

Exodus 22:18–30

How Israel's Death Penalty for False Religion Instructs Our Hearts for Our Everyday Life

Friday, August 26, 2022 ▫ Read Exodus 22:18–20

Questions from the Scripture text: What must not be done with a sorceress (v18)? Who else must be put to death (v19)? Who must be utterly destroyed (v20)?

How did God's civil law for Israel highlight how abominable idolatry is? Exodus 22:18–20 looks forward to the evening sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these three verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **idolatry is not only abominable in itself but leads to other abominations that are uniquely detestable to the LORD.**

No power greater than Yahweh, v18. The word 'sorceress' here is a feminine, singular form of the word used for the "magicians" of Egypt in Ex 7:16. Ancient near eastern religions held to a "deep magic" to which even the gods were subject, and which could be used to manipulate them. Permitting such wicked practitioners in Israel would have been to put Yahweh in the same class. For this reason, the penalty prescribed here and in v20 are put in phrases used when something is devoted to death or destruction in order to vindicate the honor or righteousness of God (cf. Deut 20:16).

While there are some who believe in things like luck or other magic that can overwrite providence, even believers can be susceptible to trying to manipulate God. Israel would even attempt to use "seeking God" and fasting as ways to force God to do what they wanted (cf. Isa 58:3–4). Saul's own rebellion for the supposed purpose of religion was characterized by Samuel "as the sin of witchcraft" in 1Sam 15:22–23.

No power from perversion, v19. While the placement of v19 may seem disjointed, ancient near-eastern studies help us to see the connection. This immoral abomination was thought to be a way to gain benefits of life and power associated with the various beasts. Idolatry quickly descends into sexual immorality, because it displaces man as made in the image of God and marriage as for producing image-bearers.

The idolatry of humanism has been no different in its defacing of the image of God and multiplication of perversions. In addition to such perversions, the idea of ascribing divinity to animals and obtaining divine power from them is imported from many pagan religions into various activities that many around us unthinkingly participate in.

No power from any other god, v20. The word 'sacrifice' in this verse is a more general word than the one for burnt offering. It can even be used just of an animal slaughtered for a communal meal. Yahweh demands complete exclusivity. We must not give to any other that dependence, devotion, or delight which belongs to the LORD alone.

What means has the Lord given us to be helped by Him? To serve Him? To enjoy Him? How offensive is it when we look for power, purpose, or pleasure in another way?

Sample prayer: Lord, You are the one, true and living God. Forgive us for our idolatries and cleanse us from them, so that we will depend upon, be devoted to, and delight in You alone, for we ask it in Your Name, Lord Jesus, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP24 "The Earth and the Riches" or TPH174 "The Ten Commandments

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Exodus chapter 22 verses 18 through 20. These are God's words, You shall not permit. A sorceress to live. Whoever lies with an animal shall. Surely be put to death, He who sacrifices to any God except Yahweh. Only, she'll be utterly destroyed.

So far the reading of God's inspired and, and they're into our

All idolatry aims at trying to have power in some way. Apart from the power of God are trying to have knowledge in some way other than the knowledge of God or trying to have purpose in some way. Other than the purpose given us by God or found in God.

We're trying to have pleasure through some way other than knowing the goodness of God in the goodness of the things that he has made for us to enjoy. And especially, when it comes to things, like these false religions, or witchcraft or magic, or any of those other things. They the idea is that the ordinary ways that God has given us of knowing things, whether from his word or from his world and the, or the ordinary ways that God has given us of having power, which is knowing that at all, comes from him whole life and all strength comes from him.

And that for our souls, he gives us this directly by the means of his grace because he operates in us by his grace personally and that when it comes to physical or earthly things, We know that it all relies upon him and that it's his providence, His creation and his providence that has built into this world.

The ordinary way by which we get things like health and strength. So that it's wicked to treat. God like a source of magic for physical things and say, oh, I'm just gonna ask God to make me lose weight, but I'm not going to move more and eat less. Yeah.

Turn this carrot stick into a Cheeto on the way down basically. But all idolatry denies that got a lawn, as the source of power that got alone is the source of knowledge. And so, what happened? What we have here are three instructions that are related to the wicked religions that were being exercise or participated in and Canaan at the time or that that were represented, either in the Egyptian religion, or in the religions of others that they had met in Egypt, and many of whom had come out with them, If you're one of the mixed multitude that's coming out in Exodus, chapter 12, that doesn't necessarily mean that you've been can converted to exclusive Yahweh religion.

It just means that between Yahweh and Pharaoh, you see which one one and which one was destroyed and you're going to choose, you know, to make you all way the top of your pantheon. So there's this is vital instruction for the Israelites as they're coming out of Egypt with a mixed multitude into Canaan, surrounded by Sumerians and Babylonians and Phoenicians and so forth.

