

# The Book of the Covenant: A Pierced Ear, A Pierced Heart, and Loving Master

10.17.21

Message 30

Exodus 21:1–11 (CSB)

“These are the ordinances that you are to set before them:

## **LAWS ABOUT SLAVES**

<sup>2</sup>“When you buy a Hebrew slave, he is to serve for six years; then in the seventh he is to leave as a free man without paying anything. <sup>3</sup>If he arrives alone, he is to leave alone; if he arrives with a wife, his wife is to leave with him. <sup>4</sup>If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children belong to her master, and the man must leave alone.

<sup>5</sup>“But if the slave declares, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I do not want to leave as a free man,’ <sup>6</sup>his master is to bring him to the judges and then bring him to the door or doorpost. His master will pierce his ear with an awl, and he will serve his master for life.

<sup>7</sup>“When a man sells his daughter as a concubine, she is not to leave as the male slaves do. <sup>8</sup>If she is displeasing to her master, who chose her for himself, then he must let her be redeemed. He has no right to sell her to foreigners because he has acted treacherously toward her. <sup>9</sup>Or if he chooses her for his son, he must deal with her according to the customary treatment of daughters. <sup>10</sup>If he takes an additional wife, he must not reduce the food, clothing, or marital rights of the first wife. <sup>11</sup>And if he does not do these three things for her, she may leave free of charge, without any payment.

1. The Book of the Covenant showed the Israelites how the law applied to daily life<sup>1</sup>.

A. The first 10 Commandments were written on stone by the hand of God.

1. This section was told by God, to Moses and Moses wrote it down (Exodus 24:4).

2. The following sections focus on the application of the Ten Words to everyday life.

a. **What would it look like to practice God's holy law amid unholy situations?**

b. This is what that looks like.

B. These following few chapters are much like case law.

1. Consider we teach law today:

2. Lawyers are taught by reading the letter of the law and then through case studies that illustrate how the laws were applied.

3. This section acts much like a case study.

4. **These examples help express God's holiness in ordinary life.**

C. I completely understand why most of us struggle with these passages.

1. **The mere fact that it is in the Bible means that it merits our attention. But the Book of the Covenant also teaches us how to live for God day by day. First God gave Israel his moral law in the form of the Ten Commandments. Then he showed them how to apply his law in various life situations. This is where the Book of the Covenant comes in. It is "an application of the Decalogue to the specific social context of Israel as a nation."**<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 698.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 697.

2. Today, we look at a larger than usual passage.

a. What I hope to demonstrate is how radical some of these laws were in that day and time.

b. And I hope to demonstrate that radical law led to the radical love of Jesus.

## 2. Slavery is the first situation God addresses in the Book of the Covenant.

A. As we read this section, we should notice that it begins the same way as the giving of the 10 Words.

1. Exodus 20 opens with God reminding Israel that they had been slaves in Egypt.

2. It wasn't but 50 days before that Israel had been slaves.

3. But we all quickly forget where we have come from.

4. Israel was no exception.

B. God knows the human tendencies to forget and to oppress.

1. God knew that these former slaves would immediately subject their own and others to slavery.

a. For ten generations, slavery was their lineage.

b. Slaves do what slaves know best: they perpetuated slavery.

c. Ever since sin entered humanity, humanity has engaged in slavery.

d. **Sin knows nothing of freedom, only slavery**; therefore it comes naturally for sinful people to subject other people to slavery.

e. **The only thing that can break the power and prevalence of slavery is the blood of Jesus.**

2. Slavery happened for numerous reasons in the ancient world.

- a. But the main reason in Jewish society seems to be payment of debt or as a way of meeting personal needs.
- b. When a person could not pay back a debt, they could sell themselves or their children (usually daughter) to the person they borrowed money from.
- c. Sometimes, a poor person would sell themselves to meet their needs (much like an indentured servant).
- d. It would be helpful for us to not picture American slavery when we read about slavery in Scripture or in ancient times.

### 3. We must notice that slavery in Israel is designed to be very different.

#### A. A Hebrew could only "sell" themselves for six years.

- 1. The seventh year was to be a year of release, or Sabbath.
- 2. God placed this rhythm throughout His created order:
  - a. His people were to rest on the 7<sup>th</sup> day.
  - b. His people were to release debts and slaves in the 7<sup>th</sup> year.
  - c. Every 50<sup>th</sup> year was a year of Jubilee, which canceled all debts and returned family property back to the family.
  - d. Never again did God want His people to be known as slaves.
- 3. A person's financial position or personal freedom did not diminish their access to the Covenant.
  - a. They were still God's children.
  - b. They were still heirs of the Promise.
  - c. They were still under the protection of God.
  - d. Therefore, they could not be forced to serve forever, but only for a season.

B. Notice also, that the treatment of the master to the slave was to be of high character.

Exodus 21:5–6 (CSB)

<sup>5</sup>“But if the slave declares, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I do not want to leave as a free man,’ <sup>6</sup>his master is to bring him to the judges and then bring him to the door or doorpost. His master will pierce his ear with an awl, and he will serve his master for life.

