



## Did God Ever Sanction Slavery?

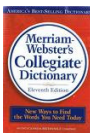
**Exodus 21:16:** (NASB) *He who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death.*



If we look back throughout all of the recorded history of mankind, there are a number of themes that seem to continually reoccur. One of those themes is the rulership of some men over others. That theme in many cultures took a downward spiral and over time ended up as one of the greatest travesties in the history of the human race - slavery. Today, we look at such a practice and shake our heads in sorrow and disbelief at the inhumanity with which we have treated one another. In the midst of this, there looms a very important question - the Bible gives us a recorded history of ruler-ship, domination and slavery - the question is; did God or does God EVER sanction slavery - that inhuman treatment of another human being? Stay with us as we look at the Bible and history and search for the answer!

### Our only question for consideration:

### Did God EVER Sanction Slavery?



#### Merriam Webster Dictionary:

##### Sanction:

- 1: to make valid or binding usually by a formal procedure (as ratification)
- 2: to give effective or authoritative approval or consent to

#### Primary words used in the Old Testament:

**Slave:** Strongs #5650 `ebed (eh'-bed); a servant

**Authorized Version:** Translated "servant" 744 times

**Genesis 26:19:** *And Isaac's **servants** <5650> digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water.*

**Genesis 26:24:** *And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my **servant** <5650> Abraham's sake.*

#### Abraham is described with the same word as those working for Isaac.

**Slave (female):** Strongs #519 'amah (aw-maw'); a maid-servant or female slave

**Genesis 21:10:** *Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this **bondwoman** <519> and her son: for the son of this **bondwoman** <519> shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.*

**1 Samuel 1:11:** (NRSV) *<sup>11</sup>She made this vow: "O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your **servant** <519>, and remember me, and not forget your **servant** <519>, but will give to your **servant** <519> a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants,<sup>o</sup> and no razor shall touch his head."*

Notice both words refer to human servitude to other humans as well as to God. The female version is shown as women serving men and women serving God.

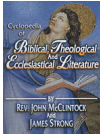


#### Benign Beginnings, Slavery - Lucas Films

- Usually not a lifetime sentence, you paid off your debt;



- Not inherited;
- Usually prisoners of war.



**McClintock and Strong's Cyclopaedia: II. Forms of Scriptural Slavery.** ...the first direct reference to...slave trading in the Bible is found in the history of Joseph, who was sold by his brethren to the Ishmaelites...

### First slavery/servitude, in the pre-Mosaic Law era...

**Patriarchal Servitude.** ...The servants of the patriarchs were of two kinds, those "born in the house" and those "bought with money" ...The servants born in the house were, perhaps, entitled to greater privileges than the others. Eliezer of Damascus, a home born servant, was Abraham's steward, and, in default of issue, would have been his heir. This class of servants was honored with the most intimate confidence of the masters. and was employed in the most important services...

...There is a clear distinction made between the "servants" of Abraham and the things which constituted his property or wealth. Abraham was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. But when the patriarch's power or greatness is spoken of, then servants are spoken of as well as the objects which constituted his riches.

...In no single instance do we find that the patriarchs either gave away or sold their servants, or purchased them of *third* persons. Abraham had servants "bought with money." It has been assumed that they were bought of third parties, whereas there is no proof that this was the case. The probability is that they sold themselves to the patriarch for an equivalent; that is to say, they entered into voluntary engagements to serve him for longer or shorter period of time, in return for the money advanced them. It is a fallacy to suppose that whatever costs money is money or property...



### Observations regarding Patriarchal Servitude:

- Slaves/Servants were of two types - they were born or bought into the household;
- Those "bought" were voluntarily "selling" their service for compensation;
- Slaves/Servants were treated as part of Abraham's household;
- Slaves/Servants were taught to worship God like other family members;
- Slaves/Servants had great responsibility and trust;
- Slaves/Servants could be in line for inheritance;
- Slave/Servant ownership was not equated with physical riches, but with household greatness and power.

