

Chapter 23

IV. The LAW (*condemnation*), Chapters 19 - 24

C. Social legislation, 21 — 24

The section concerns the basic Civil Laws of Jewish society

Chapter 23...continues to address sundry issues of civil society.

1. Consider that before this law was given to men, the nation of Israel lacked a comprehensive code of this type.
 - While it's true that society in general was guided by law of the culture, this document is by far the most complete and ancient record of civil law in existence.
 - And since it is God's law, it should be no surprise that modern law finds its roots in this law.
 - Although in many ways we have departed from these principles.
 - And as we have departed, we have diminished the value of what's provided.

Verses 1- 9... The theme in this section is in preserving justice

1. Act in accordance with truth and fairness.
 - In repeating the first commandments, the Lord reminds Israel not to bear a false report or perjure oneself.
 - And don't enter into a conspiracy.
 - Moreover, don't follow the masses when they desire to do evil.
 - We don't determine the right path based on it's popularity.
 - In fact, given the sinful nature of flesh, any crowd should be
 - And when judging disputes between men, don't give an unfair advantage to a poor man simply because he is poor.
2. Lost animals are to be returned and animals in distress are to be relieved of the stress.
 - And in the spirit of justice, the Lord layers additional regulation on Israel in vs.4-5
 - They are to act in kindness and mercy for the sake of justice even when doing so means coming to the aid of one who is their enemy.
 - We cannot use as an excuse for not being merciful the fact that someone has made themselves our enemy.
3. Vs.7-9... the Lord once again commands men not to pervert justice by promoting injustice, oppression or by taking innocent life.

Verses 10 - 12...

These verses were a command to give land rest every seventh year

1. This command is explained more fully in Leviticus and repeated in Deuteronomy, and it provides for good husbandry of the land.
 - Crops grow better when the land is given a chance to rest and replace the depleted nutrients in the soil.
 - Crop rotation is still a practice today, though fertilizers have reduced the need
2. In this case, the purpose was also spiritual.
 - Resting on the seventh year is tied to resting on the seventh day.

- The Lord took a Sabbath, as we learned in chapter 20, so He offers Christians the opportunity to enter in His rest by faith.
 - In the meantime, the Jews were to observe a shadow in the form of a once a week rest
 - And the land was to participate in that shadow by observing a rest every 7th year.
3. How would Israel have food in that seventh year?
- As with the manna, the Lord would make a double provision available in the sixth year to hold the nation over through the seventh year.
 - So no farming would be required in the seventh year
 - At a point in Israel's history, the Jews decided to disobey this law and farm continuously through the seventh year.
4. They enjoyed the benefit of having the double sixth year harvest plus still having a seventh year harvest as well.
- This was an act of greed and a disobedient act under the law
 - This practice went on for 490 years in Israel until the Lord decided to take retribution
 - He declared through Jeremiah that the nation would have to repay Him for the 70 sabbaths they skipped over the 490 years.
 - So He told them this...

Jeremiah 25:9–12

'and I will send to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them and make them a horror and a hissing, and an everlasting desolation.

- Then it came to pass in **2 Chronicles 36:11-21**

Verses 13 - 19...

Then we move into basic principles of worship and religious observance.

- The section on worship opens with the third warning against idol worship.
 - & continues to a discussion of 3 mandatory festivals all Jewish men must observe.
1. The requirement was for adult males age 20 and higher.
- The **first feast** was Passover and Unleavened Bread.
 - They must come with a sacrifice for the Passover, not empty handed.
 - The **second feast** was Pentecost or First Fruits or Weeks.
 - The **third is the feast** of Tabernacles, which is at the fall harvest.
2. These three festivals were mandatory for every male Jew.
- It required that they traveled to the Lord's appointed place.
 - First it was Shiloh in the early years of Israel.
 - Later it becomes Jerusalem under David.
3. Why were these three festivals mandated?
- The answer is because of their unique symbolism in God's prophetic plan.
 - The feast of Israel are all **prophetic shadows** of coming events in the program of God's people.
 - **The Passover** and Unleavened Bread picture Christ's sacrifice and the sanctification of the believer made possible by that sacrifice.
 - **The Feast of Pentecost** is a shadow of the coming of the Spirit to God's people and the writing of the Law on their hearts.

