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One of the questions we always ask is “What is God’s will for my life?” “What does God want me to do?” “How do I discover God’s will for my life?” Now, the most basic answer to this question is that God wants you to follow His revealed will. When I speak of the revealed will of God I am, of course, speaking of special revelation. Special revelation is the words of God. When God has verbally spoken into history revealing His will. That is the revealed will of God. We are interested in God’s revealed will which is captured in the word of God and applies to your dispensation. So, of course, this requires observing God’s word, interpreting God’s word, and making application to our lives (the three aspects of methodical Bible study). Since we live in the Church age or dispensation of the Church the core of our investigation into God’s will for our lives is found in the NT epistles. Of course, the NT authors assume we already have a good grasp of the OT. There is an order to studying the Bible and it is chronological. It is senseless to start with the gospel and Jesus when the Holy Spirit started with God, man and sin. So, the word of God builds precept on precept from first things (Genesis) to last things (Revelation). The Holy Spirit is a perfect teacher and he laid things down in the proper order of knowing things so that when we get to the gospel and Jesus we understand it in context of God’s overarching plan. Ok, but our concern is knowing the will of God for our lives and the proper place to start for us is with His revealed will captured in the word of God in the NT epistles (background study would be necessary to provide a context for understanding it). So, when you’re in doubt about what God wants you to do, first check the revealed will of God and see if you are following that. Some people only pray and pray and pray that God would reveal His will to them for their life but they never consult the Scriptures. Prayer is just talking to God. Prayer is a one-sided conversation. It’s flapping one’s mouth so it’s hard to listen when

one is talking. Studying the word of God is listening to God. God speaks verbally through His word. Now, it's fine to pray as you study Scripture, indeed I recommend it heartily. The Psalmist prayed, "Open my eyes Lord that I may behold wonderful things from thy Law" (Ps 119:18) and it is a wise thing to pray before we study and as we study that God would open our eyes to see the wonders of God. But praying alone without consulting the word of God is an almost fruitless endeavor because it is a one-sided conversation. What most of us need is more time listening to God and less time talking to Him (I'm not down-playing prayer, it is vital). But we are never told that the way to discover God's will is simply by prayer. So, here is the thing to do. First, check the revealed will of God in the Scriptures. Nine times out of ten when someone asks me how to know God's will for their life they aren't even following God's revealed will for their life. But, if you're following that, relax, don't get all bent out of shape concerning the unrevealed will of God for your life. It is really quite simple, follow the revealed will of God for your life and the unrevealed will of God for your life will work itself out. In the OT, God said it very simply,

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

As long as you are trusting Him with all your heart and acknowledging Him in all your ways, making a conscious effort to follow His revealed will in all your ways then He's going to make your paths straight. God has already provided for and revealed all that is necessary for a life of godliness (2 Pet 1:3). No more divine revelation is necessary for you to be godly so there is no need to worry, indeed, worry would be contrary to God's will which is to "Cast all your anxieties upon Him, because He cares for you" (1 Pt 5:7).

Now, if you were an Israelite living among Moses, Aaron and the Exodus generation, long ago in the 15th century and you wanted to know "What is God's will for my life?" "What does God want me to do?" where would you go to find out? You would consult the Mosaic Law, the revealed will of God. The Ten Words or Ten Commandments are the basis of this legal system upon which were added some 603 laws during the wilderness wanderings. His revealed will for the individual Israelite and for the nation is expressed in this law. Violation of these laws had consequences in time such as divine

discipline and the sin unto death and for continued violation there were consequences for the future such as disinheritance. So, the majority of God's will for the Israelite was found right here in the law. What does God want me to do? What is God's will for my life?" To study and obey His commandments. This is why Joshua was told,

Joshua 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

Listening to the word of God is the essential ingredient in knowing God's will for your life. And it's easier to just lay in bed and pray that God would show us His will than it is to break out the word of God and study it and ask your pastor-teacher questions so you can understand. I call people every week to get help. We're here to learn about God and grow together.

So, this is what we are studying, the revealed will of God for the individual Israelite and the nation. The laws that follow are not casuistic laws like the one's we've been studying but they are apodictic laws like the Ten Commandments. Apodictic laws merely give a positive or negative command. "Honor your father and your mother" or "You shall not murder". Little explanation is given. Most of these laws stem from one of the Ten Commandments.

IX. The Ordinance Regarding the Seducer (22:16-17)

Exodus 22:16 "If a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged, and lies with her, he must pay a dowry for her *to be his wife*.

¹⁷ "If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the dowry for virgins.

