

ALL THINGS IN CHRIST

In all wisdom and prudence making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him the plan for the fullness of the times

**TO HEAD UP THE ALL THINGS IN THE CHRIST,
the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, in Him...**

(Ephesians 1:8b-10)

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Laws of Impartiality, Justice, & Restitution

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In my book titled *The Ultimate Purpose of God – All in All New*, I mention that judgment carried out in what is called the lake of fire, which is the fiery law of God, will involve restitution for wrongs or evil deeds done to others. Simply, amends will be required for things done in accord with God's law of restitution.

Today, few, if any, among God's people talk about restitution, especially as it was required of the ancient nation of Israel through the law of God that came through Moses. This is rather unfortunate, for an understanding of the law of restitution might give a glimpse of how God intends for His conquerors to judge the world in accord with the Great White Throne Judgment.

Many speak of the Kingdom of God, even of building the Kingdom, but very few talk about how the Kingdom of our Lord is to operate, especially in the next eon (age). Don't you think that this is a vital matter, especially if we are to reign with Christ when ***the reign of the heavens*** is established on this earth in response to the prayer ***"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"***? In light of this, don't you think we should be learning God's way of ruling the nations, or, more explicitly, learning the laws of the Kingdom that will be administered in ***the Kingdom of our Lord*** in the age to come? I think so.

Now, before looking at the law of restitution, there are three fundamental laws upon which restitution is built: the law of impartiality, the law of righteousness and justice, and the law of love. It should go without saying that the law of love is the greatest and most important law of them all. Since love is interwoven in the totality of God's law, we won't consider it separately in this article.

In what follows, the term *kingdom nation* is used, which simply refers to a nation that has come under the rule of the Kingdom of God, meaning it abides by the law of God.

Law of Impartiality

The love of God demands impartiality. We could say that love is impartial.

The law of impartiality was first given to Moses.

"For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe." (Deuteronomy 10:17 NASB)

The word translated *partiality* comes from two Hebrew words: *nasa*, which means "to lift" and *paniyim*, which means "face." (You might notice that the US space agency, NASA, derives its name from the Hebrew word to lift, meaning it lifts payloads into outer space.) In the Greek, the word translated *partiality* is *prosopepsia*, which is derived from a root word that means "accepter of a face." Thus, *partiality* means that "one lifts up the face of another" or "accepts one person over another," implying that there is a prejudice of persons or an attitude of personal favoritism.

The following literal translation clearly makes this distinction.

For Jehovah your God, He is the God of gods, and the Lord of lords; the great, the mighty, the fearful God who does not lift up faces, nor take a bribe. (Deuteronomy 10:17 LITV)

Without doubt, the epistle of James draws heavily on the law of God, which has led some to discount the epistle entirely as not relating to ones who believe on Jesus and are now under grace. However, according to Paul, the law is good (1 Timothy 1:8) and the law is spiritual (Romans 7:14). In fact, grace and mercy are based on the law of impartiality. After all, God's judgment is that all (no one excluded) have sinned (Romans 3:23), and God has shut up all (no one excluded) in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all (no one excluded) (Romans 11:32). There is no partiality in God's judgment of all mankind or in His mercy.

At any rate, James reiterates the law of impartiality that is to be followed in the Kingdom of our Lord.

(1) My brothers, do not with partiality have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. (2) For if a gold-fingered man in splendid clothing comes into your synagogue, and a poor one in shabby clothing also comes in; (3) and you look on the one wearing the splendid clothing, and say to him, You sit here comfortably; and to the poor one you say, You stand there, or, sit here under my footstool; (4) did you not also make a difference among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? (5) Hear, my beloved brothers, did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to the ones loving Him? (6) But you dishonored the poor one. Do not the rich ones oppress you, and they drag you to judgment seats? (7) Do they not blaspheme the good Name called on you? (8) If you truly fulfill the royal Law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well. Lev. 19:18 (9) But if you have partiality you work sin, being reproved by the Law as transgressors. (James 2:1-9 LITV)

Another literal translation words the first verse: **My brothers** [and sisters], **stop holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the** [Lord] **of Glory, with accepting of faces** [fig., with a prejudiced attitude] (James 2:1 ALT).