So you under, I hope that gives you a, an understanding of the big principles at stake and the context into which this comes So verse 18. Basically, you shall not permit, a sorceress to live it's against magic and that's going to be. There is no power greater than the Lord.

And then verse, 19, whoever lies with an animal shall. Surely be put to death that there is no power from perversion twisting, good things that God has made to try to get either pleasure or power from them in a way that God has not designed and then he who sacrifices to any God except Yah.

By only that there is no power from other gods or other religions man-made religions. So, verse 19, perverting that which God has given us in his world. And verse 20, perverting that which God has given us by special revelation, which for us is, especially in his words. So, that's kind of the outline that will have Lord willing in the evening.

Sermon in a couple of days. First of all, you shall not permit a sorceress to live. This is something that you see in a lot of fantasy writing or fantasy TV or film, the idea that there are magical forces that can be tapped into whether that's the old-fashioned way with spells and magic words, or whatever, or the new fashioned way science fiction.

The magic is just science. We haven't figured out yet and we are going to be able to do whatever we want. We just need to figure out how how to overcome all things by the magic that is in quote, unquote science. And so science becomes not a receiving from God.

His good design of the world so that we can learn how he has designed it, and more and more effectually acknowledge and make use of his goodness to us by understanding how things actually are. But science becomes a sort of religion that has no limit in the amount of power that we have, and we're tapping into something that is like a magical power.

And so even science fiction has behind it. Often this mindset of magic and since you guys are exposed or have been exposed to a lot of that, it's good for you to realize the spiritual danger of the idea that if you just figure out the right words or get advanced enough in the right quote unquote science that you'll be able to manipulate existence to do what you want.

Because both of those things, deny the God of Providence. The idea of magic, which even exists for instance in some of the Narnian writing.

Is the idea that even the gods can be manipulated and in ancient pantheistic or polytheistic religions. There was always this this higher power of magic that even the gods themselves were susceptible to and could trick one another into being trapped by. And So those gods were not the highest power.

Magic was the highest power. So a sorceress is someone has claims they have the ability and of course we would know what it is. It's demonic, but he claims to have the ability to tap into this power. That twists, even the arm of God overrules his providence, by tapping into the spiritual realm for power that makes your will.

The thing that's in charge, that's what people want. When they go looking for magic, they either want a shortcut or they've come to the end of their ability and rather than yield to God and say, the Lord alone is God. And his providence is good, and he's put this beyond our ability.

Say no. There has to be some way of enforcing my will upon the situation. And a sorceress is one, who, who holds out promise of a power that is greater than the Lord Himself. And this is why it was such a horrible, not just sin, but inviting others into that idea, is a crime.

It's sole murder to tempt others into thinking that they can overrule God and His providence, and have a power that is greater than him so that they can force their will on what happens. And sole murder both in the capital crime against God himself and a capital crime against others is punishable here.

Of course by death. You shall not permit. A sorceress to live. So that's no power greater than y'all play in verse 19. You have no power from perversion that there is this corrupt way of making the creation your source of pleasure or source of power. In a way that the Lord has has not given and the violates his law and his design, whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death.

Now that sounds like its just a seventh commandment thing and you wonder why it's sandwiched here between the sorceress and verse 18 and the sacrificing to any God in verse 20? Well, you wonder that but those who just came out of Egypt, didn't wonder that because Egypt had a whole pantheon of animal Gods.

And so there was the idea that that animals had these divine qualities and each animal had its own kind of unique divinity. And, of course, out of that kind of a mindset comes, the horrible perversion of trying to become one with the animal and even find find pleasure in that and not much has changed.

Even though what we have now is supposedly atheism, that has resulted in environmentalism the same sorts of perversions have come from elevating. The creatures to having something like a divine image in them and reducing man to just one of the other animals. And, and in cultures, where that has advanced quote-unquote, the same sorts of perversions.

That came out of the ancient Near Eastern religions happen. In fact while I was in the process of studying this and writing for the devotional and for the evening, sermon on the 28th, the health organizations in America and Europe were revising. Their advice on monkeypox, which is transmitted bisexual immorality, whether fornication and adultery, or homosexuality, or or Many, anything outside of marriage.

There were revising their council because

There were French men who had gotten or given it to their dog. And so the the health councils, these supposedly top intellectuals of of the western world, we're telling people, that they should, they should be advised, not to practice immorality with their animals, in such a way that would expose them to monkeypox.

These perversions that come out of a false view of the creation as having ultimate power in itself. And so the confusion and the rebellion against God from the heart are still here today. When we read something like Exodus, 22 verse 19, whoever lies with an animal shall. Surely be put to death, the horricifness of man's sin.

In denying God is Creator and denying man's uniqueness and being made in the image of God in denying God alone as the ultimate source of power and pleasure. The horricifness of men's sin in those denials is is exposed. Again, it wasn't just them. It still happens today and anyone who starts on the road of a materialistic worldview in which you buy into a theory of evolution or rather than creation stewardship.

