

God's people delivered by the blood of a lamb

- Moses prepared
- Conflicts and judgement
- Deliverance and singing
- To Sinai
- Covenant and covenant-law

In the Book of Exodus we have the story of how the people of God were delivered by the blood of a lamb. They were experiencing terrible persecution and slavery, but God prepared Moses to be a deliverer¹. After an initial period of conflict with Pharaoh² there came a time when Pharaoh was confronted by nine powerful judgements from God³, but it was a tenth judgement, the battle over the 'firstborn son', that led to the redemption of Israel by the blood of a lamb⁴. They marched out of Egypt singing a song of triumph⁵.

The people travel to Sinai¹, and then the narratives record no further travelling until Numbers 10:11. The whole of Exodus 19:1 to Numbers 10:10 finds its setting at Mount Sinai.

After the forming of a covenant between God and Israel¹, Moses is to be given a copy of the covenant-law². God says 'Come up to me on the mountain'³. The people are at the foot of the mountain. The elders are part-way up the mountain. Moses and Joshua go yet higher⁴, and Moses alone goes into the cloud at the top of the mountain⁵. For the first time, 'Moses entered the midst of the cloud'. It was the highest privilege of all, and was experienced by Moses alone. While Moses is in the thick cloud of the presence of God, he is given instructions concerning 'the tabernacle'.

We come now to a very vital question: **is the Christian under the Mosaic law?** It is a question often approached in a very confusing way. What does 'the law of God' mean? Do you use that phrase to mean 'principles of righteousness'? A Christian most certainly keeps principles of righteousness! Jesus and His apostles have a lot to say to Christians about living a godly life. Much of the New Testament is about living a godly life for God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But actually this is not the meaning of the phrase 'the law' in the vast majority of times when it is used in the Bible. 'The law of God' is **everything that God gave to the nation of Israel at the time of Moses**. It generally means 'the Mosaic system'. In that sense of the term, the Christian is **not** under the law. He or she walks in the Spirit and by walking in the Spirit they fulfil the Mosaic law, indirectly. The Christian even goes beyond and higher than the Ten Commandments, by walking in the Spirit under the explicit instruction of Jesus and His apostles, whose teachings we find in the New Testament.

In Exodus 21–40, we have a lot of legislation. The Christian fulfils it all by walking in the Spirit. Exodus 21–24 are perhaps heavy reading for some people. (On a first reading, you can skip it if you like, and go straight to the tabernacle chapters! They begin in my Part 39. Or you might want to read first the amazing story of Moses' praying, it is found in Parts 50–60.)

¹ Exodus 1-4

² 5:1 – 7:7

³ 7:8 – 10:29

⁴ Exodus 11-

14

⁵ 15:1-21

¹ 15:22-18:27

¹ 19:1-24:11

² 24:12

³ 24:12

⁴ 24:13

⁵ 24:18

Is the Christian under the Mosaic law?

- Certainly a godly life
- But not under the Mosaic system
- Walks by the spirit – a higher standard than the commandments of Moses
- Exodus contains a lot of legislation – not easy reading!

• For the Christian – abolished – and fulfilled in another way

The law distinguishes between the main ‘Ten Commandments’ and the ‘judgements’. Exodus 21 is the commencement of particular decisions or judgements about particular cases. It is this distinction that was in Paul’s mind when he said the law is abolished ‘with its ordinances’¹. That was Paul’s way of emphasizing that the entire Mosaic law has been abolished and fulfilled in another way than by being directly under it.

¹ Ephesians 2:15

Five different structures in which the laws are stated

Structure 1
A ‘when/then’ regulation

The different sections of law in 21:2–23:19 are marked out partly by the form of the command, and partly by subject-matter. There are at least five different ways in which the laws are stated. We may look at the different sentence-structures and survey the laws between 21:2–23:19 at the same time.

1. Some of these laws are what I may call a ‘when/then’ **regulation**. There are two different words for ‘if’ in these regulations. The Revised Standard Version of the Bible (RSV) often, but not always, translates one by ‘When’ and the other by ‘If’. This is very helpful. The word ‘when’ (Hebrew *ki*) marks out small units of the law. I may number it ‘Structure 1’.

Structure 2
Subsidiary matters

2. **The word ‘if’ (Hebrew ‘im) marks out subsidiary matters within a larger unit.** I may number it ‘Structure 2’. In Exodus 21:2–11 it may be easily seen how ‘when’ marks out the unit, but ‘if’ marks out minor matters within the unit.

	Ref	Structure
‘When you buy a Hebrew servant...’	21:2–6	1
‘If he comes by himself...’	21:3a	2
‘If he is married ...’	21:3b	2
‘If his owner gives him a wife’	21:4	2
‘But if the servant says ...’	21:5–6	2
‘And when a man sells his daughter ...’	21:7–11	1
‘If she does not please ...’	21:8	2
‘And if he marries her to his son ...’	21:9	2
‘If he takes another wife ...’	21:10	2
‘And if he does not do these three things...’	21:11	2

We shall see something similar in Exodus 21:18–27 and Exodus 21:28–36.