Obviously, James knew that those entering the synagogue or assembly meetings were treated one way or another based on their appearance. The ones that looked rich by their outward appearance were given the more prominent places, but the ones that looked poor were given the less prominent places. They were judging by appearance, which in itself breaks another law of God, that is, the law of the heart, judging by heart, not by outward appearance.

Notice how James identified the Kingdom with the law of impartiality. The rich snub their noses at the poor, but God chooses the poor to be rich in faith. What they lack in earthly possessions, they gain in their faith and their love for the Lord. The poor (materially) but rich in faith will be the heirs of the Kingdom, not the prejudicial rich (materially). Rather than having mercy on the poor, the rich oppress and prejudicially judge the poor. They ignore the royal law of love, the law of the King.

James sums up the matter by declaring that partiality is sin. *Sin is lawlessness* (1 John 3:1).

Is it much different in our day? Hardly! We see partiality exercised throughout the world, including in the church of God. I don't need to give examples, for I am sure we all have seen them, and, if we are honest with the Lord, each of us has been partial to others somewhere along the line.

The good news is that in the Kingdom of our Lord, the law of impartiality will be taught to the kingdom nations until it becomes the norm. Judgments will be rendered impartially based on the law of God, with love as the foundation. No one will be treated differently than another in regard to the same matter.

Dear beloved in Christ, do you realize that in the coming Kingdom of our Lord, His people, the holy ones, will be the judges to settle all matters among the inhabitants of the world?

You know that the holy ones will judge the world, do you not? And if the world is judged by you, are you unworthy [or, incapable] of the smallest court [cases]? (1 Corinthians 6:2 ALT)

Paul undoubtedly understood this by revelation and knowledge of Scripture, especially the charge given by Moses to the judges appointed over the tribes of Israel.

(16) "Then I charged your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear the cases between your fellow countrymen, and judge righteously between a man and his fellow countryman, or the alien who is with him. (17) You shall not show partiality in judgment [shall not recognize persons in judgment]; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God's.' (Deuteronomy 1:16-17b NASB [ALT])

Paul exhorted the Corinthians for turning to the world to settle their disputes rather than resolving their disputes among themselves. They sought the way of the world and not the way of God. Undoubtedly, the reason they could not judge properly was because they did not apply the law of impartiality, but rather looked upon matters with prejudice. They were carnal, not spiritual.

Are we any different from the Corinthians? It seems that some of the worst prejudice occurs among Christians, especially the religious ones. It is time we learn the ways of the Kingdom and apply the law of impartiality in all our dealings, both within and without the ecclesia. The Lord's conquerors, the sons of glory, are being prepared to become the judges of the world in the Kingdom of our Lord. If we are to be among this holy company, we need to learn and apply the law of impartiality.

The law of impartiality is also integral to the law of righteousness and justice.

Law of Righteousness and Justice

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; lovingkindness and truth go before You. (Psalm 89:14 NASB; also Psalm 97:2)

As the psalmist states, righteousness and justice are the foundation of the throne of our Lord. Consequently, all that is done and developed within a kingdom nation must be right and just according to God's divine law, not according to man's idea of what is right and just.

If left to man, what is right and just is based on the self-interest of the individual or some corporate entity (e.g., political party, organization, business, industry, race, etc.), which often leads to injustice for others. God's justice ensures that all parties are treated righteously and justly, for, as we have seen, there is no partiality with God.

Babylonian justice would rather talk of *fairness* without having justice for all. However, true justice will always lead to fairness, but this is not the way of the Babylonian system. Fairness under the Babylonian mind is not necessarily true justice. For proof, listen closely to the rhetoric that comes from some areas of the political realm and match it to the policies associated with these words. You will hear the words *dignity*, *fairness*, *openness*, and *transparency*; all code words for Babylon's idea of justice. And yet, the policies associated with these words are often based on the Babylonian law of partiality, which is anything but true justice.

Simply, fairness overrides equal justice as it is perverted to give advantage to one group over another. According to Babylonian thinking, it is only fair that wealth be redistributed from one class to another. This is one example of what fairness has come to mean in our day. Another term to describe fairness is *class advantage* that produces *class warfare*. In other words, one class of people is given advantage over another class of people, which leads to discontent and civil unrest.

