

Responding to the New Atheists' attacks on the God of the Old Testament-36: The Mosaic Law-9 The Superiority of the Mosaic Law Over the Roman Empire in regard to slavery

Before we move into the specifics of Mosaic laws, we need to make sure we understand the historical context. Before the advent of Jesus Christ and His influence which spread through Western Civilization, the world was a very different place. It was Christ who brought to Western Civilization, for the first time, countless blessings: for example, man is made in the image of God; man's ancestry is not animal, but divine; the Earth was made for man; individual men are immortal; what man believes and does on Earth will have eternal consequences; and all men are equal before God—the classes and nations of ancient society: the nobles, the proletariat, the slaves, the citizens, the men, the women, the barbarians mean nothing to God. In the new Christian faith, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:8).

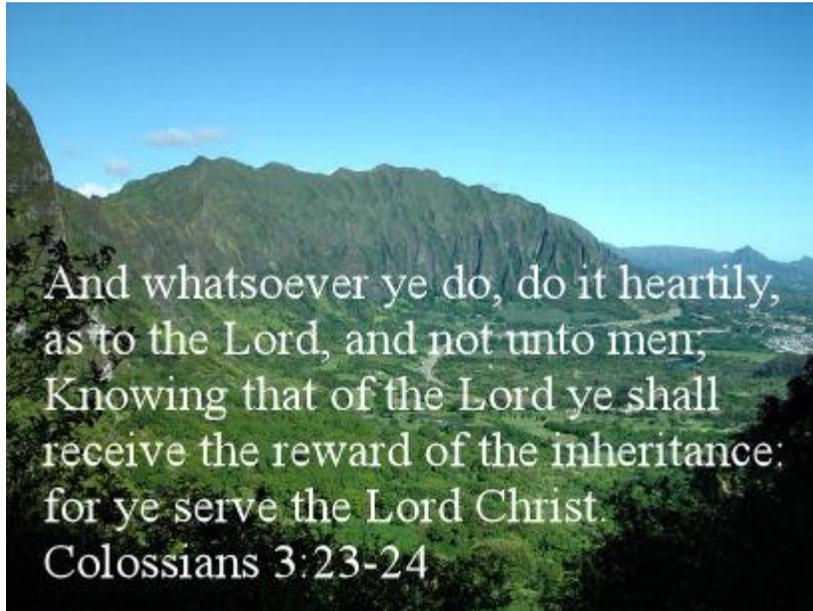
When we get to the various laws on slavery in the Old Testament and their abolition in the New Testament, I will spend a great deal of time on the issue of slavery in Israel, their abolition in the New Testament, and the institution of slavery in our history. For now, I will just say that the Old Testament institution of slavery was more of indentured servant system and much more civilized than slavery in America or Rome.

What about slavery in the Great Roman Empire? At the time of Christ, the population of Roman Italy comprised an estimated five to six million free citizens and one to two million slaves. Many slaves worked the mines of the Roman Empire, and they were sometimes forced to live below ground until they died. Slaves were forbidden to marry, and the power of the masters over their slaves was absolute. The Roman society remained radically unequal in opportunities.

The Republic and Empire's military conquest resulted in the influx of hundreds of thousands of slaves to Rome. These slaves were used not only for work, but also for entertainment in the gladiatorial contests that both nobles and proles loved to attend. The appetite for gore and brutality in the “games” is ghastly! Thousands of slaves were brutally tortured and sliced up for entertainment with an eye to inculcate the Roman idea of the power of the elite. You certainly do not see anything like this in the Mosaic Law! The Christian doctrine that all men are created in the image of God, and that the image of God is rationality was totally foreign to pagan thought and society.

In any society in which slavery plays a major role, idleness becomes a virtue. It was so in the American South, and so it was in Rome. Romans held labor in contempt and scorned those who worked with their hands. The workingman was base and socially inferior. Again, what a contrast to the ethos of the Mosaic Law written over fifteen hundred years hence. Work was never designed by God to be a curse. Through Christ, we are to do all of our jobs, regardless of the job, as unto the Lord. Our attitudes toward our jobs always reflect for whom we are living

and working. How was work today? How was your walk with the Lord today? The answer to both are the same.



In Him,

Pastor Don