

Crime and Punishment in the Bible

Written and compiled by Gary Kukis

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God." (John 3:16–18). "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!" (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). *If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1John 1:9). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

The Doctrine of Crime and Punishment

Criminals in Scripture (from the Dictionary of Bible Themes)

Preface: Interestingly enough, even though the Bible spends a great deal of time discussing sin; there is much less time devoted to crime. This is because sin stands between us and God; and crime is only a societal matter. This is taken out of Proverbs 4

ESV; capitalized is the translation used below.

The Doctrine of Crime and Punishment

1. The Bible is against crime, and provides stiff punishment for the commission of a crime.
2. The first recording of a crime and its punishment is Gen. 9:5–6, after the flood, where a murderer is to be punished by being put to death.
3. Several of the Ten Commandments were crimes. Ex. 20:13–16 *You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not testify a witness of falsehood against your neighbor.* (It is not clear if the 9th commandment is a crime; I would classify it as such and it is treated as such in our society.) This ought to be a point of interest that only 4 of the 10 commandments are crimes.
4. The Bible emphatically warns young people against becoming involved with young criminals. Prov. 1:10–19 2:9–19 4:14–17
5. The Bible is very pro-policeman and very much in favor of a society having good laws and upholding them, even with the ultimate punishment. Rom. 13:3–4 *For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.*
6. However, there are exceptions to obedience to authority:
 - 1) You do not commit a crime because you are ordered to do so. 1Sam. 22:18
 - 2) Leaders, quite obviously, abuse their power and use it wrongly. We have the example of Saul against David. However, it ought to be noted that David twice had the opportunity to kill Saul the

The Doctrine of Crime and Punishment

- King, and he declined, reasoning that he himself should not remove the king by force.
- 3) As believers in Jesus Christ, we are to evangelize others and we are to teach the Word of God. No human authority has the right to stop us from these two things (in the early portion of the Church Age, some believers would perform healings or miracles as well). Acts 4:19 5:26–29 16:20–40
 7. Groups of people *require* authority; and this authority is used in order to provide law and order. Rom. 13:3–4
 8. The general principle of crime and punishment is, the punishment ought to fit the crime; the punishment ought to be commensurate with the crime. Ex. 21:23–25 **But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.** Compare Ex. 22:1–31.
 9. Sometimes, it is up to the judge to determine the proper punishment. Ex. 21:22
 10. When it comes to personal insults or problems with others or when justice is not carried out, in your opinion, then you leave it in the Lord's hands. The Bible *does not* support vigilantism. Rom. 12:18–21 **If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.** (Deut. 32:35 Prov. 25:21–22) Matt. 26:52 **Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword."** Although Matt. 26:52 can be applied to living a life a crime, in context, it is about being a vigilante and exacting your own justice. See also Matt. 5:38–39.
 11. At the same time, the Bible allows you to protect your family and possessions. Ex. 22:2–3
 12. It is one of the criminals hung on a cross along side of our Lord who reveals to us that a person can have a deathbed confession. Luke 23:40–43

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Continuing with this theme of crime.

Criminals in Scripture (from the Dictionary of Bible Themes)

Criminals guilty of murder

Cain Ge 4:8

Abimelech See also Jdg 9:5

Doeg the Edomite 1Sa 22:18

David 2Sa 11:14-17

Absalom 2Sa 13:23-29

Herod the Great Mt 2:16

Barabbas Mk 15:7 pp Lk 23:19

Criminals guilty of adultery

David 2Sa 11:2-5

Gomer (Hosea's wife) See also Hos 3:1

Criminals guilty of theft

Rachel Ge 31:19,30

Achan Jos 7:21

Judas Iscariot Jn 12:6

Criminals guilty of perjury

Joel and Abijah (sons of Samuel) 1Sa 8:3

Criminals in Scripture (from the Dictionary of Bible Themes)

Two who gave false evidence against Naboth 1Ki 21:13

Examples of criminals guilty of treason

Zimri 1Ki 16:15-18

Athaliah 2Ki 11:1-3 pp 2Ch 22:10-12

Examples of delinquents

Those who break the fifth commandment as minors may have been treated as criminals Ex 20:12

Manasseh, king of Judah 2Ki 21:1-2

Youths who jeered Elisha 2Ki 2:23-24

Those who ignore the wise counsel of Solomon Pr 1:1-4 It seems that sections of Proverbs were written with young people in mind. Those who choose to act upon its wisdom will please God and keep themselves out of the troubles common to youth.

Those who succumb to the evil desires of youth See also 2Ti 2:22 Young people are warned that the strength of their desires can easily get them into trouble. Young Christians are, with God's help, able to control such desires.

The punishment of criminals

By hanging Dt 21:22-23 See also 2Sa 21:9; Ezr 6:11; Est 7:9-10

By stoning Dt 22:23-24 See also Lev 20:1-2; Jos 7:24-25

By beating Dt 25:2-3 See also Ac 16:20-23; 2Co 11:24-25

By confiscation of property Ezra 7:26 See also Ezra 10:8

By crucifixion Lk 23:32-33 pp Mt 27:38 pp Mk 15:27 See also Lk 23:40-41

From <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/dictionary-of-bible-themes/5277-criminals> accessed March 7, 2015. Dictionary of Bible Themes Scripture index copyright Martin H. Manser, 2009.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

[Topics](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

The Abbreviated Doctrine of

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Bibliography

[Topics](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

[Kukis Homepage](#)

[Doctrines](#)