After issuing the Ten Commandments, God expanded the commandments related to human relations by issuing more specific laws in chapters 21-23. Additional laws are contained in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. God chose to begin by addressing the treatment of Hebrew slaves who were the lowest of the Israelite society (see Matt 25:40). Israelites could become slaves as a result of:

1. Selling themselves into slavery due to extreme poverty
2. A father selling a daughter into slavery with the plan of securing a marriage
3. Inability to repay debts owed to a creditor
4. Payment of restitution required due to a crime

God required that slaves be offered their freedom after 6 years of service while allowing for those slaves who wished to remain in service to their masters. Provisions were also made for wives and children of slaves. Female servants sold into slavery by their fathers were accorded special consideration. Females who went into slavery were destined to become wives of their masters of their sons. If the master failed to honor that commitment, the female slave was to be set free or redeemed by her family depending on the circumstances.

Next God gave laws regarding killing and kidnapping. He began by establishing the death penalty for those who committed murder while providing a means of escape for those who killed by accident. Later God created sanctuary laws to deal with accidental killings but he forbade murderers to use His altar as a place of sanctuary. God also required those who attacked their parents and kidnappers to be put to death as well. Verse 17 requires the execution of anyone who curses his mother or father. While this seems severe, David Guzik pointed out that in Deuteronomy chapter 21, parents were required to refer such a case to the elders who seldom carried out such a harsh sentence.

Injuries that did not result in death were dealt with next. If a man injured another while fighting, he was required to compensate the injured man for loss of time. Serious injuries inflicted on slaves were cause for some form of punishment, presumably handed down by the elders. Next injuries to pregnant women were subject to compensation or punishment including death depending on the severity.

The remaining are laws in the chapter are about then various consequences of damage or injury caused by livestock. Owners who did not control animals prone to ferocity were subject to more serious consequences including death.

Many writers have compared the Code of Hammurabi to God’s laws. While estimates vary of the year God delivered the law at Mt. Sinai, most settle on mid 1400’s BC. The Code of Hammurabi was a legal code written around 1750 BC by Hammurabi who was a Babylonian king. This document had 282 edicts which described how matters were to be adjudicated. Since this code predates the giving of the law, some suggest that Moses copied the Ten Commandments and other laws from the code. That idea is just another example of attempts by secular humanists to discredit and deny the deity and indeed the very existence of God. The Code of Hammurabi differs from and is inferior to God’s laws in many respects.

1. The code begins with an acknowledgement that the writer was influenced to write the code by a collection of false gods. Contrary to what some believe, Moses did not write the Ten Commandments and the other laws, God did.
2. The code is a collection of what can be considered legal precedents based on generations of human interaction. God’s laws are based first on a relationship with Him. As we studied last week, the first 4 commandments are about our devotion to God. Jesus commanded that we love another as He loved us so the remaining 6 commandments are consistent with that. A writer for Bible Questions Answered appropriately described the code as horizontal while God’s laws are vertical. The article quoted Fred Wright who wrote *“The great fundamental principle of the laws of God in the Hebrew Bible may be summed up in the words: ‘Be ye holy, for I am holy’.* *Such a principle as this was utterly unknown to the Babylonians as seen in their law code.”*
3. The code contains no laws regarding worship. God began with the Ten Commandments then issued more specific laws consistent with the Ten Commandments then progressed to additional laws regarding specifics about how the Israelites were to worship Him such as sacrifices and ordinances they were to observe.
4. It is folly to believe that Hammurabi was the first to postulate that certain acts such as murder and theft were wrong. The first murder was committed by Cain who was only the second generation of mankind. He clearly knew that he had sinned as evidenced by his response to God’s inquiry about his brother. Cain was also guilty of coveting Abel’s relationship with God and killing him certainly did not honor his mother and father so he violated 3 of God’s commandments before they were formally given to Moses. I believe that God imprints on us at birth a moral code so that we innately know right from wrong. Consider the following *“But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding.”* (Job 32:8) *“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.”* (Rom. 1:20)

The Ten Commandments and the other laws issued by God are the foundation of our modern laws which promote justice and equity.