

SLAVERY

Purpose: What does the Bible say about Slavery?

Definition(s): The ownership of one man by another so that the former is viewed primarily as property. (*The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*)
Total subjection to a master. (*The New Lexicon of Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*)

1) Words translated as slave(s), servants (s), etc. in the NASB

Hebrew

- a) ebed - slave, servant
- b) naar - a boy, lad
- c) sakir - hired
- d) amah - maid, handmaid

Greek

- e) doulos - bondservant
- f) duoloo - to enslave, hiring under subjection
- g) soma - body
- h) douleia - slavery

2) How were slaves acquired? How did people become slaves?

- a) the poor could sell themselves into slavery (Leviticus 25:39, 47)
- b) punishment for thievery (Genesis 43:18; Exodus 22:3)
- c) prisoners of war (2 Chronicles 28:8-9, Deuteronomy 20:10-12)
- d) given as a gift or bequeathed (Genesis 29:24, Leviticus 25:46)
- e) purchased
 - i) a wife for oneself (Exodus 21:7-11)

3) The treatment of slaves

- a) protection against physical abuse (Exodus 21:20-21, 26-27)
- b) male Hebrew slaves were to be set free after 7 years (Exodus 21:2) and on the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:39-40)
- c) fugitive slaves were not to be returned nor mistreated (Deuteronomy 23:15-16)
- d) punishment for adultery / fornication with a slave (Leviticus 19:20)
- e) not to be treated harshly (Colossians 4:1)
 - i) slaves to respect their masters (Ephesians 6:5-9)
- f) had sources of income (Matthew 18:21-30)
- g) could have significant responsibility (life of Joseph)
- h) had wives and children

4) Slaves in the household

- a) participate in Passover (Exodus 12:44-45)
- b) rest on Sabbath (Exodus 23:12)
- c) participate in feasts (Deuteronomy 16:11)
- d) slaves in the priest's household (Leviticus 33:11-14)

5) How were slaves set free

- a) Year of Jubilee or 7th year of services (Hebrews only) Exodus 21:2, Leviticus 25:39-44)
- b) Redemption
 - i) God reminds Israel that He redeemed them out of slavery and that they should obey Him (Deuteronomy 5:15, 15:15, 16:12, 24:18)
- c) violation of one of the rules concerning physical abuse (Exodus 21:26-27; Deut. 21:10-14)
- d) escape

6) Some Biblical characters that were slaves

- a) Joseph
- b) Hanna
- c) Onesimus

7) Some Biblical characters who owned slaves

- a) Solomon (1 Kings 9:15-22, 2 Chronicles 8:1-11)
- b) Philemon
- c) Centurion (Luke 7:1-12)

8) Kid-napping / Man-stealing

- a) Hebrew word “ganab” - to carry away (Exodus 21:16)
- b) Greek word “andrapodistes” - one who unjustly reduces free men into slavery as well as one who steals slaves

9) Application

- a) our position in the economic ladders does not matter to God (1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:10-11)
- b) God's work for us and our relationship to Him

(NOTE: this is would be a good initial study on the subject. There is much more that can be done to expand by including ALL verses related to the subject and categorizing them, cross referencing with other passages that would apply to the treatment of people in general. Bible study aides useful to this subject: Topical Bibles, Encyclopedias, word searches, TSK)