

Exodus 23

Justice for All

- “You shall not circulate a false report.”
 - Don’t spread rumors. Don’t spread fake news. Don’t tell a half story. If you don’t know the whole story, don’t try to tell it. We need this commandment and this Law more than the people of old
- Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.
 - If someone asks you to “back me up” by saying something that’s false, this is sin.
- You shall not follow a crowd to do evil;
 - Sometimes even though I am a good person, I am sitting with evil people. I am participating them – maybe they are talking about things that are evil, and I am just listening. I am still participating! Remember that “evil company corrupts good habits” (1 Cor 15:33)
 - Even if the whole world is saying something or doing something, and you know that it is evil, go against the world. Like Daniel the Prophet, who stood up for Susanna after everyone believed the two elders.
- nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice.
 - Don’t testify to something or agree to something, just because of peer-pressure and because many are doing or saying it
 - This reminds me of Evolution – completely rejected by all scholarly material. And yet, because of the claim that it eliminates God, millions and maybe billions subscribe to it and follow it and believe in it. And after many years, now it’s taught in schools and now it’s accepted everywhere – even though there’s no proof for it.
- You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute.
 - Someone might say “should I tell a lie to help someone in need?” Absolutely not... always tell the truth.
- “If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it.”
 - God hasn’t said to love your enemy yet... that is hard for them. But God starts with them here and takes the first step – if you find the donkey of someone that hates you, help him.
 - “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” (Matthew 5:44)
- “You shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute.”
 - This is taking advantage of someone because you have more than them. It is sin.
- Keep yourself far from a false matter; do not kill the innocent and righteous. For I will not justify the wicked.
 - You can kill an innocent or righteous just by telling a lie about them

- Not just “don’t lie” but “Keep yourself FAR from a false matter” – keep yourself close to the Truth which is Christ. Don’t hang out with people who are liars.
- And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous.
 - If you feel that someone is giving you something, in order to get something in return – don’t take it. Bribes blind discernment.
 - If someone gives you some new shoes at school, and then comes to you next week and say “hey how are those shoes? You like them? Awesome. Hey do you have that assignment that’s due today? Mind if I copy some answers?”
 - If someone comes and says “If I give you the answer to #4 on the homework, will you give me the #2?”
- “Also you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

The Law of Sabbaths

- “Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard and your olive grove. Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed.
 - The Sabbath was the seventh day of every week – a day of rest for man and animal.
 - But there’s another Sabbath which was the seventh year – a day of rest for the land. Farms, vineyards, olive groves, etc.
 - We spoke about the Sabbath before
- “And in all that I have said to you, be circumspect and make no mention of the name of other gods, nor let it be heard from your mouth.
 - Be circumspect is the highest level of hearing. Someone can hear the Word of God and it goes in one ear and out the other. Someone else can hear the Word of God and consider it. Someone else after he considers it, will do it.
 - And He concludes these Laws with one more mention of having no other gods. But this time at a different level – don’t let it be heard from your mouth. Someone might talk all day about money. Or he might talk all day about himself. Or he might talk all day about a celebrity. Even with his words, he is glorifying another god.
 - And also, to remind them that this law is given them by God, and no other gods can give them any other laws.

Three Annual Feasts

- “Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field. “Three times in the year all your males

shall appear before the Lord God. “You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until morning. The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.

- Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - This is the same as the Passover
 - Feast of the Exodus – Exodus from death to life, from slavery to freedom
 - None shall appear before Me empty
 - St John Chrysostom says that the most valuable gift you can bring to God is one of His children: a lost sheep, someone who doesn’t know God
- Feast of Harvest
 - Feast of Firstfruits
 - At the beginning of the harvest
- Feast of Ingathering
 - At the end of the year, bring from what you have gathered
- Three Feasts
 - Christians have seven Major Feasts of the Lord (Annunciation, Nativity, Theophany, Palm Sunday, Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost). These are feasts pertaining to our salvation
 - The Jews would celebrate three feasts, and we’ll see that in the time of Christ, these feasts were so important that all the Jews would come to Jerusalem to celebrate them in the Temple
 - This means that the idea of feasts or celebrating certain days is an idea from God. Some people reject giving value to certain days (like Jehovah’s Witnesses)
 - The feasts we celebrate are of a spiritual nature not like these which were focused on what the ground produced
- Offer the blood of sacrifice with leavened bread
 - Leaven represents sin
 - Don’t you dare receive the Eucharist if you are living in sin – in conflict with people, angry, etc.
- The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring
 - The first of your energy
 - The first of your time
 - The first of your day
 - The first of your talents
 - The first of your earnings
- You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.
 - God is giving them here an appreciation for all – even the animals. Don’t take a small goat as a sacrifice, that is still drinking its mother’s milk
 - Nowadays, we know that if a mother goat’s udders are full of milk, then the goat will feel pain if there is no baby goat to take the milk

The Angel and the Promises

- “Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.
 - Their journey is Egypt to Canaan

- Our journey is from earth to heaven. And the Lord Jesus Christ did it first! He said ok come follow Me – you'll go to the tomb like I did, and you'll raise like I did
- God is doing His part for us – but we have to focus. We have to see the Lord Jesus Christ that is in front of us and keeping us in the way
- The place which He has prepared: Christ said the same thing “I go to prepare a place for you and I will come again and receive you to Myself” (John 14)
- Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him.
 - All of the words that are coming now are about the Lord Jesus Christ
 - If God was talking about a regular angel, He would not say “He will not pardon your transgressions” and He wouldn't say “My name is in Him”
- But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.
 - Who is our enemy?
 - Christ said to “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44)
 - “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12)
 - If I obey His voice, He will protect me against my adversary
 - Continuing from Ephesians 6:13-20
- For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.
 - Many people get upset when they see wars in the Old Testament and they ask why would God do this. But I remind you with Genesis 15 what God said to Abraham
 - “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” (Genesis 15:13-16)
 - The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete
- You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars.
 - It's clear these nations were worshipping idols and doing evil works
- “So you shall serve the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you. No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days.
 - We take these things for granted – that we have food and water, that we aren't sick, that we were born in the first place, that we woke up today to live another day
 - These are the things that mattered to them in those days – worldly blessings
 - To live a long life
 - To have many kids
 - To not be sick
 - To have many possessions

- In the New Testament, we are not focused on the worldly things, but on the heavenly. It doesn't matter to me if I have bread, water, sickness, kids, long life – as long as I go to heaven.
- “I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you.
 - When Joshua sends two spies to Jericho, what does Rahab tell them? She says “by the way, everyone is TERRIFIED of you” – why? Because they heard of their God. If I put God before me in everything, I do not have to worry about my enemies (earthly or demonic)
- And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you. I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you.
 - The spiritual meaning is that if God removes from us any sin that we do, then the beasts of the field will become too numerous for us. What are those? The demons and the sins that we can't handle... the biggest one is the sin of pride. If God took away any temptation of the devil from us and made us saints overnight, we would fall into pride that same morning.
 - The Fathers say that Purity is a lifelong struggle – it's not something that can be obtained quickly
- Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land.
 - Spiritual struggle is little by little, until you inherit the Eternal Life
 - Usually someone who tries to change his whole life in one day, he won't endure and will change back.
 - Like if someone doesn't read the Bible and all of a sudden decides he's going to read 30 chapters every day... within two days, he will be back to 0 chapters.
 - Someone who doesn't pray and all of a sudden decides to pray the 10 hours of the Agpeya every day... within a week, he will be back to not praying.
- And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea, Philistia, and from the desert to the River. For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”
 - If Israel interacts with these nations, it will be a snare for them. It will make them sin against God. God is worried about their salvation.
 - I have to be careful of who my friends are... I should love all people, and serve all people – but it doesn't mean that I get close to all people. I have to be careful who I get close to. I don't have to do what everyone else is doing. Because if I do that, it will be a snare for me and it will make me sin against God.