To be clear, I am not stating that injustice is a new phenomena; quite the contrary, it has been around for as long as Babylon has been rooted in the nations of the world. What I am stating is that we must guard ourselves from rhetoric and policies that proclaim fairness when in fact they are merely ruses to further injustice and take it to new heights.

Please understand that those who speak in these terms could be quite sincere or honest in their motives and yet be quite deceived in their beliefs. Let us not forget that there are powers and principalities of darkness that drive the Babylonian mind and influence and deceive the governance of the world (Ephesians 6:12). We need spiritual discernment in these days.

Now, the same issue of justice and fairness can be found in the judicial realm. As crime has increased, the solution to the problem has been to build more and more prisons to house the criminals, which cost money to build and to maintain, which, in turn, leads to higher taxes and more strain on national and local economies.

Admittedly, US prisons may be more humane than some prisons in other countries that do not even allow due process under the law. However, the justice system in the US is more of a penal system than it is a justice system. For clarity, the word *penal* means "constituting punishment, especially legal punishment." Thus, nations institute *penal codes* which are "a body of laws dealing with various crimes or offenses and their legal penalties." But more than not, these bodies of law are not designed to rehabilitate or to bring restitution or restoration to all the parties involved. They are based purely on punishment, as if to get a pound of flesh out of the criminal.

Unfortunately, these systems are more destructive than corrective, for they hurt the one who committed the crime, along with the one who was on the receiving end of the crime, as well as society itself; all suffer in some measure.

The result is that there is unnecessary cost at all levels: the recipient of the crime loses out (lost money, wages, or property, not to speak of the emotional toll); the criminal loses out because he or she is not rehabilitated but locked in a cell like an animal with no chance to make restitution; the family of the criminal suffers in numerous ways as they have to make up the difference of what their loved one had provided to or for the family; society at large loses out as it must pay to house the criminal; and citizens lose out as they must pay higher taxes for the prisons and insurance premiums for theft insurance. Everyone suffers a loss in this sort of system.

The result is that injustice abounds and true justice is seldom achieved.

Most people have been trained to think of justice as penal not restorative in nature. To prove the point, consider the response that often comes from those who have been affected by a crime. It is very common to hear families of ones who have suffered loss at the hands of another cry out: "I hope he rots in hell"; or, "I hope he is locked up and the key is thrown away." This is not the heart of restitution or of forgiveness; it is the heart of bitterness and anger that demands justice through punishment. There is no concern in such a response to see the matter settled to the benefit of all, including the one who caused the hurt in the first place.

Unfortunately, this same attitude is seen among ones who call themselves Christians, especially ones who believe in hell as a place of eternal and fiery torture. Some who reject Christ often have more compassion on criminals than some Christians. How can we expect to reign with Christ and administer His divine law if we do not understand His heart on the matter of restitution? The answer is that we cannot reign!

After all, *righteousness and justice* are the foundation of the throne of our Lord, and righteousness and justice demand restitution.

This leads to the law of restitution.

Law of Restitution

To understand this law, let us start with some general principles.

First, *restitution* means "**compensation**" or "**amend.**" ***Amend*** means "to correct" or "to improve"; a word that speaks of the very heart of God for all mankind. Restitution is the process of making things right to the benefit of all involved parties.

Second, restitution is required when someone causes a loss to another person. The loss could result from an act that is intentional (willful), unintentional (accidental), or negligent. It could involve a person's well-being (body), property, or livelihood. Restitution covers both criminal and civil matters, and applies to all inhabitants in a kingdom nation (citizens and aliens, that is, all living in the land).

Third, inhabitants of a kingdom nation are never thrown into jail or prison and the key thrown away, so to speak. Further, no one is ever thrown alive into a fiery place likened to man's concept of a living hell, burned at the stake, tortured, or has his head or other body parts cut off. It is safe to state that under God's divine law there are no prisons, jails, or torture chambers. Simply, all citizens and aliens within a kingdom nation are **responsible** for their actions and **accountable** for making restitution for all of their actions that require it. If they were incarcerated, then they would not be able to make proper restitution.