This ordinance relates to the sixth commandment "You shall not commit adultery". **If a man**, and it is assumed by the text that he is not married, **seduces**, that is, persuades in some manner, **a virgin**, she has not had sexual intercourse with any man, and she **is not engaged**, for if she was the law would be different, **and lies with her, he must pay a dowry for her to be his wife**. The prospective husband would pay the parents of the bride a

dowry but if a man seduced a virgin who was not engaged then this would greatly de-value the girl and so the seducer **must pay** the **dowry** price in full. If the man is found fit then the girl's father may give her to him for the **dowry** price. However, if he is found **unfit, and her father absolutely refuses to give her to him for these reasons, then, he shall pay money equal to the dowry for virgins**, that is, he has to pay the dowry anyway as a fine. This would be his punishment.ⁱ

PRINCIPLE: Sex outside of marriage is a violation of God's purpose for sex. God made sex for married people who have entered into a contract. What if a boy and girl have sex before marriage? Should they marry????? The text seems to say "Yes". Why? Because the two have become one flesh (Gen 2:24). Further, if they do not marry then it will make sexual satisfaction more difficult with their spouse in the future (Prov 5:1ff) and one of God's purposes for sex is pleasure, enjoyment of one another.

X. The Ordinances Regarding Idolatrous Customs (22:18-20)

These three ordinances relate to the first commandment forbidding idolatry (20:3-6). All were punishable by capital punishment.

A. Sorcery (22:18)

Exodus 22:18 "You shall not allow a sorceress to live.

Verse 18 **You shall not allow a sorceress to live.** Sorcery was a capital offense not to be taken lightly because it is an attempt to discover God's will improperly or prevail over God's sovereignty. A **sorceress** was a woman who practiced magic. Magic was closely associated with idolatry in ancient religious practices as it still is in religions today (e.g. Roman Catholicism). In the ancient world people made a distinction between black magic and white magic. Black magic was outlawed because it was meant to cause harm to others but white magic was permitted. The Bible makes no distinction between black and white magic. All magic is prohibited. "Every magical act...is forbidden, since it constitutes an attempt to prevail over the will of God, who alone has dominion over the world."ⁱⁱ "The sorceress only is mentioned here, and not the sorcerer, because women were particularly associated with magical practices, and the Bible speaks of things as they are.

But there can be no doubt that the Torah does not intend to differentiate between man and woman in this regard.”ⁱⁱⁱ

PRINCIPLE: Dabbling in magic is not okay. It should not be experimented with. It is not just a “phase” all teens go through. It is dangerous. Our culture has introduced the concept of white and black magic to our children through Disney movies like “The Little Mermaid”, “Aladdin”, “Snow White and the Seven Dwarves”. Of course, there are more oblate instances such as ‘Harry Potter’. One movie in this series is called “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone” Our culture takes the same stance as ancient paganism, that white magic is good and black magic is evil and uses these finely made movies to introduce this distinction to our children. The Bible never permits a distinction between white and black magic. None of these movies is ‘okay’. They are pagan devices used to introduce our children to occultism, magic and sorcery on a basic level. They provide the groundwork upon which teens and adults often develop deeper commitments to occultism, drug use and demonism. If we think they are okay then we have been deceived. Little Mermaid is not okay, Harry Potter is not okay. It doesn’t matter which Testament of the Bible, both OT and NT condemn it equally. The OT penalty for sorcery was capital punishment.

The sorcerers of Pharaoh (Exod 7:11). Also condemned in Dt 18:10. It is considered evil and provokes the Lord to anger (2 Chron 33:6). It cannot overrule the power of God (Isa 47:9, 12). Israel was not to listen to them but to the word of God (Jer 27:9). The gentile nations had their sorcerers (Exod 7:11; Dan 2:2). Will be judged (Mal 3:5). A deed of the flesh (Gal 5:20). Something the earth-dwellers will not repent of in the Tribulation (Rev 9:21). Closely associated with drug use which leads to deception (Rev 9:23). Origin of 'assassin' in Islam and the story of the hashayim. Believer's whose lives are characterized by sorcery will be disinherited in the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21:8; 22:15).

B. Bestiality (22:19)

Exodus 22:19 "Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death.

Verse 19, it is a capital offense to have sexual intercourse with any **animal**. Sex with animals was something attributed to the gods in pagan mythologies such as the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic (Flood Story). Since their gods did it pagan religions often practiced it in connection with magic. Obviously it has a close connection with idolatry. Typically pagan religions permitted sex with certain animals and prohibited it with others. Buddhist pictographs often portray males having sex with animals. The Bible does not permit it. It is an abomination punishable by **death**. In America it is fairly uncommon or uncommonly reported. More common in males than females. More common in children than adults. More common in an agricultural setting rather than cities. Illegal in most states.

