew 25, Acts 4:32)
  + It is going to impossible to say “It every situation you do \_\_\_\_\_.” In general, it seems that we can say that in many situations self-defense or guarding your property is good. (i.e. locking your house/car) But in other cases, it may be good to turn the other cheek and offer your possessions to others. In general, I don’t think we should leave our houses unlocked as a sign of generosity; criminals are clearly seen as wrong in this section.

Worship and Social Responsibility: This section mixes religious laws with social ones. This points to at least two truths:

1. The authenticity of your worship is demonstrated in your conduct towards others.
2. In God’s eyes, there is no divide between spiritual/non-spiritual realms of life. God’s law pertains to every sphere of life.

* How do these truths challenge you personally?

**Read Exodus 22:18-20**

* These verses feel very foreign to us, but their heart is to protect the purity of worship. What does it look like to protect the purity of our worship?

**Read Exodus 22:21-28**

* What is the general principle of this section?
* Why is Israel called to treat the disadvantaged this way?
  + The American mentality is one of individualism, achievement, and “work hard and you can be whatever you want.” How does this way of thinking tend to color your view of others?

**Read Exodus 22:29-23:9**

* 22:29-30 are concerned with whole dedication to God by giving him your first and best. What does this look like for you? What makes this difficult?
* What is the general principle of 23:1-9?
  + In what situations could it be easy to follow the crowd in doing wrong? (23:2)
  + There is sometimes a difference in what *feels* right and what *is* right. For instance, it might feel right to show favoritism to a poor man in a lawsuit (23:3), but this is not right. When have you seen this distinction?
  + What is God’s reasoning for living in the ways described here? (v.9)
  + As people who have experienced the oppression of sin, we should have empathy and care for oppressed people. Who is someone towards whom you want to show more care and empathy (as opposed to frustration/judgment)?

**Read Exodus 23:10-19**

* What is God’s primary concern in keeping the Sabbath (both the day and the year)?
* Israel’s religious festivals were set at agriculturally significant times as a reminder that God is their provider. Living in this way ensured God’s presence with them. “He is the source and the goal of everything they do. The law comes *from* God, and through obedience Israel will move closer *to* him.” (Enns) As you draw near to him, you find that He is the bread of life. (John 6:35)
  + When is obedience to God most difficult for you?
  + What are some things that you feel like sustain you? What do you feel like you can’t live without/are too attached to?

Challenge: This week’s challenge is an effort to put action to the previous set of questions.

What is that thing you feel like you can’t live without/are too attached to? Sports, social media, a certain food, etc. Abstain from that thing this week and instead, make an intentional effort to be obedient to God and spend time with Him.

Notes

* Self-defense is a difficult thing to shallow given Jesus’ statements about turning the other cheek in Matthew 5. We must recognize that v.2 doesn’t suggest that a defender try to kill someone, but only offers what to do if someone is killed. This still doesn’t tell us why he is allowed to resist to the point of bloodshed, but it does seem that there is room for defending yourself since the criminal is the one in the wrong. Justice is God’s ultimate concern here and while we should seek justice, there are some situations where justice can only be the Lord’s.
* It is also difficult to know why oaths are allowed in verse 11 given Jesus’ statements in Matthew 5:37. Once again, the Sermon on the Mount seems to involve personal ethics. Exodus 22:11 envisions a court scene.
* Fun story – after reading verses 14-15, I borrowed a neighbor’s rake and accidently broke it. Since he wasn’t there to witness me breaking it, I thought it my responsibility to buy him a new own. Thanks Mosaic law!
* The inclusion of verses 16-17 in the section of personal property is debated, namely because calling a person “property” is unappealing. Though this is true, a daughter was seen as belonging to a father. He would have received a bride price for a virgin daughter, which would now be impossible; therefore, he is owed restitution. Also, verses 16-17 follow the “if-then” formula of verses 1-15. At the end of the day, the groupings don’t really matter – there are no headers in the Hebrew.
* The second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:36-40). God made us not to live alone and worship him in a vacuum. We are relational people; to follow him is to treat others as he has treated us. Poor treatment of others betrays parts of our heart that need further renovation.
* I’ve included blasphemy (22:28) in the section about the disadvantaged. It could be that it is just an independent thought, but I agree with some scholars that it appears to be a conclusion of 21-27. “Blasphemy should not be understood as simply some abstract verbal assault on God, but a failure to follow God’s law.” (Peter Enns)
* Note that widows and orphans still hold a special place on concern in the NT. In general, Christians are called to help the helpless.
* The meat torn apart by beasts is called unclean in Lev. 17:15 and 22:8. Why this is the case is not explicitly stated. It could be, due to the concerns for holiness, that this was associated with pagan practices in some way.
* Some of the details of 23:10-18 may seem abstract, but they all have basis either in history (i.e., the concern of yeast tied to the Passover) or some religious observance concerned with holiness. We don’t always understand the cultural significance of every detail.
* Why shouldn’t a goat be boiled in its mother’s milk? Good question! We don’t fully know, but we have some clues. The hodgepodge of laws in 18-19 seems to associate to the Feasts listed beforehand. Yeast is connected to the Unleavened Bread and the first fruits has to do with the Feast of Harvest, which would connect our goat law to the Feast of Ingathering. This is also called the Feast of Booths, which calls them to remember living in temporary shelters. It also seems to be attached to noting God’s provision when the people were helpless to provide for themselves. So why not boil a goat in its mother’s milk? Perhaps the cruel irony of doing so does not reflect on God’s provision of natural resources. The best suggestion I’ve heard is that this was practiced by their neighbors; this is another instance of concern for holiness. At the end of the day, this famous verse remains a puzzle.