

# Slavery (#19)

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8 December 2009

This manuscript will prove:

- 1) Slavery has always been with fallen man.
- 2) Slavery continues today.
- 3) The proper approach to slavery was demonstrated by Job, Jesus, and Paul.

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Definitions for Slavery

**Slavery:** 1) a person held in servitude as the chattel of another [Merriam-Webster]

2) a forced laborer considered the property of another [Wikipedia]

3) [author's definition]

a) a person used against his will while in custody, and/or

b) a person used to provide unjust economic gain for his controller

**Indentured Servant:** a laborer under contract to an employer for a fixed period of time typically 3 to 7 years

**Redemptioner:** European immigrants in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries who gained passage to America by selling themselves into indentured servitude to pay back the shipping company which advanced the cost of the sea voyage.

**Manumission:** the freeing of a slave by the owner

**Emancipation:** the freeing of slaves by proclamation

## Slavery Has Always Been with Mankind

Immediately after the flood circa 2300 BC, Noah cursed the lineage of the son of Ham by saying: “*Cursed be Canaan<sup>1</sup>; a servant of servants, he shall be to his brothers.*” And so, slavery entered into the daily lives of the burgeoning human race. In Mesopotamia<sup>2</sup>, the early Sumerians in their codex Ur-Nammu (c 2000 BC) referred to female slaves as “mountain girls” and to male slaves as either “mountain men” or “males of a foreign land”. The latter term showed that the outsiders represented a lower caste and could have been prisoners of war. The Babylonian Code of Hammurabi (1760 BC) referred to slaves as *wardu* and mentions that one’s wife and children could be sold as slaves to pay off a debt. In the same period, the Egyptian Pharaohs cultivated domestic, agricultural, and industrial slaves called *hemu*. The personal account of one such female domestic servant is as follows:

I am your servant, together with my children and my children’s children. I shall not be free in your precinct forever and ever. You will protect me; you will keep me safe; you will guard me. You will keep me sound; you will protect me from every demon, and I will pay you 1 ¼ kita of copper...until the completion of 99 years, and I will give it to your priests monthly.<sup>3</sup>

At that time, the Hebrew slaves in Goshen<sup>4</sup> were called *ebed* in the Bible. Later in Deuteronomy, Moses wrote circa 1410 BC: “*We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt (Dt 6:21)*”. The Hebrews in turn had slaves of their own including their own children who could be sold to pay off a debt.

*Now a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the Lord; and the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves (2 Ki 4:1).”*

The Jews were familiar with the God of the Hittites on their northern border who treated slaves not as property, but as assets.

The early Greeks called their slaves *duolos* and *andrapodon* which means “one with the feet of a man”. In Greece, slaves were considered by the learned elite to be not only natural, but necessary. Most households had 10-20 slaves with the rich marshalling up to 50. Slaves could be born into the caste, sold to pay off a debt, or come from a defeated enemy in war. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, the Greek Temple of Erechtheus was constructed with the help of 20 free born, 30 aliens, and 16 slaves. In the Greek culture, the assignments given to slaves were multifarious: police force, civil servants, dangerous occupations like mining, agriculture and industry, and female domestics.

The Romans called their slaves *servi* or *ancillae* and employed them more extensively than the Greeks. Those owned by the state were called *servi publici*. The rich in Rome would maintain up to 100 slaves in their households. It is estimated today that up to one third of large cities and one fifth of smaller towns were slaves captured from foreign wars. The Romans mastered gang slavery on plantations—a practice that many centuries later came to America. Romans also integrated the simplest tasks into a slave's routine. I remember having dinner at Mamma Leon's in New York years ago and having to pay an old man 25 cents for giving me a towel in the washroom. This custom comes from ancient Roman slaves who held a towel at bath for the master. The eventual decline of the Roman Empire was due in part to the increasing segment of the welfare budget for *servi publici* and corresponding decreasing segment for the military.

Slavery also infiltrated religious organizations. When Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 and was renamed Istanbul, the Turks bought 50,000 slaves called *abd* meaning "that which your right hands own". Unlike the Romans, Islam employed household and not field slaves. With the permission of Pope Nicolas V (p 1447-1455), Moslems were enslaved by the King of Portugal. Even cardinals under Pope Innocent VIII (1484-1492) employed Moorish slaves.