Slavery in Egypt: Notice the progression in the following verses. It starts with oppression and degrades to outright cruelty.

**Exodus 1:8-11:** (NASB) <sup>8</sup>Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. <sup>9</sup>He said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. <sup>10</sup>"Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land." <sup>11</sup>So they appointed **taskmasters** over them to **afflict** them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses.



The first step in securing the Egyptian supremacy was the appointment of “masters” to “browbeat” the people.

Exodus 1:12: (NASB) *But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel.*

In spite of these measures, Israel’s strength increased!

Exodus 1:8-13-14: (NASB) <sup>13</sup>*The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously;* <sup>14</sup>*and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them.*

Now the lordship turned to severity, cruelty and harshness, to keep their superior position, they of necessity had to abuse and break this mighty people!

This was a far cry from what we had seen so far!

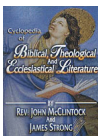
Exodus 3:7: (NASB) *The LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings.”*



**Greek Transformation (387BC), Slavery - Lucas Films**

- Plato the Philosopher travels from Athens to Sicily to give Dionysius advice on government;
- Plato’s advice causes him to become a slave;
- The Greeks created the world’s first true “slave society”;
- They transformed a short term condition into a life sentence for slaves and their descendants.

Compare with Hebrew servitude:



**Hebrew Slaves.** The circumstances under which a Hebrew might be reduced to servitude were (a) poverty; (b) the commission of theft; and (c) the exercise of paternal authority. In the first case, a man who had mortgaged his property, and was unable to support his family, might sell himself to another Hebrew, with a view both to obtain maintenance and perchance a surplus sufficient to redeem his property...

There is a huge difference between the escalation of slavery by the Greeks compared to the Biblical concept of servitude.

Deuteronomy 5:14-15: (NASB) <sup>14</sup>*but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant or your ox or your donkey or any of your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you, so that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.* <sup>15</sup>*“You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day.*

Even servants didn’t work on the Sabbath. Servants were cared for.



**Aristotle’s Conclusion, Slavery - Lucas Films**

- It is clear that some men by nature are free, and others are slaves;
- These are “natural” slaves - therefore slavery is both expedient and right;
- All would acknowledge that the inferior class should be slaves of the superior;



- The Greeks could now justify enslaving those were “less human” or less deserving of freedom.

There is nothing close to this philosophy in the Bible.

### Rules regarding slaves:

**Leviticus 25:39-43:** (NRSV) <sup>39</sup>*If any who are dependent on you become so impoverished that they sell themselves to you, you shall not make them serve as slaves. <sup>40</sup>They shall remain with you as hired or bound laborers. They shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee. <sup>41</sup>Then they and their children with them shall be free from your authority; they shall go back to their own family and return to their ancestral property. <sup>42</sup>For they are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves are sold. <sup>43</sup>You shall not rule over them with harshness, but shall fear your God.*

### The release of slaves:

**Deuteronomy 15:12-18:** (NRSV) <sup>12</sup>*If a member of your community, whether a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and works for you six years, in the seventh year you shall set that person free. <sup>13</sup>And when you send a male slave out from you a free person, you shall not send him out empty-handed. <sup>14</sup>Provide liberally out of your flock, your threshing floor, and your wine press, thus giving to him some of the bounty with which the LORD your God has blessed you. <sup>15</sup>Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; for this reason I lay this command upon you today. <sup>16</sup>But if he says to you, "I will not go out from you," because he loves you and your household, since he is well off with you, <sup>17</sup>then you shall take an awl and thrust it through his earlobe into the door, and he shall be your slave forever. You shall do the same with regard to your female slave. <sup>18</sup>Do not consider it a hardship when you send them out from you free persons, because for six years they have given you services worth the wages of hired laborers; and the LORD your God will bless you in all that you do.*

God's rules were made so that servitude would not be abused.