C. **Sacrifice to Idols (22:20)**

Exodus 22:20 "He who sacrifices to any god, other than to the LORD alone, shall be utterly destroyed.

Obviously since there is but one God and the first commandment forbade any worship of any other so-called **god**. **YHWH alone** is to be sacrificed to and worshipped. The one who commits idolatry **shall be utterly destroyed**, that is, capitally punished.

PRINCIPLE: Guard yourselves against idols (1 John 5:21). Your body and its instruments should be offered to God as living sacrifices and not to any other god (Rom 6:12-13; 12:1)

XI. **The Ordinances Regarding the Poor (22:21-27)**

This section is meant to show that even though the practices of strangers were forbidden they themselves were not to be mistreated. The Bible teaches that we are to 'love the sinner, hate the sin' and it is amazing to me that hard Calvinists disagree with this statement. Hard Calvinism teaches that "God hates the non-elect" or "God hates the sinner" quoting passages like "Jacob I loved, Esau I hated" (Rom 9:13) so, when they come to passages like John 3:16 "For God so loved the world" they say this means "world of the elect" and not all men. But this is not interpreting the Bible, this is reading one's theology into the text. The concept 'love the sinner, hate the sin' is a biblical

one. Both the OT (here) and NT (Matt 5:44-45) teach it. So, we are to hate all sin but love the one who commits the sin because Christ died for them.

A. The Stranger (22:21)

Exodus 22:21 "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

They should not **wrong a stranger**, that is, mistreat him in any way or cheat him **or oppress him**, for this word is the precise Hebrew word used to describe the Hebrews treatment in Egypt (Exod 3:9). Their lives were made bitter by the oppression in Egypt and they are not to oppress **strangers** for this very reason. To oppress is to steal life, to drain it of its vigor. The verse also implies that one day they will be in their own land, the land of Israel, and **strangers** will live among them.

B. The Widow and Orphan (22:22-24)

²² **"You shall not afflict any widow or orphan."**

²³ **"If you afflict him at all, and if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry;**

²⁴ **and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.**

A strict warning here against **afflicting** those who are defenseless; the **widow** and **orphan**. **If you afflict him at all and if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry**, just as the Hebrews cried out to God because of their affliction in Egypt and God heard and answered their cry (Exod 3:7). Verse 24 describes the measure for measure judgment for the one who afflicts any **widow** or **orphan**. It is *lex talionis*, 'the Law of Retaliation'. If they afflicted **any widow or orphan** then they would be **killed with the sword** and their **wives would become widows and their children fatherless**. God provided protection of a wife and child through the father but if the father dies then God Himself would provide protection for the widow and orphan. God is very concerned about the protection of those who are defenseless. They need to be taken care of and watched over. We know of a case in Genesis where a mother and child cried out to the Lord and the

Lord heard and answered. Does anyone remember who it was? Hagar and Ishmael. They were released from the protection of Abraham and when they cried out to God He showed them compassion and provided for them (Gen 21:12ff). So, God is very concerned about the widowed and orphans and we should be too.

PRINCIPLE: Widows can be put on the list to be taken care of by the church if they meet certain qualifications as outlined in 1 Tim 5:9-16. True worship is visiting orphans and widows in distress (James 1:27)

C. The Needy (22:25-27)

25 "If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest.

26 "If you ever take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets,

27 for that is his only covering; it is his cloak for his body. What else shall he sleep in? And it shall come about that when he cries out to Me, I will hear *him*, for I am gracious.

Notice the first words of verse 25, **if you lend money to My people, to the poor among you**. The **poor** of Israel were also God's **people**. You should not treat them differently than the rich of **My people**. You were not to show deference to the rich. **You are not to act as a creditor to him**, that is, **you shall not charge him interest** if he needs to borrow money. The needy should pay back the principle but not the principle + interest. It is hard enough for the poor to pay back the principle much less the hardship of piling on interest. The poor were to be shown mercy. Verse 26 **If you ever take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge**, which was commonly done among the poor for loans, then the creditor was **to return it to him before the sun sets for that is his only covering**. Though the creditor could legally keep it until re-payment was made he was to compassionately return the cloak before the **sun sets**. It is interesting that the OT includes compassion in business contracts. Often a poor person in Israel only had the clothes on his back and he needs **his cloak for his body** for he has nothing else **to sleep in** and he would get very cold if he lacked **his cloak**. If you don't return it before the sun sets and **he cries out to Me, I will hear him, for I am**

gracious. We should be **gracious** and return the cloak but if we are not God will be. God is a God of grace and He gives us an opportunity to shower grace on others but if we fail He will not, for He answers those who cry out to Him in their hour of need.