If the law of restitution were in force in our day, there would be far less need for insurance, especially liability and automobile insurance.

Fourth, according to the law of restitution, justice is always meted out quickly and efficiently, which is contrary to the way many penal systems work in our day. In the US, judicial cases could, and often do, drag on for years before being resolved. Consequently, parties involved in these long and dragged-out cases are often left in bitterness for years because they believe justice is not being served.

Fifth, the aim of restitution is to make things right or to correct or improve bad situations by compensating for the damage done or the loss incurred so that no injustice is done to any party and all are made whole. Restitution is not a partial compensation but in all cases a full compensation; it is full restitution. In certain cases, it actually goes beyond full payment up to a seven-fold increase for one whose food is stolen (Proverbs 6:30-31).

Sixth, a restitution payment becomes a **debt** that must be paid off either through a) replacement or repair of the property that was lost or damaged; b) payment of money commensurate to the loss plus whatever additional compensation is required; or c) labor by the perpetrator until the debt is paid off. The latter case applies when the perpetrator of the loss does not have the means to make restitution, in which case he is indebted to labor until the required payment is satisfied. In other words, **he must work to pay off his debt.** I believe that this will be one of the primary means of restitution that will emanate from the lake of fire. For some, it could take years, even eons, to work off their debt.

Seventh, there are some cases when restitution is not possible and the proper recourse is death, that is, cessation of life, which is most definitely not entering an afterlife in a place called *hell*. In these cases, the matter will have to wait for resolution at the Great White Throne Judgment that sits between the Lord's Day and God's Day. Simply, the person remains in the state of death until Judgment Day.

Eighth, Scripture gives examples of losses but does not cover all types of losses that could occur in our modern-day society. Obviously, in ancient agricultural societies, property was mostly land, livestock, crops, and often slaves. As such, the examples given in the Old Testament may not be specific to our day or even in the coming Kingdom; however, the principles are still applicable.

(33) "If a man opens a pit, or digs a pit and does not cover it over, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, (34) the owner of the pit shall make restitution; he shall give money to its owner, and the dead animal shall become his." (Exodus 21:33-34 NASB)

In this example, the man who dug the pit and did not cover it has some responsibility for the loss of the ox or the donkey and must buy the dead animal. Notice the justice in this case; the owner gets compensated in full for his loss so that he can purchase another ox, and the one who dug the pit gets the dead animal, which also has some value so that he recoups some of his loss. After all, this was an accidental loss, and true justice does not try to punish the one who has some responsibility for the accident. The purpose is to restore order to the situation so that both men walk away with a sense that they were treated fairly so that bitterness does not take root. Today, we could replace the ox or donkey with a truck or a car.

Ninth, in light of the previous point, spiritual discernment (i.e., spiritual to spiritual) and the wisdom of God are required to apply the law of restitution. Solomon was granted wisdom to rule and judge the people; so too will the conquerors be granted heavenly wisdom to rule and judge the world.

Tenth, again, as a reminder, the one law that is foundational to all laws and undergirds the law of restitution is the royal law of love. Love (agape) always brings about forgiveness between all parties and leads to rehabilitation and restoration. After all, we are commanded (a law) to love and to forgive. Sons love!

"For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." (Matthew 6.14 NASB)

Love your enemies ... so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5.44, 45 NASB)

When love is not the foundation of justice, then injustice is inevitable. Where love is not manifested, there will be unforgiveness that will lead to bitterness and further injustice. Let us put these words in the positive. When love is the foundation of justice, then justice is inevitable. Where love is manifested, there will be forgiveness that will lead to healing and further justice and manifestations of love.

To reiterate, the goal of restitution is to make things right by compensating for losses an individual incurs as a result of action or inaction (e.g., negligence) of another. God's concept of restitution is not a partial compensation but in all cases a full compensation; it is full restitution. In certain cases, it actually goes beyond full payment to include an additional payment up to seven-fold. But keep in mind that it is never about punishment but about restoration, that is, restoring the loss to the person who was harmed by another, bringing about forgiveness between all parties, and rehabilitating or restoring the perpetrator of the crime. After all, the laws of love and forgiveness are foundational laws to all other laws (Matthew 5:44; 6:14-15).