**Leviticus 25:44-46:** (NASB) <sup>44</sup>*As for your male and female slaves whom you may have—you may acquire male and female slaves from the pagan nations that are around you. <sup>45</sup>Then, too, it is out of the sons of the sojourners who live as aliens among you that you may gain acquisition, and out of their families who are with you, whom they will have produced in your land; they also may become your possession. <sup>46</sup>You may even bequeath them to your sons after you, to receive as a possession; you can use them as permanent slaves. But in respect to your countrymen, the sons of Israel, you shall not rule with severity over one another.*

Aha! Here is a marked difference in the “rules” of servitude regarding the alien - but does this mean that they have a God given right to do anything they want with them? We'll get back to this shortly.



### Roman Escalation, Slavery - Lucas Films

- Rome takes slavery to unprecedented levels of brutality;
- Citizens were surrounded and outnumbered by slaves;
- Rome's tradition demanded that all slaves be killed if one slave murders their master.

Did the Romans get this idea from the Jews? No! The Jewish Law was just!

**Leviticus 24:17, 22:** (NRSV) <sup>17</sup>*Anyone who kills a human being shall be put to death. <sup>22</sup>You shall have one law for the alien and for the citizen: for I am the LORD your God.*



## The Law had SPECIFIC provisions AGAINST cruelty on behalf of slaves:

**Exodus 21:26-27:** (NRSV) <sup>26</sup>When a slaveowner strikes the eye of a male or female slave, destroying it, the owner shall let the slave go, a free person, to compensate for the eye. <sup>27</sup>If the owner knocks out a tooth of a male or female slave, the slave shall be let go, a free person, to compensate for the tooth.

## Slaves were considered by a conscientious master as entitled to justice and honorable treatment:

**Job 31:13-15:** (NRSV) <sup>13</sup>If I have rejected the cause of my male or female slaves, when they brought a complaint against me; <sup>14</sup>what then shall I do when God rises up? When he makes inquiry, what shall I answer him? <sup>15</sup>Did not he who made me in the womb make them? And did not one fashion us in the womb?

## Slaves were given the ability to partake of the Jewish feasts - another indication of respectful treatment:

**Exodus 12:43-44:** (NRSV) <sup>43</sup>The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: This is the ordinance for the passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, <sup>44</sup>but any slave who has been purchased may eat of it after he has been circumcised;

### Pope Gregory 596AD, *Slavery - Lucas Films*

- The Holy Roman Empire is still a slave-based society;
- Pope Gregory's Christianity did not deter him from pursuing slaves.

### Christianity Embraces Slavery, *Slavery - Lucas Films*

- Gregory embraced Aristotle's philosophy;
- Gregory sets the new rules for the philosophy - only non-Christians deserve to be slaves;
- Gregory went out and bought pagan slaves and established slavery under "Christian" rule.

## According to Jewish Law, to kidnap any man was punishable by death - this was put in place right after the Ten Commandments were given:

**Exodus 21:16:** (NASB) *He who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death.*

Long before all of the degradations of slavery were introduced, there was the Jewish Law. It outlined the respectful treatment of those human beings who by reason of their debts, their crimes, their being prisoners of war or their impoverished state, were to be in servitude. The Law made it clear that there was to be no human trafficking, no severe beatings, no overworking, and no tyranny when dealing with these people, for they were just that - people. Israel was not to forget the horror and humiliation of their own enslavement in Egypt.

### Greek and Roman Basis for American Slavery, *Slavery - Lucas Films*

- The American south looked to Greece and Rome as a template for life;
- Greece and Rome were noble, cultured, classical, sophisticated and slave-based;
- There is a direct line from Aristotle straight through to the beginnings of slavery in the new world.



## The New Testament view on slavery: (Remember, this is in the context of the Roman style of slavery, not the Hebrew style under the Law.)

**Ephesians 6:5-9:** (NASB) <sup>5</sup>Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; <sup>6</sup>not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. <sup>7</sup>With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, <sup>8</sup>knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. <sup>9</sup>And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

Just as there was a constant reminder of Israel's deliverance from bondage and cruelty to focus the Jews on the respectful care of those in their service, so we have a New Testament constant reminder of our accountability to God for our actions, even if we are in a situation that is unjust.