Structure 3
‘The-someone-doing-something’ regulation

3. **Another form of law may be called ‘the-someone-doing-something’ regulation.** This comes first in Exodus 21:12–17. The Hebrew has a participle, ‘The one smiting ...’, and so on. Each of these laws have opening words which follow this particular style. So I call it the ‘the-someone-doing-something’ form of regulation. We may number it ‘Structure 3’.

	Ref	Structure
‘The one smiting a man...’	21:12–14	3
‘The one smiting his father or mother...’	21:15	3
‘The one stealing ...’	21:16	3
‘The one cursing’	21:17	3

In Exodus 21:18, the form changes back to the ‘When/Then’ style. There are distinct units of subject-matter 21:18–27 (quarrels), 28–36 (damage done by animals); 22:1–15 (damage to the property of others), 16–17 (seduction).

Quarrels	Ref	Structure
‘When men quarrel ...’	21:18–19	1
‘When a man strikes a slave ...’	21:20–21	1
‘When men strive together. ...’	21:22–25	1
‘When a man strikes the eye ...’	21:26–27	1

Damage done by Animals	Ref	Structure
'When an ox gores a ...'	21:28–32	1
'When a man leaves a pit open ...'	21:33–34	1
'When one man's ox hurts another's ...'	21:35–36	1

Damage done to the Property of Others	Ref	Structure
When a man steals an ox ...'	22:1–4	1
'When a man causes a field... to be grazed ...'	22:5	1
'When fire breaks out...'	22:6	1
'When a man delivers money ...'	22:7–9	1
'When a man delivers an ass ...'	22:10–13	1
'When a man borrows anything ...'	22:14–15	1

Seduction	Ref	Structure
'When a man entices a girl ...'	22:16–17	1

Structure 4
Mixed forms
determined by
content and
subject matter

4. Often a unit is defined more by subject-matter than by sentence- structure. At such a point the structures may vary. In 22:18–20 there come three short and sharp condemnations. The first of them ('You shall not permit a sorceress to live' [22:18]) has a straightforward negative command, 'You shall not. . .'. This is the same style that was used in eight of the ten commandments. We may number it 'Structure 4'. So 22:18–20 has mixed forms and is defined by content more than by structure.

	Ref	Structure
'You shall not permit a sorceress to live'	22:18	4
'Every person lying with an animal shall surely be put to death'	22:19	3
'The one sacrificing to any god, save to Yahweh only, shall be utterly destroyed'	22:20	3

Structure 5
Positive
commands

Similarly the rulings throughout 22:21–23:19 vary in structure and are defined more by content. We shall find an additional kind of structure in it, one where there is a straightforward positive command, like the structure of the fourth and fifth commandments. I may number it 'Structure 5'. Distinct units of subject- matter come in 22:21–27, 28–3 1; 23:1–9, 10–19.

Damage done to the Property of Others	Ref	Structure
'A sojourner you shall not wrong . . .'	22:21	4
'A widow ... you shall not afflict . . .'	22:22-24	4
'If you lend silver . . .'	22:25	2
'If you take a pledge . . .'	22:26-27	2
'God you shall not curse . . .'	22:28	4
'Fullness ... you shall not delay . . .'	22:29-30	4
'Torn flesh... you shall not eat . . .'	22:31	4
'You shall not spread a false report . . .'	23:1	4
'A multitude you shall not follow . . .'	23:2	4
'The poor you shall not favour . . .'	23:3	4
'When you meet your enemy's ox . . .'	23:4	1
'When you see . . .'	23:5	1
'You shall not twist the case . . .'	23:6	4
'A matter that is false, keep away . . .'	23:7	5
'A bribe you shall not take . . .'	23:8	4
'A stranger you shall not oppress . . .'	23:9	4
'Six years you shall sow . . .'	23:10-12	5
The name ... you shall not mention. . .'	23:13	4
'Three times you shall keep a feast . . .'	23:14–17	5
'You shall not offer blood . . .'	23:18	4
'The firstfruits you shall ...'	23:19a	5
'You shall not boil a kid . . .'	23:19b	4

Structure number 2 always denotes something **subsidiary**. This means that Exodus 22:25–27 still has widows in mind and consists of subsidiary regulations under the heading of 22:22–24.

• *More merciful than the laws of surrounding lands*



• *Christians fulfil by walking in the Spirit and going beyond*

'A widow ... you shall not afflict . . . '	22:22-24	4
'If you lend silver . . . '	22:25	2
'If you take a pledge . . . '	22:26-27	2

These regulations were given by God to Moses while Moses was on Mount Sinai. They were more merciful than the laws of surrounding lands. The Christian fulfils them not by being literally under them, but by walking in the Holy Spirit and going beyond them.¹

Note

1. A much fuller exposition of Exodus 19–24 is to be found in my *Applying God's Law* (Paternoster, 1999).

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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