

The Laws of Moses (1450 – 1400 BCE)

Laws of Government

Concerning a King

Respect for Rulers

The Judicial System

Establishment of Courts

Fairness and Justice

Witnesses

Punishment

Readings: Exodus 22:28; 23:1-3, 6-8; Leviticus 19:15; Numbers; Deuteronomy 5:20; 16:18; 17:8-20; 19:15-21; 21:22-23; 24:16-20; 25:1-3

Reflections:

- It is important to note that God front-end loads the Law to address the issue of a king, even though God never wanted them to have a king. This again is another clue that God knew from the beginning of the Law that it would not work. God made direct provision for the ultimate rejection of him as their leader. This reveals God's overarching purposes and his grace and reminds us again that from God's perspective, the story of Israel is the story of "what doesn't work."
- There aren't many laws around the king but they are well worth reflecting on:
 - Must be one of your brothers, no foreigners. Leadership must be rooted in community.
 - Must not use their power or status for personal gain. We see that this will be Solomon's downfall and again God is forewarning the people of what is to come.
 - Must remain submitted to God's truth and law. They are under a higher authority and must not see themselves above the Law.
- These seem like all key points that we should always keep before us as a leadership.

- The command not to curse a ruler is echoed in the New Testament writings. It is a demonstration of submitting to God and his leadership through that person (see 1 Peter 2:13).
- In terms of the courts, it is interesting that if people wanted to appeal a ruling of a judge, they had to go to the Priests. Then the Priest's word was final. It shows God's ultimate authority. This again is echoed in the early Christ Community as Paul encourages the church to help each other make tough decisions and not fight it out in the courts.
- It is significant to note that the powerless and disadvantaged are specifically highlighted with the command to make sure they receive justice. This passage again shows God's heart for the alien, fatherless and widow. God expected the people to remember what it was like to be slaves and to in turn express compassion to those who are vulnerable. This is what he expects Christ-followers to do as well. They were slaves to sin and objects of wrath but because of his great mercy have become his children. Therefore, they are to show this same great mercy and compassion to those who are the weakest and the neediest.
- In the section on false charges it is one of the places the principle of the Law and justice is clearly defined as "eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, and life for life." This reminds us that the Law is based on justice, punishment and fear. In Christ, grace is based on forgiveness, love and reconciliation. Again, thank God for Jesus!
- Punishment? Each person stands responsible for their own sin although sin has a way of passing through the generations.
- Notice the reference to forty lashes. This will become a bench mark. You could be lashed multiple times or put to death if you were only lashed thirty-nine times. But if you were lashed the fortieth time then you were done and could not be put to death because that was considered completion of your punishment for your crime. So Paul is always beaten with forty lashes minus one. It really shows the sickness of the Law and how it makes people think in completely the wrong direction.
- The command about hanging a person on a tree was very similar in concept to crucifixion. Both were forms of public execution. Again, we see the basis for how they responded to Jesus and his execution here in this passage. Jesus was under a curse in his crucifixion. He was cursed and made sin that we may have all curses, punishment and sin removed from us. Again, praise God for the mercy we have in Christ.