- And the *Feast of Booths* is a shadow of the arrival of Christ at His Second Coming and the inauguration of His Kingdom.
4. You may remember at the Transfiguration that the Apostles offered to set up booths for Jesus, Moses and Elijah.
 5. They thought the Kingdom had arrived, and therefore it was time to set up booths.
 - The animals used in the sacrifice must be handled in a certain way.
 6. *Sacrifices* can't be combined with leavened bread.
 - Leaven is a picture of sin.
 - For obvious reasons, God doesn't want a sacrifice for sin mixed with a symbol for sin
 - These laws are intended to reinforce and preserve the pictures God is intent on creating
 - In passing, doesn't it encourage you to see God working so diligently within Israel to preserve these symbols of His Son?
 - It's so clear that the Lord wanted Israel to become a living symbol of things to come
 - By their very lives, the people of Israel were a living, breathing billboard announcing God's plan of redemption through Christ.
 - If you knew how to interpret the signs and symbols embedded within Israel, you could tell the entire Gospel story by these commandments.
 - As Jesus Himself did to the men on the road to Emmaus...**Luke 24:25-27**
 7. *Secondly*, the fat of these animals was to be entirely used up in the sacrifice.
 - Nothing was to be withheld from God.
 - The sacrifice was total.
 - Picturing the way Christ gave up everything for Creation.
 8. *Thirdly*, the Lord receives the first fruits, the best of the harvest.
 - God gets the best, not what we don't want for ourselves.
 - Only after the Lord receives what He deserves do we have our portion.
 - Picturing the way the Lord gave up His Son first.
 - And Christ was resurrected first.
 - Making Him the first born of creation, Paul says
 9. *Finally*, the young goat cannot be boiled in the milk of it's own mother
 - This law is important and is repeated three times in the Law.
 - The reason for its importance is that it was a common practice in Canaanite culture to do this very thing.
 - A young goat was killed and then it's mother was milked.
 - Then the baby goat was boiled in the mother's milk.
 - It was an important part of the Canaanite worship practices.
 - So the Lord forbids it three times because He knew Israel would be living around Canaanites.
 - So He didn't want Israel to engage in any of the Canaanite worship practices.
 - Therefore, He specifically forbids this particular type of worship practice.
 10. The rabbis of Israel took this law to far (which was their practice in general) and set up numerous related restrictions to the point of absurdity.
 - As a result of these pharisaical rules, observant Jews even to this day will not mix meat and dairy products.
 - Cheeseburgers are forbidden to Jews under orthodox rules.

- And orthodox homes will maintain two sets of dishes, pots, and pans.
 - o One set is only used for meat.
 - o One set is used for dairy.
 - o The two are never mixed.
 - o And if they are mixed accidentally, the dish is buried and never used again
- This shows the absurdity of men run away with God's law absent a correct understanding of its purpose in developing holiness.
 - The original purpose was to protect Israel against a Canaanite worship practice
 - It has become a set of unnecessarily restrictive laws that heap burdens on the pious Jew.
- As Jesus said...**Matthew 23:2-4**

Verses 20 - 23...

Finally, the Lord gives Israel promises and instructions concerning their Conquest of the Promised Land.

- The Lord promises to deliver the people into the Land safely by means of His Angel
- 1. This Angel will lead Israel in the desert and into the Land.
 - The Angel will protect Israel.
 - And He will ensure that Israel will enter into the land as promised.
 - In other words, the Angel will deliver them.
- 2. Obedience to this Angel is absolutely imperative
 - In fact, if the nation doesn't obey the Angel fully, if they provoke Him (meaning rebel against Him), the Angel will not forgive them of this sin.
 - And this Angel has the Lord's name in Him.
 - This tells us that the Angel is pre-incarnate Jesus.
 - Jesus is the One in the Godhead to forgive sins and to have the name of God.
- 3. So the Lord has sent His Son to lead Israel into the Promised Land.
 - But if Israel rejects the Son's leadership, they will be judged and not forgiven.
 - We know that in Numbers, this very thing happens
 - The nation is led to the edge of the Promised Land, but the people believe the false report of the spies concerning the Promised Land.
 - And they fail to believe in the Angel of the Lord, Who has led Israel to that moment according to God's promises.
 - So Israel failed to trust in Jesus and failed to believe in God's promises.
 - So that generation of Israel is judged and barred from entering the Land.
 - An entire generation of Israel is barred from forgiveness and from entering the land.
- 4. Hebrews makes the following commentary on that moment...**Heb. 3:12-19**
 - This moment has an interesting parallel to later days
- 5. When Jesus came to Israel in His first coming, He told them that if they blasphemed the Holy Spirit, then that generation could not be saved.
 - And when the nation saw Jesus perform miracles and prove Himself to be the Messiah yet called Him Satan, they committed that sin.