1. *How good would a master have to treat his slave that the slave would be willing to stay?*

a. How loving would this master have to be that someone would willingly lay down their rights in order to stay with the master?

b. The Apostle Paul hints at this in his teachings to masters of slaves in Ephesians and Colossians.

c. Paul didn’t demand that they release their slaves, but he did demand that the masters be so Christlike that the slave would willingly love and serve their master.

2. But what about the pierced ear part?

a. **The attachment to the doorpost indicated that the slave had become a member of the household.**<sup>3</sup>

b. According to many of the scholars I consulted, It seems that this may not be the doorpost of the home but possibly to the tabernacle.

1. This is evidenced by the presence of the witness.

2. It is also evidenced in the Hebrew translation that says “bring him to God” instead of judges.

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<sup>3</sup> Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus*, ed. H. Wayne House and William D. Barrick, vol. 2, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 77.

3. The way to bring someone to God would be by bringing them to the Tabernacle, where God chose to dwell.

c. The pierced ear was a renunciation of freedom, and a holy oath to love and follow the master the rest of his days.

3. There is incredible symbolism here:

The ear is the most important part of a servant's body. He has to hear before he can obey. By having his ear pierced, therefore, the servant was making a public commitment to do what his master said. The doorpost was also symbolic. Not only did it serve as a place for driving the awl, but it also showed that the servant was now attached to his master's household. The doorpost was marked with the blood of a covenant between master and slave.<sup>4</sup>

a. Picture this: Possibly at the tabernacle, there was a doorpost or a door.

b. And on that doorpost, there were all of these small-holes.

c. When people walked by, they saw all the piercings, the expressions of someone who laid their life down for their master.

d. Expressions of love, of commitment, of gratitude, of thankfulness.

1. What looked like slavery to some, felt like freedom to others.

2. When the person walked into town, with his ear pierced and the master's ring put in there, they happily announced that being a slave to a loving master is better than freedom to sin.

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<sup>4</sup> Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 705.

C. The blood of the pierced ear harkened back to another experience:

1. Just a couple months before, the blood of lambs was splattered on the DOORPOSTS in Egypt.
2. The blood declared Israel's freedom from slavery to Egypt.
3. Listen to this:

Blood on the doorframe is one of the most iconic images of this transfer from slavery into following a new Master in freedom. The blood of the Messiah from his pierced flesh on the cross, the blood of the Passover lamb on the lintels, and the blood of the slave who for love agrees to serve his master willingly.<sup>5</sup>

4. King David proclaims this significance.

A. In Psalm 40:6, the Hebrew expression is: You pierced my ears to listen.

Psalm 40:6–8 (CSB)

<sup>6</sup>You do not delight in sacrifice and offering;

you open my ears to listen.

You do not ask for a whole burnt offering or a sin offering.

<sup>7</sup>Then I said, "See, I have come;

in the scroll it is written about me.

<sup>8</sup>I delight to do your will, my God,

and your instruction is deep within me."

1. David proclaims that God desires more from us than offering the right sacrifice at the right time.
2. Instead, God desires our whole life, given to Him as He is the loving Master and we are the thankful slave.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.oneforisrael.org/bible-teachings/why-did-bondslaves-have-their-ear-pierced/>

B. This Psalm takes on a greater significance when understood as a prophecy of Jesus.

1. David, acting prophetically, foretells of what Jesus would do.
2. Jesus offered Himself to the will of the Father, accepting the piercing that marked Him as belonging to the Father.

C. This understanding is expressed by Paul in Philippians 2:5–11 (CSB)

<sup>5</sup>Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus,

<sup>6</sup>who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. <sup>7</sup>Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a **servant**, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, <sup>8</sup>he humbled himself by becoming obedient

to the point of death— even to death on a cross. <sup>9</sup>For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow— in heaven and on earth and under the earth— <sup>11</sup>and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1. Jesus assumed the form of a servant (the Greek word is slave).
2. He laid down His will, His rights, and His life to the Will of His loving Father.
3. But He didn't have his ear pierced, but His heart.
4. He was willing to do this because He knew that His Father would not leave Him in death but would raise Him to life.

D. When we give our lives to Jesus, we are not entrusting them into the hands of a despot, a tyrant, or a revengeful God.

1. When I gave my life to Jesus, I declared that serving Jesus was better than serving the devil, or myself, or my flesh.
2. Brothers and Sisters, ours is not a Gospel of freedom to self but a freedom to serve God with ALL our Hearts, Minds, and Souls.



### 3. What sort of love has thus saved us?

Closing: I recently read a story that, although it may be fiction, reflects the kind of love we are talking about here.

A. The story is told of a visit Abraham Lincoln once made to a slave auction, where he was appalled to see the buying and selling of human beings:

His heart was especially drawn to a young woman on the block whose story seemed to be told in her eyes. She looked with hatred and contempt on everyone around her. She had been used and abused all her life, and this time was but one more cruel humiliation. The bidding began, and Lincoln offered a bid. As other amounts were bid, he counter-bid with larger amounts until he won. When he paid the auctioneer the money and took title to the young woman, she stared at him with vicious contempt. She asked him what he was going to do next with her, and he said, "I'm going to set you free."

