

[NB. This is an archived article. The author no longer holds the view of Universal Salvation expressed herein, which is similar to the view of the renowned church father, Origen. See www.purposeoflife.org.uk for further information]

The Principles of Restoration

By Gerry Watts

The Divine Law teaches the principle of restoration or restitution. This fundamentally means that that which is taken away from someone by somebody else should be repaid or restored, returned or given back. In many instances the repayment was to be at least double of that which was originally lost or taken.

Exodus 22:1-15 gives us the most detail on the principles of restoration. If someone stole an ox or a sheep, which was a persons livelihood in those days, the thief would have to pay back double if the stolen animal was found in his possession, but if he had killed it or sold it, he would have to pay back five-fold for the ox, and four-fold for the sheep. If he didn't have any means of making restitution, the thief himself would have to be sold to the owner as a slave. Either way, a thief had to restore what was stolen, and it was usually double. If he had destroyed or sold the animal, then he was to pay back the necessary value of that particular animal as prescribed by God.

The same principle applied to destruction of a person's property, such as a field where grain was grown or a vineyard. The one who caused the destruction had to make restitution.

In Luke 19:1-10, we are told about the incident with Zacchaeus, the wealthy tax collector, who, after Jesus had had dinner with him, showed acts of repentance by deciding to give half of his possessions to the poor (which he had probably gained through extortion), and restoring four fold to those whom he had cheated. These acts were in accordance with the true spirit of the Divine Law. In fact, he went above and beyond the statutes of the Law. This is why Jesus proclaimed, "Today salvation has come to this house."

In Leviticus 6:4-5, the one who sins against his fellow man by stealing, by deceiving, by lying, by extortion, by cheating, or by any other means that robs someone of that which is rightly theirs, he is to return to the owner in full what he has taken, and add a fifth of the value to it. He had to give this to the owner on the day he offered his guilt offering to the priest for his forgiveness.

This is what Jesus was referring to when he said that if your brother has anything against you, because you have wronged him, then go and put it right, that is, make restitution, before you offer your sacrifice to God (Matthew 5:23-24).

Proverbs 6:30-31 says that men do not despise a thief if he steals food because he is hungry, yet if he is caught, he nevertheless must pay back sevenfold, even if it means that he has to sell everything in his house. This shows that any kind of stealing is discouraged, even when in desperate need. Obeying the Divine Law and entrusting oneself to God is the righteous thing to do.

Jesus said that believers should not worry about getting food and drink and clothing, even when in need, for the Father knows that we need these things. But we must seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these other things that the world runs after will be given to us as well (Matthew 6:25-34).

Joel 2:25 teaches us the principle that God Himself, in accordance with His own Law, will repay His people for that which has been destroyed ('...for the years the locusts have eaten'), making full restitution. God is actually taking the responsibility here for sending disaster as a means of chastening His people for sin and disobedience.

This principle is taken a step further in the New Testament. Jesus states that there will be a restoration and regeneration of ALL things, that is, the whole of creation will be restored and renewed through the coming of the kingdom of God (Matthew 17:11; 19:28). Peter also confirms this restoration of ALL things in Acts 3:21.

The remainder of the New Testament reveals the glorious truth that there will ultimately be a New Creation which will replace this Old Creation, so that the Restoration and Regeneration of ALL things will eventually reach every being that God has created. The Divine principle of Restoration demands that God must take full responsibility for creating humanity and Satan, and for allowing sin and death to enter His creation to destroy it. He will pay back more than double to all of His creatures.

This is in no way declaring that God is a sinner or a thief. Absolutely not! These attributes are rightly given to Satan, who will also pay back all he owes to God. Nevertheless, in accordance with the Divine principle of Ownership, and the laws of liability, God alone is Creator and Sovereign of the universe, so He is ultimately responsible for it ALL. This is why He sent His precious Son to pay the Ransom price so that He may be the Saviour of ALL and the Redeemer of a New Creation in which ALL things are restored and reconciled to God.