

Exodus chapter 21.

In chapter 20 God gave the Ten Commandments—those foundational principles for all of life. Now, as we get into chapter 21, we see God getting into the details—the "nitty-gritty." He starts giving what are called "judgments." These aren't just cold, legal statutes; these were the guidelines given to the judges in Israel so they could handle the day-to-day disputes of the people.

You remember Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, told him, "Moses, you're going to wear yourself out trying to judge every little thing." So, they appointed men over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. These verses were the handbook for those men to ensure that justice was tempered with God's heart.

The Judges and the "Gods"

One of the most interesting things you'll find here—and we see it in verse 6 and again in chapter 22—is that these judges are actually referred to by the Hebrew word *Elohim*. Now, *Elohim* is the word we usually use for God, the Creator. But here, it's translated as "judges."

Why? Because when a man sits in judgment over another man's life, he is acting as God's representative. He holds a person's future, their liberty, and sometimes their very life in his hands. It's a heavy, heavy responsibility.

The Pharisees once tried to trap Jesus because He claimed to be one with the Father. Jesus responded by quoting the Psalms, saying, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "You are gods"'"? He was pointing back to this very concept. He wasn't saying that we are evolving into deities or that we have some "divine spark" that makes us equal to the Creator. Far from it! He was showing that even the law recognized that men appointed by God to represent His justice were called by that title.

Let's be clear: there is only one true and living God. The idea that man is progressing into godhood is the oldest lie in the book. It's what the serpent whispered to Eve in the garden: "You shall be as God." It's what caused the fall of Lucifer. We don't want to be "as gods"; we want to be servants of the one true God.

The Law of the Bondslave

Now, we see something beautiful in verses 2 through 6. It deals with the Hebrew servant. The law said a servant would work for six years, but in the seventh year, he was to go free. It's the "six and one" pattern God established at creation.

But look at verse 5:

"But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free...'"

If the servant loved his master and didn't want to leave, the master would take him to the doorpost and bore (pierce) his ear through with an awl. This made him a bondslave—a lifetime servant by

choice. He would often wear a ring in that ear as a badge of honor. It said to the whole world, "I'm not a slave because I have to be; I'm a servant because I love my master."

You know, the New Testament writers loved this. Paul, Peter, James—they all started their letters saying, "Paul, a bondservant (*doulos* literally means a bonds slave) of Jesus Christ." They had spiritually "pierced ears," so to speak.

I look at my own life, and I think: No one has ever treated me as well as Jesus has. Why would I ever want to be "free" from Him? True freedom is found in total surrender to the Master. I've decided I don't want my own way anymore; I want His way. I want to be His bonds slave forever.

Equity and the Heart of God

As you read through the rest of the chapter, you see laws about restitution—"eye for eye, tooth for tooth." We often think of that as being harsh, but it was actually a limit on revenge. Human nature wants to take two eyes for one eye. God was saying, "Let the punishment fit the crime."

But when Jesus came, He took it a step further. He didn't abolish the justice of God, but He showed us the way of grace. He said, "If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other also." He was calling us to a higher law—the law of love.

And we see the value God places on life here. Even the life of a servant, even the life of the unborn (verse 22), even the safety of a neighbor's livestock. God cares about the details of how we treat one another.

The Challenge for the Believer

The challenge for us today is this: Whose ear do you have? Are you still trying to run your own life, or have you come to the doorpost and said, "Lord, I love You. I don't want to go out free. I want to be Yours forever"?

If you call yourself a Christian, live like a bonds slave. Let your choices, your finances, and your relationships reflect that you have a Master who loves you and who gave His life for you. Jesus didn't just give us a set of rules; He gave us His very self. When He shed His blood on the cross, He paid the price to redeem us from the cruelest master of all—sin.

An Invitation to New Life

Maybe you feel like you've been in bondage. Not to a person, but to a habit, to guilt, or to the emptiness of trying to be your own god. That's a heavy burden to carry, and it's one that leads to death.

But I have good news. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to this earth to pay your debt. When He died on the cross, His shed blood was the perfect sacrifice for your sins. And when He rose from the dead three days later, He proved once and for all that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

He isn't looking for "good people"; He's looking for people who will admit they need a Savior. If you will turn from your sin and put your trust in Him today, He will set you free from the power of death

and bring you into the family of God. You can leave here today knowing that your sins are forgiven and your future is secure in Him.