"Free?" she asked. "Free for what?"

"Just free," Lincoln answered. "Completely free."

"Free to do whatever I want to do?"

"Yes," he said. "Free to do whatever you want to do."

"Free to say whatever I want to say?"

"Yes, free to say whatever you want to say."

"Free to go wherever I want to go?" she added with skepticism. Lincoln answered, "You are free to go anywhere you want to go."

"Then I'm going with you!" she said with a smile.<sup>6</sup>

B. Some of you came to Jesus out of fear.

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<sup>6</sup> Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, [\*Exodus: Saved for God's Glory\*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 707.

1. You feared going to hell.
  - a. You feared where life was taking you.
  - b. You feared what might be on the other side of death.
  - c. Just as people sold themselves into slavery in ancient times to escape bad and desperate situations, maybe you gave your life to Jesus out of desperation and despair.

**2. But now that you have been with Jesus a little while, you realized that even though you came in desperation you have stayed for the love.**

C. Today, the ancient passage of Exodus 21 invites us to give our lives, again, to Jesus.

1. Perhaps, you don't love Jesus as deeply as you want.
2. Perhaps, you have never given your life to Jesus.
  - a. You are giving him the 6-years, but not the lifetime.
  - b. You are holding out for something better where you are the boss.
3. Today, I invite all of us to gather around the front and give our lives to Jesus.
  - a. We hold nothing back.
  - b. We keep nothing for ourselves.
  - c. We give Jesus more than our ears, but we give Him our lives.

4. The Apostle Paul in Galatians 6:17 wrote:

**Galatians 6:17 (CSB)**

<sup>17</sup>From now on, let no one cause me trouble, because I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

- a. The word "marks" is a word to describe a piercing, scar, or brand that signifies ownership.

b. Paul was proud that his life and body displayed who he served.

c. May our lives bear the marks of a life fully devoted to Jesus.

## I Surrender All

All to Jesus, I surrender  
All to Thee I freely give  
I will ever love and trust You  
In Your presence daily live

I surrender all, I surrender all  
All to Thee, my blessed Savior  
I surrender all

All to Jesus, I surrender  
Lord, I give myself to Thee  
Fill me with Your love and power  
Let Your blessing fall on me

I surrender all, I surrender all  
All to Thee, my blessed Savior  
I surrender all

All to Jesus I surrender  
Now I feel the sacred flame  
O the joy of full salvation  
Glory, glory, to Your name

I surrender all, I surrender all  
All to Thee, my blessed Savior  
I surrender all (I surrender all)  
I surrender all, I surrender all  
All to Thee, my blessed Savior  
I surrender all (all to Thee, my blessed)

All to Thee, my blessed Savior  
I surrender all

Check out this resource:

<https://www.oneforisrael.org/bible-teachings/why-did-bondslaves-have-their-ear-pierced/>

**8.55 στίγμα<sup>a</sup>, τος** *n*: a permanent mark or scar on the body, especially the type of ‘brand’ used to mark ownership of slaves—‘scar, brand.’ ἐγὼ γὰρ τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματί μου βαστάζω ‘for I bear the marks of Jesus in my body’ Ga 6:17. In Ga 6:17 Paul is most likely alluding to scars resulting from wounds received in the service of Jesus, but στίγμα may also imply ownership and hence suggest that such scars served as brands (see 8.56). For other interpretations of στίγμα in Ga 6:17, see 33.481 and 90.84.

**8.56 τύπος<sup>a</sup>, ου** *m*: a visible impression or trace made as the result of a blow or pressure—‘scar, wound.’ ἐὰν μὴ ἴδω ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν αὐτοῦ τὸν τύπον τῶν ἥλων ‘if I do not see the scars of the nails in his hands’ Jn 20:25.

Though both στίγμα<sup>a</sup> (8.55) and τύπος<sup>a</sup> may mean scars, there are significant differences in meaning. στίγμα<sup>a</sup> bears the connotation of brand or mark of ownership, while τύπος<sup>a</sup> indicates a wound or scar resulting from the shape and form of some object, for example, nails in the case of Jn 20:25.<sup>7</sup>

If a servant loves a master who takes care of him and treats him like a friend, imagine what a servant would do for a master who saved him, and at the cost of his own life! We are loved by such a Master. Why would we ever want to serve anyone else, least of all ourselves? What we ought to do is give ourselves entirely to his service. We ought to make a public declaration of our allegiance to Christ. We ought to listen to his Word and obey his voice. We ought to say, “I love my Master, and I want my heart to be bound to him forever.” **Service to such a gracious master is not bondage but freedom.** As Ambrose rightly said, “That man is truly free ... who is entirely God’s.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, [\*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains\*](#) (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 100.

<sup>8</sup> Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, [\*Exodus: Saved for God’s Glory\*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 706–707.