America had its share of slavery. It is estimated that 50% of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Europeans and 70% of the Germans were redemptioners. These go-now pay-later emigrants were either redeemed by a person paying their shipping fees COD upon arrival to the captain or were sold into indentured servitude for 3-7 years to pay off the fee. Convicts often served as indentured servants. If you were British, then your contract could be negotiated in England prior to embarking. Otherwise, non-British emigrants would negotiate on the ship with the captain often under unfavorable terms.

On 11 December<sup>5</sup> 1620, 101 Pilgrims from the Mayflower landed at Plymouth. These passengers were bound to pay their colonial financiers a loan at 45% interest. This took the surviving indentured servants 25 years to pay off. After the Pilgrims lost half of their settlers in the first winter, it looked like they would not survive on the former land of the Patuxets who died in a plague four years earlier. At this critical moment, an Indian who survived the plague because he was captured by the British and sold into slavery, volunteered to teach the settlers how to hunt, fish, and plant corn. Squanto had been captured by Cpt. Weymouth in 1605 and spent 9 years in England. He was returned to America and then recaptured in 1615 by Cpt. Hunt and sold in Malaga Spain. The Jesuits redeemed him out of slavery and in 1619 he boarded Cpt. Dermer's ship to Maine and then was dropped off at Plymouth where he was taken in by Chief Massasoit of the Wampanoags.

Most authors identify the first exportation of slaves from Africa with Portuguese seamen who brought 10 black slaves from the Guinea coast of Africa home to Portugal in 1441. In America, black slavery began with the indentured servitude of whites and blacks in Jamestown, Virginia in 1619 for 4 to 7-year periods. Of the estimated 30 million slaves

sold from Africa, about 12 million were brought to the Americas and of those 645,000 to America or what would be the United States.<sup>6</sup> In 1770, the percentage of slaves in various soon-to-be states was: Massachusetts—2%, N.Y.—12%, Maryland—32%, Virginia—42%, Georgia—45%, S. Carolina—61%. In this period, the following was written by a black slave taken captive at the age of 13:

*I must own, to the shame of my countrymen, that I was first kidnapped and betrayed by some of my own complexion, who were the first cause of my exile and slavery...But if there were no buyers, there would be no sellers.<sup>7</sup>*

By 1860, the 645,000 imported slaves had grown to about 4 million. The cost of a slave was generally reckoned on his projected return over a 6-year period. The value of a slave grew from \$300 in 1790 to \$1250 at the start of the Civil War. If \$5 were the nominal weekly wage, then 250 weeks wages equaled 5 years of work which in today's dollars would be at least \$250,000—the cost of a house. Consequently, it was an economic necessity that a slave be given proper sustenance and medical attention. Legalized slavery in the U.S. was abolished by the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment in December of 1865.

Before and during the Civil War, the Christian church was thrown into a maelstrom of controversy. After Rhode Island had established itself as the hub of slave trading in the America in 1730, Samuel Hopkins, the minister of the First Congregational Church in Newport and former slave holder, gave the first sermon against holding slaves in 1770. After the Revolutionary War of 1776, Washington wrote in 1786 that he wanted to devise a plan to slowly abolish slavery, yet he himself held slaves. By the 1830s, two factors had evolved which would polarize the Americans to the point of shooting. Garrisonian abolitionism in New England and Theodore Dwight Weld's anti-slavery movement in Ohio collided when cotton became the chief source of income for some southern states. Then the sinews that held the nation together began to snap. The Methodist Episcopal Church split north-south in 1845. Then the Baptists who as a group were not of the slave-holder class, and excommunicated those who sold a family apart and did not recognize marriage, split in the same year ostensibly over the missionary issue<sup>8</sup>. The Episcopalians, however, like the Catholics did not divide. In the North, Lincoln took special recognition of the Methodists when he said: "...it may fairly be said that the Methodist Episcopal Church, not less devoted than the best, is by its greater numbers the most important of all." In the summer of 1861, the attitude of the Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States of America is summed up as follows: "We venture to assert that if men had drawn their conclusions only from the Bible, it no more would have entered into any human head to denounce slavery as a sin, than to denounce monarchy, aristocracy, or poverty." After the churches split, the country split. Church people on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line saw the war as a moral and religious struggle. The Civil War (1861-1865) evoked more religious zeal than any of America's wars.<sup>9</sup>

Let us conclude this section on how slavery has always been with us with the following quote from the Sultan of Morocco when he was interviewed by a British envoy in 1842: “The traffic of slaves is a matter on which all sects<sup>10</sup> and nations have agreed from the time of the sons of Adam...up to this day.”