Property Crimes

Now, let us look at some details of the law of restitution as given to the ancient sons of Israel, starting with property crimes, that is, the theft of one's property. As a reminder, the eighth commandment given by the Lord to Moses is *you shall not steal*. Thus, there are consequences for stealing. The following verses pretty much sum up how a thief is to be treated.

(1) "If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. (2) If the thief is caught while breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account. (3) But if the sun has risen on him, there will be bloodguiltiness on his account. He shall surely make restitution; if he owns nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. (4) If what he stole is actually found alive in his possession, whether an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double." (Exodus 22:1-4 NASB)

If the thief is caught, he shall pay double. (Exodus 22:7b NASB)

The first thing that needs to be noted is that a thief can do one of three things with any type of stolen property: destroy it, sell it, or keep it. Obviously, if it is destroyed or sold, then the property cannot be returned to the owner. In some cases, sold property might be retrieved and returned to its owner if it is located, but this would have to be done in such a way that the purchaser is fully compensated. But then again, it could get a little more complicated if the purchaser of the stolen goods knew he was purchasing stolen goods.

The return of stolen goods is addressed in Leviticus 6:2-5 and Numbers 5:6-7, where one finds something that was lost and lies about it. Of course, this requires that the person have knowledge of the nature of the goods. If he purchases goods with no knowledge that they are stolen, then he has not sinned. However, if he later discovers that the goods were stolen and he knows who the owner is, then he has an obligation to return them (make full restitution). If he does not, then he has sinned and acted unfaithfully. In this case, if caught, he would be required to pay an additional 20%.

The next thing to note is that if the property cannot be retrieved, there is a replacement value assigned to the property based on its value to the owner. Simply, the stolen item is required to be replaced with like kind. In this case, the loss of one ox requires a debt payment of five oxen (5-fold payment), and the loss of one sheep requires a debt payment of four sheep (4-fold payment).

The reason for such a higher payment is that animals are part of a man's livelihood. The ox represents the labor of the field, without which he cannot till his soil to produce a crop. The highest premium is placed on what affects a man's labor. The sheep represent a man's products, such as wool and meat. Thus, the greater the impact on one's livelihood, the greater the restitution payment.

Consequently, any loss due to theft that impacts a man's livelihood requires a greater debt payment. This ensures that the one who suffers the loss of his property is able to continue providing for himself and his family.

If the thief maintains possession of the property, then he has to pay the property owner double and, although these verses do not state so, it would make sense that the property had to be returned to its owner. Exodus 22:7b refers to stolen money or goods, so it is safe to assume that the double payment is a monetary payment based on the value of the stolen item. Obviously, an impartial judge must make these determinations.

Next, if the thief commits his crime at night and is killed by the property owner, then the property owner is not be held liable. The reason is that, due to darkness, the owner might not know if the thief is armed or not. If the property owner is threatened with bodily harm, he has a right to defend himself (self defense) and his family from the intruder. In the dark, a killing blow or gunshot could be inflicted on the intruder. However, if the thief commits the crime during the day, then the property owner does not have a right to kill the thief, for he should be able to discern the situation and avoid killing the thief. This is explained in verses 2 and 3.

Debt Payment, Making All Parties Whole

But what happens if the thief is apprehended and cannot make a restitution payment? According to the latter part of verse 3, the answer is that he must work until he has fully paid his debt. Sitting in prison making pennies for menial work is not a very quick and efficient way to compensate the property owner. In fact, it would be an injustice to the one who incurred the loss due to the theft.

Some people might have a problem with anyone being sold to another, which is slavery, but actually what is being sold is his labor. Perhaps a better way to look at it is that the person becomes a servant (employee) of another. A just system may go like this: The court determines the total debt to be paid with the thief's labor, which includes not only what is owed to the property owner who incurred the loss but what it will cost to employ the thief while he is working off his debt. A value is placed on what could be called the debt note. Once the value is established, the court entertains bids from third parties willing to hire or employ the thief. The bidding is based on how long the third party will employ the thief until full payment is reached. Factored into the bidding process is how much it will cost the new employer to take care of the thief and his family during this time.

