

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes

10-14-20

Exodus 22

Laws about Stealing - Verses 1-4

¹“Whoever steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. ²“If a thief is caught breaking in at night and is struck a fatal blow, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed; ³ but if it happens after sunrise, the defender is guilty of bloodshed. “Anyone who steals must certainly make restitution, but if they have nothing, they must be sold to pay for their theft. ⁴ If the stolen animal is found alive in their possession—whether ox or donkey or sheep—they must pay back double.

22:1 These are not a collection of picky laws but are case studies of God's principles in action. God was taking potential situations and showing how his laws would work in the Israelites' everyday lives. These case studies had several objectives: (1) to protect the nation, (2) to organize the nation, and (3) to focus the nation's attention on God. The laws listed here do not cover every possible situation but give practical examples that make it easier to decide what God wants.

22:3 Throughout chapter 22 we find examples of the principle of restitution—making wrongs right. For example, if a man stole an animal, he had to repay double the beast's market value. If you have done someone wrong, perhaps you should go beyond what is expected to make things right. This will (1) help ease any pain you've caused, (2) help the other person be more forgiving, and (3) make you more likely to think before you do it again.

22:3 If a thief could not pay the penalty for stealing, he would be forced to sell himself. Sinning has consequences. You don't want to be a slave? Don't steal. You don't want to be in financial trouble? Make wise financial choices and don't get into massive debt. Keep the law and you don't have to worry about punishment.

Laws about Restitution - Verses 5-15

⁵ “If anyone grazes their livestock in a field or vineyard and lets them stray and they graze in someone else's field, the offender must make restitution from the best of their own field or vineyard. ⁶ “If a fire breaks out and spreads into thornbushes so that it burns shocks of grain or standing grain or the whole field, the one who started the fire must make restitution. ⁷ “If anyone gives a neighbor silver or goods for safekeeping and they are stolen from the neighbor's house, the thief, if caught, must pay back double. ⁸ But if the thief is not found, the owner of the house must appear before the judges, and they must determine whether the owner of the house has laid hands on the other person's property. ⁹ In all cases of illegal possession of an ox, a donkey, a sheep, a garment, or any other lost property about which somebody says, 'This is mine,' both parties are to bring their cases before the

judges. The one whom the judges declare guilty must pay back double to the other. ¹⁰ "If anyone gives a donkey, an ox, a sheep or any other animal to their neighbor for safekeeping and it dies or is injured or is taken away while no one is looking, ¹¹ the issue between them will be settled by the taking of an oath before the LORD that the neighbor did not lay hands on the other person's property. The owner is to accept this, and no restitution is required. ¹² But if the animal was stolen from the neighbor, restitution must be made to the owner. ¹³ If it was torn to pieces by a wild animal, the neighbor shall bring in the remains as evidence and shall not be required to pay for the torn animal. ¹⁴ "If anyone borrows an animal from their neighbor and it is injured or dies while the owner is not present, they must make restitution. ¹⁵ But if the owner is with the animal, the borrower will not have to pay. If the animal was hired, the money paid for the hire covers the loss.

22:5 This basically refers to selfishly using up others resources instead of your own. The lesson here to consider others more important than yourself. Don't selfishly take advantage of others and their resources. Consider instead how you can help others.

22:6 Verse 6 refers to accidental harm done to others. The fire probably wasn't started maliciously. The fire starter didn't intend to destroy his neighbor's crops/fruit. But it happened. The best way to prevent accidents is by being careful. Don't be too confident in your own ability. Pride goes before the fall.

22:14-15 These verses show us that if we agree to watch something for somebody we have a responsibility to take care of it. It doesn't matter what the exact thing is, what matters is that we care for it responsibly. If you don't think you are able to do that, then don't take the responsibility to begin with.

Social Responsibility: Miscellaneous Laws - Verses 16-21

¹⁶ "If a man seduces a virgin who is not pledged to be married and sleeps with her, he must pay the bride-price, and she shall be his wife. ¹⁷ If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he must still pay the bride-price for virgins. ¹⁸ "Do not allow a sorceress to live. ¹⁹ "Anyone who has sexual relations with an animal is to be put to death. ²⁰ "Whoever sacrifices to any god other than the LORD must be destroyed. ²¹ "Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt.

22:16 The male is the one seen as responsible for pre-marital intercourse. Obviously it takes two, but probably in most cases it would be the male taking the initiative. Also the male would be the head of the family, so is the one held responsible for this. The first solution for this problem is for the man to pay the dowry and marry immediately. Although it was sin and a mistake was made, this is the most honorable thing to do (instead of casting out the woman like David's son did). This law acts as protection for the woman.

22:18 Why did God's laws speak so strongly against sorcery (Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deuteronomy 18:10-12)? Sorcery was punishable by death because it was a crime against God himself. To invoke evil powers violated the first commandment to "have no other gods." Sorcery

was rebellion against God and his authority. In essence, it was teaming up with Satan instead of with God.

22:21 God warned the Israelites not to treat foreigners unfairly because they themselves were once foreigners in Egypt. It is not easy coming into a new environment where you feel alone and out of place. Are there foreigners in your corner of the world? refugees? new arrivals at school? immigrants from another country? Be sensitive to their struggles, and express God's love by your kindness and generosity.

Social Responsibility: Laws about caring for Others - Verses 22-27

22 "Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless. **23** If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. **24** My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless. **25** "If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not treat it like a business deal; charge no interest. **26** If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, return it by sunset, **27** because that cloak is the only covering your neighbor has. What else can they sleep in? When they cry out to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

22:22-27 The Hebrew law code is noted for its fairness and social responsibility toward the poor. God insisted that the poor and powerless be well treated and given the chance to restore their fortunes. We should reflect God's concern for the poor by giving and by helping those less fortunate than ourselves.

22:23 All the other punishments in this chapter were to be enforced by men. But in the case of abusing the widow/orphan, God Himself says He will kill the person with the sword. God will set Himself against the wicked people who take advantage of and prey on the less fortunate.

22:26 Why did the law insist on returning a person's outer cloak by evening? For many people in Israel, their outer cloak was one of their most valuable possessions. Making clothing was difficult and time-consuming. As a result, cloaks were expensive, and most people owned only one. The cloak was used as a blanket, a sack to carry things in, a place to sit, a pledge for a debt, and, of course, clothing.

More miscellaneous Laws - Verses 28-31

28 "Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people. **29** "Do not hold back offerings from your granaries or your vats. "You must give me the firstborn of your sons. **30** Do the same with your cattle and your sheep. Let them stay with their mothers for seven days, but give them to me on the eighth day. **31** "You are to be my holy people. So do not eat the meat of an animal torn by wild beasts; throw it to the dogs.

22:29 The Israelites were to be prompt in giving God their offerings and not hold anything back. The first of the harvest was to be dedicated to him. Since God doesn't send payment overdue notices, it is easy to take care of other financial responsibilities while letting our gifts to him slide. Giving to God first out of what he has allowed you to have demonstrates that he has first priority in your life.