### **Slavery Today (2009)**

While legalized slavery has been abolished in today’s world, it has been estimated that there are 12 million slaves throughout the world based on the old definitions of slavery. These include forced labor in African mines, sex slaves in Tel Aviv, and kidnapping traders in cities like Las Vegas. Based on my personal definition of slavery, i.e., forcing one’s will and illicit gain from a person’s labors, there are many more slaves in the world. One has to be careful here because what may be true in one case may not be in another. But as increased centralized power is accrued by governments in the form of socialism, the portals open wide for the following:

- 1) Granting a loan to a person who will most likely (and hopefully) default
- 2) Affecting the economy by intervention so that even prudent borrowers default on loans
- 3) Devaluing the unit of exchange to eliminate personal savings
- 4) Treating sport stars like the former gladiators in Rome so as to make illicit gain from their performances
- 5) Applying coercive pressure to a judge, juror, witness, police officer, reporter, examiner, or public representative to change their testimony for personal gain or a party-line vote for power
- 6) Paying lower wages to one of an inferior caste such as Koreans in Japan or illegal aliens in America
- 7) Blackmailing with defamatory information
- 8) Forcing compliance under threat of destitution on brothers and nuns by the clergy
- 9) Oppressive treatment of the aged, orphans, convicts, and military recruits
- 10) Usurping those rights ordained by God to the economic advantage of the group or government

A perfect example of the above is the story that was covered by 60 Minutes on 6 December 2009. Tim Donaghy was a very good NBA referee, but he had an addiction to gambling. He soon realized that with his inside information of league office directives that were issued to the referees just prior to the start of a game, he could influence the outcome. In fact, with this information, he could place bets before the start of a game and be correct about 80% of the time. He would win about \$2000 per game. But when the Mob in Las Vegas learned of his high win rate, they compromised him to pass the information on to them. If he did not do as they said, they would pay a visit to his wife and children. So, he played ball with them for the remainder of the season. While Donaghy made only two grand a game, the Mob made up to a million a game. Eventually the FBI heard about the

scheme and Donaghy was sent to prison for 11 months. Donaghy fulfilled both parts of my definition for slavery. He was forced against his will by being blackmailed using Item 7 above and his controllers made illicit gains. Personal sin was the cause of his fall.

Imagine this subtle form of economic oppression. You are within a year of retirement and would like to work some overtime in your final year since it will contribute to your retirement benefits. The company you are working for has a history of doing this for its high seniority employees, so you approach your boss and ask for OT beginning next week. Your boss leans back in his chair, acknowledges your long-term commitment to the company, says you can start right away, but then adds that he'd have to make some arrangements. "What arrangements", you ask? "Well, the budget is a little tight right now, so I'll have to let the new guy go." Thoughts race through your head. Yes, he's married and has a kid, but surely he can find another job. Or maybe this: Since my father lived to 90, I probably will too. So that pension increase will benefit me for 25 years and my gain will outweigh his temporary loss. And so, the rationalization goes. What do you do?

### **Christian Perspective on Slavery**

Jesus did not denounce slavery, because he was more than a political activist. Had he been accepted by the Jews, the Kingdom of Heaven<sup>11</sup> would have been ushered in and slavery would have ceased to exist just as it will not exist during his millennial rule. But when the Jews as a nation officially rejected him<sup>12</sup>, he immediately made plans to establish the church. That very afternoon, he began using parables for the first time and after his death on the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), the church was established. Had the churches carefully followed the Law of Christ (Galatians 6:2), slavery even by my general definition (forced will and illicit gain) would never have existed in a Christian household.

Let's examine the words that Job spoke shortly after the Flood which occurred in 2348 BC<sup>13</sup> and was followed by the great dispersion from the Tower of Babel on the Plain of Shinar when Peleg was the ruler.

*If I have despised the claim of my male or female slaves when they filed a complaint against me, what then could I do when God arises, and when He calls me to account, what will I answer Him? Did not He who made me in the womb make him, and the same one fashion us in the womb? (Job 31:13-15)*

The above statement was Job's last reply to his three unsympathetic friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. This exchange of words can be dated to approximately 2000 BC if one assumes that Job is called Jobad in Genesis 10:29.<sup>14</sup> Job's statement shows that those like him with financial means and managerial skills were in positions of responsibility in control of others and those slaves and servants like the Egyptian woman mentioned earlier took umbrage in the security offered by such a relationship. But it also shows the responsibility that Job had to those working for him. His employees had legal rights, and Job had what would in years to come be called a Christian responsibility to those workers. Why—because, in his

words, their creator had made all in the womb. So, as his employees were accountable to him, he was accountable to God.