### Our accountability spreads through all aspects of our life:

**Titus 3:1-2:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, <sup>2</sup>to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.



### Noah's Curse Justifies Slavery, Slavery - Lucas Films

- Aristotle never drew a race-based slave picture - his was a life-position picture; (certain people, regardless of race, were destined to be slaves)
- Pope Gregory altered the slave picture to be religion-based; (non-Christians could be slaves, Christians could not)
- Bible believing slave owners needed to justify their position;
- Noah's curse targeted Canaan;
- It was said that Ham's descendants were the father of the African race - therefore appointed to slavery.

### Noah's words:

**Genesis 9:25-27:** (NASB) <sup>25</sup>So he said, "Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants he shall be to his brothers." <sup>26</sup>He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. <sup>27</sup>May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant."

(Source: "After the Flood," Albert O. Hudson) The gist of the prophecy was that Canaan - in his descendants - was to occupy a position of servitude to his half-brothers, in their descendants. The people destined to spring from Japheth were to be 'enlarged', spread abroad in far distant lands, while those from Shem would have God dwelling among them. The true meaning of vs.27 is "God shall dwell in the tents of Shem." Shem, represented now chiefly by Jews and Arabs, has long been recognized to be the most spiritually perceptive and receptive of the three great races.... The Sons of Japheth, the Aryans, have spread all over the world and dominated. Those of Ham, at first the most intellectual and artistic, founders of the first civilizations, have progressively changed as they migrated into the tropical and sub-tropical regions.... The descendants of Canaan, a heterogeneous assembly of tribes collectively known as Canaanites, have ceased to be representative of their forefather. Noah's forecast of the future came to pass...

(Source: Biblical scholar Jim Parkinson) Canaan was the only completely non-African "son" of Ham. From the time of the Sumerians (including Ur-Nammu, king of Sumer, in Genesis 14), the Canaanites were temporarily subjected by Cushites (from Ham) until Abram, Semites (from Assyria to neo-Babylon) and Japhethites (from Medes and Persians to Ottomans and Great Britain, with interruptions by Arab Semites), until Israel became independent.



While Ham's sons were actually the progenitors of the African Race, Canaan had absolutely nothing to do with it! The prophecy came true.

**All in Christ were equal - no matter what their status was otherwise:**

1 Corinthians 12:13: (NRSV) *For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free (the Roman version of slavery, not the Jewish version of servitude) --and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

Galatians 3:28: (NRSV) *There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.*

Colossians 3:11: (NRSV) *In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!*

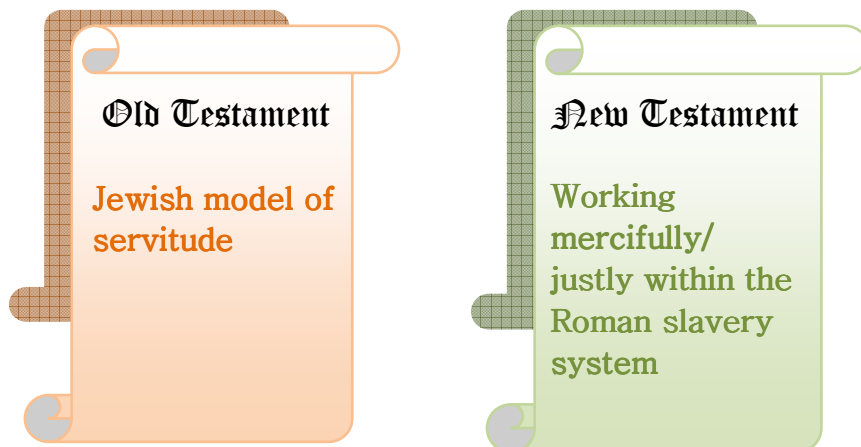
The Apostle Paul recognized that some of the brethren were under very difficult circumstances, and that it didn't matter where they were physically, only spiritually. The Apostle Paul wasn't encouraging a rebellion to free the slaves. Just because someone is in that servitude doesn't mean they can't honor and love God.

