
Day 64 – March 5

The Laws of Moses (1450 – 1400 BCE)

General Welfare Laws

Requirements for Benevolence

Duties of Respect and Support

Rules of Warfare

Preparation for Battles

Rules of Siege

Camp Regulations

Readings: *Exodus 21:17; 22:21-24; 23:4-5, 9; Leviticus 19:3, 9-10, 14, 16-18, 32-34; 20:9; 23:22; 24:22; Deuteronomy 5:16, 21; 20:1-20; 21:18-21; 22:1-4, 6-7; 23:9-14; 24-25; 24:19-22; 25:4, 35-38*

Reflections:

- This grouping of laws focused on benevolence shows most clearly the radical nature of God's compassion for the weak and vulnerable. The huge concern for the poor, the needy, even for little birds who need help, reveals an intentional cultivation of people having hearts of mercy and compassion. Again the direct connection is for Israel to remember they were once slaves and equally vulnerable and needy. Similarly, Christ followers are to remember what it was like to be lost, slaves to sin, and strangers to God so that we will always have compassion for those who are broken.
- These laws show radical equality, radical mercy, even for animals in need. Again this is radical within ancient law. It is also interesting how God promises a long life if you help a mother bird. It shows again the interconnection from God's perspective between humanity and creation.
- The teaching about preparation for warfare is fascinating. There was no concern about not having enough people in the army because the battle was always God's battle to win. It was never about having numbers of men but only being in league with God and his power. It allowed them to send everyone home who wanted to go home for any reason. It reminds us that God doesn't need people in mass numbers. He simply needs those whose hearts are fully devoted. Jesus turned away people in a similar fashion. He was not gathering forces to fight for an earthly kingdom, but he was gathering followers

to be agents of peace and reconciliation for a spiritual kingdom. So in a sense, the heart of this is similar.

- The laws of warfare follow the pattern we will see in Joshua. As Christ-followers we can be grateful we are under the teachings of Jesus. Complete extermination was the standing marching order. These cultures were incredibly sick with human sacrifice, child sacrifice and sexual abuse. In the future Israel will not follow this command of God but will allow these people to live. In turn, Israel will continually break their covenant relationship with God and get involved in the worship of the pagan gods of these people. They will continually turn away from God and be tempted into all the prostitution and sexual orgies of these people. So although it sounds terrible, God's plan was what was practically needed. But it was still second best. It again shows what doesn't work. All of this is a part of God setting up the ultimate conclusion to the story of Israel: Nothing external can change the human heart. It has to change from the inside out. No laws, no attempt to purify your environment, no initiative to find the perfect king or leader will ultimately change our lives. The human heart must change from the inside out if people are going to truly follow God.