Let's say the thief stole \$10,000 and cannot pay it back. Under the law of restitution, he must pay double or \$20,000. In this case, the court might put a total value on the crime or debt note at \$40,000, the extra \$20,000 being needed to care for the thief and his family. The parties

bidding on the man's labor do so based on how long they would employ him, with the debt note being granted to the party that bid for the least amount of time to employ the thief. During this time, the thief cannot change jobs or work for anyone else; he is indebted to the one who won the bid, and he remains so until the full debt is paid. In the kingdom, there will be no dead beats, that is, people who run from their debts. The purpose is to teach him the importance of working for his livelihood.

You see, the purpose is to rehabilitate the thief, not destroy him and his family, which is so commonly done under most penal systems. Through this process, he is taught the importance of working and the consequences of stealing.

But there is more to the law of restitution, for the one who incurred the loss must be made whole quickly. This is accomplished when the bid is awarded. At this point, the third party pays the \$20,000 debt owed to the property owner who incurred the loss. In this way, the owner gets compensated quickly and gets back to his normal routine of life. The thief then works a set period of time at a certain wage that will pay the debt note in full. He is not separated from his family, so that they do not suffer hardship and become bitter. In turn, the employer gets the benefit of the thief's labor. In this scenario, all parties benefit, including the thief and his family, and bitterness from injustice and incarceration is avoided. This is love and justice in action.

Can you imagine how much better all our lives would be if this law were operational in our day?

When it comes to loss of property, the underlying principle of the law is the property that was damaged or lost must be replaced with a like kind. However, this does not prevent the two parties from negotiating a monetary settlement; otherwise, a like-kind payment is required. For example, if a man's brand new car is destroyed, it would be replaced with another brand new car of the same make and model. If the replacement cost were \$40,000, then an equitable payment would be \$40,000.

Examples of Restitution Involving Property

The following are some examples of restitution involving property as presented by the Lord through Moses. Obviously, every situation is not addressed, which means that in the coming eon (age), the judges must have the wisdom of God and spiritual discernment to execute righteous judgment. Further, in a primarily agricultural society, property is mostly made up of animals, crops, and land. Consequently, the principles must be extrapolated to modern-day goods.

"If a man lets a field or vineyard be grazed bare and lets his animal loose so that it grazes in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard." (Exodus 22:5 NASB)

In this case, if a man's animal grazes in another man's field and wipes out his crop, then he is required to make full and equal restitution from the best of his field and vineyard.

"If a fire breaks out and spreads to thorn bushes, so that stacked grain or the standing grain or the field itself is consumed, he who started the fire shall surely make restitution." (Exodus 22:6 NASB)

Another way of stating this is that if you started the fire, you own the fire and are responsible for its destructive result. This should remind us of the devastating fires that annually occur in the western part of the US and the most recent fires in Australia. Under the law of restitution, if a person starts a fire that leads to destruction of the property of others, then the arsonist must make full restitution to all parties. The same applies to an accidental fire.

When I was the president of a condo homeowner's association, I noticed that many residents did not want to take responsibility if a neighbor's unit was damaged due to something that came from their unit, whether due to negligence or by accident. For example, if an owner left water running in the bath tub and the water overflowed and flooded another unit, then it was not uncommon for the owner who caused the damage to state: "It was by accident. I did not mean it to happen. Why should I pay to repair my neighbor's unit? Besides, insurance will cover it." By the way, this is also an example of *moral hazard*: "Let someone else make restitution, but leave me out of it." However, under Kingdom law, everyone has responsibility for what is under their control.

(7) "If a man gives his neighbor money or goods to keep for him and it is stolen from the man's house, if the thief is caught, he shall pay double. (8) If the thief is not caught, then the owner of the house shall appear before the judges, to determine whether he laid his hands on his neighbor's property. (9) For every breach of trust, whether it is for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for clothing, or for any lost thing about which one says, 'This is it,' the case of both parties shall come before the judges; he whom the judges condemn shall pay double to his neighbor." (Exodus 22:7-9 NASB)

These verses deal with property that is entrusted to another for safe keeping while the owner is away. If the money or goods are stolen and the thief is caught, then double payment is required from the thief, unless the goods were damaged or lost, in which case, the payment would be four or five times the value of the goods (Exodus 22:1). However, if the thief is not caught, then a determination must be made whether the trust had been broken, that is, whether the one entrusted with the goods stole the goods for his own benefit. If the one that had been entrusted with the goods did not steal the goods, then he must make an oath in court to that effect. However, if a breach of trust occurred, then the restitution payment would be double the value of the goods.