 **John Newton's Own History, Movie - Amazing Grace**

**The Apostle Paul's letter to Philemon was all about a slave:**

Philemon excerpts: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved brother and fellow worker,...<sup>10</sup>I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, <sup>11</sup>who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me. <sup>12</sup>I have sent him back to you in person, that is, sending my very heart, <sup>13</sup>whom I wished to keep with me, so that on your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel; <sup>14</sup>but without your consent I did not want to do anything, so that your goodness would not be, in effect, by compulsion but of your own free will. <sup>15</sup>For perhaps he was for this reason separated from you for a while, that you would have him back forever, <sup>16</sup>no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. <sup>17</sup>If then you regard me a partner, accept him as you would me. <sup>18</sup>But if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account; <sup>19</sup>I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand, I will repay it (not to mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well). <sup>20</sup>Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. <sup>21</sup>Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, since I know that you will do even more than what I say.

Paul is drawing clear attention to the fact that freedom in Christ (which he ironically calls being a prisoner) is greater than any earthly bondage, even if that bondage remains throughout one's entire lifetime.





### The Great American Awakening, *Slavery - Lucas Films*

- In the early 1800's, American Protestants begin to stand against slavery.

#### Observations about slavery:

- There are widely varied degrees of servitude, some very civil and some utterly cruel;
- God NEVER sanctioned any abuse of, or cruelty to, any servant at any time;
- Men, in an effort to justify their own hard-heartedness, found ways to use the Bible to defend their position.



Although we live under the earthly law, God's law is higher.

**Romans 2:15,16:**  
...which shew the work of the law written in their hearts...

### The South's Resistance, Jeff Davis, *Slavery - Lucas Films*

- Slaves were worth three times all the nation's railroads, manufacturing and industry combined;
- Southern fear was that without slaves the economy would collapse.



"There is not one verse in the Bible inhibiting slavery, but many regulating it. It is not then, we conclude, immoral." - Rev. Alexander Campbell

"The right of holding slaves is clearly established in the Holy Scriptures, both by precept and example." - Rev. R. Furman, D.D., Baptist, of South Carolina



Fortunately, our God is a God of deliverance and NOT a god of bondage!

#### Jesus was sent to release all captives of sin:

Isaiah 61:1-2: (NRSV) <sup>1</sup>The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; <sup>2</sup>to pr the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;



"Amazing Grace - My Chains Are Gone," Chris Tomlin

#### As a result of Jesus' sacrifice, all will be saved:

John 3:16-17: (KJV) <sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. <sup>17</sup>For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

There is a promise of salvation that is all-encompassing, covering not only the landowner, but also the one in servitude.





Slavery versus Servitude: The Old Testament gave very clear instruction for servitude. God sanctioned servitude within specific guidelines. God's view had a respect built in for man. Greek and Roman philosophy and influence added a factor of cruelty and inhumane treatment.

**And all will be judged with righteous judgment:**

*Jeremiah 31:29-34: (KJV) <sup>29</sup>In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. <sup>30</sup>But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. <sup>31</sup>Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: <sup>32</sup>Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: <sup>33</sup>But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup>And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

There is a great promise of salvation because God is a God of deliverance.



Why do we use the term "servitude" to describe the Old Testament concept of slavery? Do you love music? But do you love all music? Just as there is a broad range of what constitutes "music," there were different concepts of slavery. In the scriptures, the treatment of one man under the thumb of another was done in accordance with Jewish law. If the master brutalized that person, the servant went free. Killing the servant would result in the death of the master.

God is a God of love, deliverance, and a plan. Slavery has no part in that plan. We must live higher than the world around us and live according to Godly standards to the best of our imperfect abilities.

***So did God ever sanction slavery?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!***