You start to think of things in terms of environmentalism, in which the other creatures have, as much of a dignity as man or even more, where man is the problem because of the dignity of the other creatures, you know, those kinds of principles are actually steps in the direction of the kind of disgusting perversion in in our passage here.

No power from perversion or no power from twisting the creation to get things out of their order. So the Sorceress no power other than Yahweh? The the

perversion and verse 19. No power from perversion or from the creation. So no power from magic. No power from the creation, other than how the Lord has created and made it And no power from religion.

Other than that, which the Lord has given. So, the Lord gives them to sacrifice to himself that happens. Already in Genesis 3. You're a member Adam and Eve. After they have heard the gospel pronounced in the curse upon the serpent and they were supposed to sit up as he could, They were supposed to surely die.

But instead got started talking about the seed of the woman. Who's gonna crunch the serpent's head and you know, where to get scratching our heads, how can someone who is supposed to in that day that you eat of it, surely die. How are they gonna have seed? But God is gonna work by grace and Praise God.

And of course, one of the things with which the account it concludes, is that God atones in a way that man has already found himself. Helpless to do that. The fig leaves were useless but when God sacrifices and the animal loses, its life and the skin covers you, you understand, someone else is going to lose his life for us.

Someone else is going to cover us in a way, that, that actually covers our shape and begins the restoration of our dignity. And so sacrifice was God's idea because it was looking forward, of course, to the sacrifice of Christ, who would be the one who atones for us. And who would be the one who covers us and restores us.

And then what does man do? Well, Adam. And Eve's children, they start sacrificing to things of their own imagination. Well, if sacrificing to one, God is good, sacrificing to a bunch of them would be better. And of course, they they're trying to get power from religion. Other than what what God has given and and same thing.

He who sacrifices to any God except Yah by only. Please shall be utterly destroyed and the language for utterly destroyed as language. For being put under the band When the Lord puts something or a people under judgment and he says all of them shall be utterly destroyed. It's not just a sentence of death.

It is a particular kind of cursed death as something that has that has been publicly identified as an offense, against the glory of God, and we should remember that. This isn't just a sin. It's also a crime. A sacrifice was a communal thing. With many people involved ordinarily, you know, one man doesn't eat an entire lamb in a sitting or or, you know, something bigger than that Knox or whatever.

And it would often be a public thing. Enticing, enticing, others into it. And so you see, even in the Civil law of Israel, the Lord giving his people commands and punishments, and hear capital punishment for the sorceress teaches them to find power. And a magic that is higher than God are able to manipulate him.

The the perversion versus 19 which seeks a power and pleasure in the creation in a way that God has not given us to have power or pleasure from the creation. And then verse 20 religion that God has not given seeking to have power or knowledge or pleasure purpose in a religious way.

That is not what God has given. My dear children, This is one of the great reasons for you to develop a healthy strong doctrine of God's providence, to know that all of your life, all of your strength, all of your goodness, ability, growth, all of your knowledge, all of your purpose in life, all of your joy in life should be ultimately in him and from him.

And therefore only in the ways that he has given for you to have power or strength or purpose, or joy, or knowledge and so forth. Because forgetting him and his word and his design for his world as you pursue. Any of those things leads you to those things that are hellish and does, our should be punishable by death and adjust society should be punishable by excommunication.

And a faithful church and will be punished by hell in the last day. So look to go out alone for all those things. He has a good God. He is not unwilling or stingy, He is not closed fisted with us, he has given us not only himself and the religion that he has given us in his word which shows us that he's given us himself in Christ and the way of coming to him through Christ but is also given us his world.

That is wonderfully designed and predictable and he's given us. Lots of ability especially now After the Reformation in Europe restored, this confidence in God and His creation and his providence from which the rapid advances in science of come, he's not closed fisted. He's generous so let us look to him for our purpose, our power, our knowledge, our pleasure are everything.

Let's ask him to convince our hearts of that.

Our Father in heaven, we pray that you would have mercy on us. We know that the same roots of the same sin that results in the things that in this passage are punishable by death remain in each of our hearts. And each of our fleshlyness remaining fleshliness and remaining sinfulness from our original nature and so we've come to you O God who have given Christ that we would be forgiven of the guilt of our sin and delivered from the power of our sin that you would make us to grow in the grace of Christ.

And the knowledge of Christ that you alone would be the one who gives us purpose that you alone would be the one in who's providence. We have hope that everything will work out for our good that you alone will be the one in him. We find power and ability and strength that we would only look to find pleasure in things that you have designed for that, that right use.

And that way, help us by your spirit, we pray to know your goodness. And therefore to look for these things. Nowhere, apart from you. We ask it in the name of Jesus, in whom you have given yourself to us for us and to us. Amen.