As a side note, the word *judge* in the above verses comes from the word *elohim*, which is most often translated God or gods. *Elohim* means *subjector*, which refers to one who has authority over others. In the kingdom of our Lord, His conquerors (saints) will be *elohims*, for they will have authority to judge the world (1 Corinthians 6:2).

(10) If a man gives his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep for him, and it dies or is hurt or is driven away while no one is looking, (11) an oath before the LORD shall be made by the two of them that he has not laid hands on his neighbor's property; and its owner

shall accept it, and he shall not make restitution. (12) But if it is actually stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. (13) If it is all torn to pieces, let him bring it as evidence; he shall not make restitution for what has been torn to pieces. (Exodus 22:10-13 NASB)

These verses can be summed up in this way: No restitution is required if animals entrusted to a neighbor are hurt or lost, as long as the neighbor takes an oath that he was not responsible. The owner must accept such an oath and leave it in the hands of God. If the neighbor states the animal was torn to pieces, then he obviously knows its whereabouts. If he produces the evidence, then restitution is not required. However, if the neighbor stole the animal, then he must make restitution.

(14) "If a man borrows anything from his neighbor, and it is injured or dies while its owner is not with it, he shall make full restitution. (15) If its owner is with it, he shall not make restitution; if it is hired, it came for its hire." (Exodus 22:14-15 NASB)

Borrowing a neighbor's goods is treated differently from being entrusted with a neighbor's goods. The reason is that when an owner entrusts something to someone else, the owner retains some accountability in the matter. Another way of stating this is that the owner assumes some measure of risk that something could happen to his goods for which he cannot hold his neighbor liable. However, in the case of borrowing a neighbor's goods, the principle is different, for the borrower assumes full liability for loss of the goods and must make pay full restitution for any loss of the goods. The exception to the rule is if the owner accompanies his goods to supervise its use. If something happens to the goods, then the owner is fully responsible, not the one who hired the use of the goods.

A present-day example would be a mechanic who borrows a jack from his neighbor in order to raise his car, and the jack breaks because the car was too heavy for the jack. The mechanic would have to replace the jack with like kind or make a restitution payment equal to its replacement value. However, if the neighbor accompanied the jack and supervised its use, then the borrower would not be held liable.

(30) Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is hungry; (31) but when he is found, he must repay sevenfold; he must give all the substance of his house. (Proverbs 6:30-31 NASB)

If a man is hungry, it is not a bad thing to desire food to satisfy his hunger. Consequently, if one is caught stealing food, then do not disrespect him, which is what *despise* means. In other words, respect him. However, stealing is still a crime, no matter what has been stolen. God's eighth commandment does not put qualifiers on theft. The man who steals food must repay. But the interesting thing is that the restitution payment is sevenfold, including all in his house, which is higher than stealing another man's ox. In fact, it is the highest required restitution payment of all thefts.

Why do you suppose such a high payment is required? I have two theories. The first is that when one steals food from another, it is a very selfish act, for it implies the hungry one would rather his neighbor starve than himself. This attitude breaks God's highest law, which is the law

of love. We should be willing to starve rather than cause another to starve due to our selfishness. Second, in a kingdom nation, the law of love ensures that no citizen is without the basic necessities of life. This does not mean that a kingdom nation embraces socialism, for every citizen is required to provide for himself and his family. What it means is that if someone falls on hard times and is lacking food to eat, then the law of love demands that the person be helped by others. All one has to do is let his need be known and others will help. In other words, there is no reason for anyone to go without food in a kingdom nation. So, why would one not ask for help in a kingdom nation? Pride! It is pride that prevents someone from admitting a need and asking for help. Consequently, if the person is unable to provide the proper restitution, it is assumed that his labor will be sold as a debt note.

Solomon gives another possible explanation to the seriousness of stealing food.