Two millennia later, Paul met and converted a runaway slave who had stolen money from his previous master. (Modern exegetes use this short letter of Philemon in the New Testament to show either that Paul was pro or contra slavery.) Paul was a Roman under Roman law, and the law at that time was to return a slave to his former owner. This Paul did even though Jewish Law ruled against returning a runaway slave. (See Deuteronomy 23:15.) Paul wanted Onesimus, the runaway slave and now Christian who aided Paul in his own imprisonment, to make restitution to Philemon his owner. Paul also sent Onesimus away with a letter of recommendation that he be manumitted. Paul's epistle does not say whether Onesimus was freed, but fifty years later, Ignatius of Antioch (c 35-117AD) would write that the bishop of Ephesus was named Onesimus—possibly the same Onesimus that Paul took a special interest in.

Under Capitalism a slave owner not motivated by love would at the very minimum be motivated by economic gain and be forced to provide medical care, shelter, and proper rest for his workers. Under a social-based ideology, however, the federal government would at best be hard pressed to measure economic gain within its own system and at worst could subject certain classifications of slaves to extinction at the whim of a federal decree.

### **Summary**

Slavery with all its terms and variations has been with mankind since the beginning and is still with us now. It has been called many things in various settings and various periods of man's cultural development. Here are some of the terms: slave, indentured servant, redemptioner, serf, vassal, field worker, prisoner, convict, detainee, servant, handmaid, waiter, domestic, maid, aid, steward, butler, major-domo, usher, bondsman, bondslave, guardianship/conservatorship, recruit, subject, citizen, laity, domestic help, Gastarbeiter (guest worker), debtor, mortgagee, borrower, underling, hireling, hired hand, help, wage earner, wageworker, cupbearer, clerical staff, personnel, and employee. Any of the forgoing terms may be what a boss calls his worker. From a Christian perspective it does not matter what the word is, but how equitably the worker is treated. There will always be divisions or responsibility in an organized society, even during Jesus Christ's millennial rule on Earth. One of the tests for a Christian is the treatment of those in his power. This is especially true either when one who had no authority is given a new command or when one stands to gain financially. Without the application of Christian principles, any system can turn into an abomination. John Adams the second president of the United States once wrote:

We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other. [11 October 1798]

The above is true about governance and command in general. Without the application of Christian principles, there will always be injustice and there will always be slavery. As countries and organizations throughout the world continue to increase centralized power, the potential for slavery is greater than at any other time in the history of man.

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<sup>1</sup> The land of Canaan was eventually controlled by the Canaanites who claimed the Levant with the Mediterranean to the west and the Hills of Judea with the Jordan River to the east.

<sup>2</sup> Today Mesopotamia meaning land between the rivers (Tigris and Euphrates) would be Iraq.

<sup>3</sup> The Status of Women in Ancient Egyptian Society, Peter Piccione

<sup>4</sup> Goshen was a northeastern section of the Egyptian delta. It was initially uninviting to the Pharaohs because it was a bit distant from the Nile river.

<sup>5</sup> Using their calendar it was 11 December. Corrected to our modern calendar it is 21 December.

<sup>6</sup> Black Diaspora: Five Centuries of Black Experience Outside Africa by Ronald Segal, 1995

<sup>7</sup> Ottobah Cugoano from Ajumako Ghana

<sup>8</sup> The Baptist missionary fund went to the central office in Philadelphia. This board refused to appoint missionaries from slaveholder states, but did retain their contributions.

<sup>9</sup> *The Story of Religion in America* by William Warren Sweet, Harper and Brothers, 1930

<sup>10</sup> Two notable exceptions were the Essenes (See the Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 2004.) and Quakers (See *The Story of Religion in America* by Sweet, 1950, p 287.) From 1830 onward, Abolitionists in the north were primarily Methodists and Baptists.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 4:17

<sup>12</sup> The national sin of the Jews was committed when they as a nation through their Pharisees denounced Jesus for working his miracles in the name of Beelzebul (Matthew 12:24).

<sup>13</sup> Modern creationists like Ken Ham do not differ on the original Biblical determination of the Flood by James Usher in 1656. Basically mankind since Adam has been on Earth for 6000 years.

<sup>14</sup> Jobab here is the son of Joktan who is the brother of Peleg. Consequently, Peleg would have been Job's uncle. All were from the lineage of Shem.