PRINCIPLE: If a brother has a need and you close your heart to him how does the love of God abide in you (1 John 3:16-18)?

XII. The Ordinances Regarding the Wealthy (22:28-31)

Exodus 22:28 "You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

²⁹ **"You shall not delay *the offering from your harvest and your vintage. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me.***

³⁰ **"You shall do the same with your oxen *and with your sheep. It shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me.***

³¹ **"You shall be holy men to Me, therefore you shall not eat *any flesh torn to pieces in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.***

The Israelite was also given ordinances regarding his duties to those in classes higher than himself. The words **You shall not curse God** make a bridge between the prior section and what follows. He has just taught that the God will respond to the needy person when he cries out to God. However, a tendency among the needy is to **curse God** in their time of need. For example, when everything was taken from Job his wife said "Curse God and die" (Job 2:9). And Isaiah says that when a person is hungry they become enraged and will curse their king and God" (Isa 8:21). We all know that when we are suffering or in great need we are liable to fall into this sin. And thus, the Torah quickly follows the proper response of crying out to God with a condemnation of the wrong response of cursing God. To **curse** means the same thing it meant when children were commanded not to curse their parents. It means to take lightly the honor due to an individual. It refers to every area of life. We should never take lightly the honor due to God, even in times of suffering which evokes anger. **Nor** should they **curse a ruler of their people**. We should never take lightly the honor due to an authority figure. It is by virtue of their position that they should be honored (Acts 23:1-5).

PRINCIPLE: Do not curse governmental authorities but honor them (Rom 13:1-7)

Verse 29 **You shall not delay your harvest and your vintage.** That is, **you shall not delay** taking them to God, for they belong to Him. The Hebrew expression **harvest and vintage** refers to the first-fruits. It was the priest's share of the crop but before it went to the priests it had to go to God. There should be no delay in bringing them before Him. Second, not only the first-fruits but also **the firstborn of their sons shall be given to God.** The giving of the firstborn son was already established in Exod 13:2, 13 on the night of the Passover. The firstborn son was to be given as a sacrifice but they were to redeem the son in order to teach them about substitutionary atonement and the redemption price. So, no firstborn son was actually to be sacrificed. They were to be redeemed by the father who provided a substitute. Such graphic events were surely designed by God to prepare Israel for the Messiah's substitutionary death on the cross for all mankind.

Verse 30 **You shall do the same with your oxen and with your sheep. It shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me.** That is, the firstborn of the **oxen and sheep** were also the Lord's. They were not to be redeemed. They were to be sacrificed on the altar for the Lord. But the firstborn **shall be with its mother seven days** to become self-sufficient and also for the mother. But **on the eighth day** it was to be **given to** the Lord. This is the same day as circumcision for sons.

Verse 31 **You shall be holy men to Me,** This is the precise reason the nation of Israel was called. They were elected unto God to **be holy**, set apart unto Him for service. Indeed, this is one of the main purposes of the Mosaic Law.

Exodus 19:5-6 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'

To **be holy** they must avoid eating **any flesh** that was **torn to pieces in the field** by another wild animal. Such foods would cause them to be ritually

unclean and were certainly not fit for a people who had been set apart by God for His service. Such food was entirely objectionable and would cast a terrible light on God's people. It was not food fit for a people God wanted to make His own and who would become a kingdom of priests. They must be holy. Food torn to pieces is fit for the dogs and should be **thrown...to the dogs**.

PRINCIPLE: Israel was chosen to become a holy nation, so believers were chosen for this exact purpose...to be holy and blameless in love (Eph 1:4; 1 Pt 1:15-16)

PRINCIPLE: There is a way to conduct ourselves. A way to live. Behavior to avoid because it is objectionable. We are to be holy as God is holy. That is, to be set apart by the commandments of God. To walk in His ways and not the world's ways. This will serve as a Christian testimony to the world. Fleshly behavior is not befitting the believer who has been justified in God's sight.

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ⁱ See the story of Shechem and Dinah in Gen 34 where Shechem's father offered a full dowry for Dinah but this was denied.

ⁱⁱ Cassuto, 290.

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