(8) Keep deception and lies far from me, give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion, (9) that I not be full and deny You and say, "Who is the LORD?" Or that I not be in want and steal, and profane the name of my God. (Proverbs 30:8-9 NASB)

It is a denial of the Lord Himself, for such a one is saying that the Lord is unable and unwilling to give him his portion. Stealing food profanes the name of God. This seems to support my second theory.

(1) Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, (2) "When a person sins and acts unfaithfully against the LORD, and deceives his companion in regard to a deposit or a security entrusted to him, or through robbery, or if he has extorted from his companion, (3) or has found what was lost and lied about it and sworn falsely, so that he sins in regard to any one of the things a man may do; (4) then it shall be, when he sins and becomes guilty, that he shall restore what he took by robbery or what he got by extortion, or the deposit which was entrusted to him or the lost thing which he found, (5) or anything about which he swore falsely; he shall make restitution for it in full and add to it one-fifth more. He shall give it to the one to whom it belongs on the day he presents his guilt offering." (Leviticus 6:1-5 NASB)

(5) Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, (6) "Speak to the sons of Israel, 'When a man or woman commits any of the sins of mankind, acting unfaithfully against the LORD, and that person is guilty, (7) then he shall confess his sins which he has committed, and he shall make restitution in full for his wrong and add to it one-fifth of it, and give it to him whom he has wronged.'" (Numbers 5:5-7 NASB)

These verses deal with people who sin but repent of their sins without being caught in the act and are brought to court for judicial action. Consequently, there are no witnesses to testify for or against such ones, and without witnesses, the court cannot determine guilt or innocence. In other words, the person sees the error of his ways and confesses his sin. These sins include fraud, extortion, receiving lost or stolen property, and false testimony. However, the point is that the one who confesses and repents of his sin pays less in restitution than one who is caught in the act and forced to confess his sin. The lesson is this: All residing in a kingdom nation are encouraged to confess and repent.

A present-day example would be one who finds a \$100 bill in his neighbor's yard and does not inquire if it is his neighbor's but instead spends it as if it were his, even showing what he bought to his neighbor. If at some point, his neighbor informs him he had lost a \$100 bill in his yard, the man has two choices: continue in the lie, or confess his sin and pay restitution. If he confesses, his restitution payment is not double but full payment plus one-fifth or 20%.

Further, the fact that 20% or one-fifth, not double, is required of those who repent speaks of the price of redemption. The number 20 is often considered the number of redemption. Notice how redemption is in view in the following verses.

"But if he should ever wish to redeem it, then he shall add one-fifth of it to your valuation."
(Leviticus 27:13 NASB)

"If, therefore, a man wishes to redeem part of his tithe, he shall add to it one-fifth of it."
(Leviticus 27:31 NASB)

Finally, to add to the above example of the lost \$100 bill, the following verses highlight another important kingdom principle: Finding something that is lost does not give one the right to claim ownership. Again, the law of love demands that we respect the property of others and return all lost property to its rightful owner.

(1) "You shall not see your countryman's ox or his sheep straying away, and pay no attention to them; you shall certainly bring them back to your countryman. (2) If your countryman is not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it home to your house, and it shall remain with you until your countryman looks for it; then you shall restore it to him. (3) Thus you shall do with his donkey, and you shall do the same with his garment, and you shall do likewise with anything lost by your countryman, which he has lost and you have found. You are not allowed to neglect them." (Deuteronomy 22:1-3 NASB)

Lake of Fire

In conclusion, in my book on God's ultimate purpose, I have presented the idea that the lake of fire signifies God's fiery law that will be applied in judging the great and the small whose names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life. They will appear before the Great White Throne for the judgment of their works or deeds. Based on this judgment, they will be required to pay for their crimes, not for the purpose of torture or punishment per se, but for the purpose of reconciliation, restoration, and restitution. Their wicked deeds are a debt that must be paid.

"Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent."
(Matthew 5:26 NASB)

However, God's law of love also demands that all will eventually come out of God's fire, even if their debts are too great to pay, for, at the consummation of the eons, Creation's Grand Jubilee demands that all debts be canceled and all set free. This is God's law!

God is love, and love never fails.