An open Bible with a smartphone and a pair of glasses resting on it. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white box.

**Is the Bible
Outdated?**
Slavery

The cost of human trafficking

Every year, human traffickers make
profit from the trade

\$150bn

Women and girls

 **71%**

21 million
victims
worldwide

Men and boys

29% 

54% sexual
exploitation

38% forced
labour

8% other purposes,
including organ
trafficking



Source: UN Office on Drugs and Crime, International Labour Organization
Icons: Kid A - The Noun Project



1. Slavery in context

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⁴² Because the Israelites are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt, they must not be sold as slaves. (*Leviticus 25:42*)

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 - Moses “the servant of the Lord”
- Work relationship of authority/dependence
- ‘Slavery’ more a matter of conditions

¹¹ So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labour...

¹⁴ They made their lives bitter with harsh labour in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labour the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly.

(Exodus 1:11,14)

1. Slavery in context

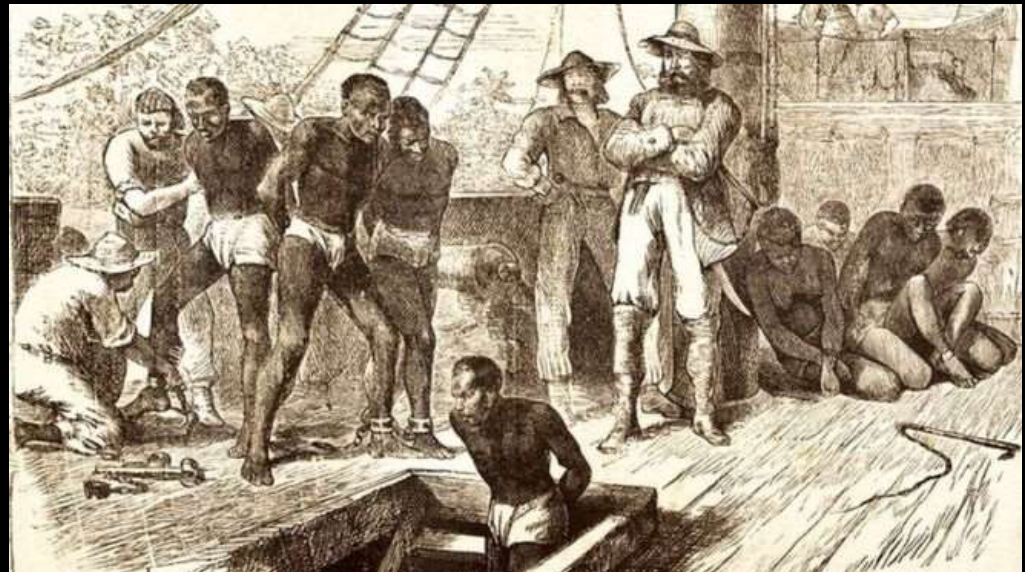
"when a person is under control of another person, who applies violence and force to maintain that control, and the goal of that control is exploitation"

– Organization "Free the Slaves"

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"when a person is under control of another person, who applies violence and force to maintain that control, and the goal of that control is exploitation"

- Kidnapping /slave trade



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"when a person is under control of another person, who applies violence and force to maintain that control, and the goal of that control is exploitation"

- Kidnapping /slave trade
- Debt slavery – no bankruptcy laws

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"when a person is under control of another person, who applies violence and force to maintain that control, and the goal of that control is exploitation"

- Kidnapping /slave trade
- Debt slavery – no bankruptcy laws
- Captives of war – no prisons

Does the Bible condone our modern understanding of 'slavery'?

No

2. OT: Radically Humane



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- Kidnapping forbidden (v16)
- Killing slave same penalty as free person (v20)
- Freedom in case of abuse (v26-27)
- Temporary – though could stay! (v2-5)
- Weekly holiday (Deut 6:12-15)
- Protect runaways (Deut 23:15-16)

¹⁵ If a slave has taken refuge with you, do not hand them over to their master. ¹⁶ Let them live among you wherever they like and in whatever town they choose. Do not oppress them.

(Deuteronomy 23:15-16)

- Pre-war US South: 6 months prison + huge fine for not returning slaves

———— God's perfect standard - Jesus
———— *2000 years of Christian influence*

———— OT Law

———— Lawless humanity



— Lawless humanity

2. OT: Radically Humane

	Old Testament	Rome	Pre-war US
Weekly holiday	Yes	No	Yes
Enough food	Yes	No	No
Legal redress	Yes	No	No
Sexual protection	Yes	No	No
Kidnapping	No	Yes	Yes
Chains	No	Yes	Yes
Torture	No	Yes	Yes
Physical Abuse	No	Yes	Yes

¹⁵ Did not he who made me in the womb make them?
them?

Did not the same one form us both within our
mothers?

(Job 31:15)

3. NT: Abolished in the Church



²¹ Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so.

(1 Corinthians 7:21)

⁹ ... [the law is] for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, ... for murderers,¹⁰ for the sexually immoral... for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine ¹¹ that conforms to the gospel ...

(1 Tim 1:9-11)

4 Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

(Colossians 4:1)

3. NT: Abolished in the Church

- Why no command for masters to free slaves?

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 - Legal system – complex!
 - Only allowed to free limited proportion of slaves
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- Why no command for masters to free slaves?
 - Legal system – complex!
 - Only allowed to free limited proportion of slaves
 - Slaves freed under 30 could never become citizens
 - Fallen, broken world – better off free?



renteAsy.hk
now renting should be



¹¹ Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

(Colossians 3:11)



Pliny the Younger, letters c. 112 AD

¹⁵ Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever— ¹⁶ no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. ¹⁷ So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me.

(Philemon 1:15-17)

4. Mixed Christian History

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 - Church / wealthy Christians redeemed slaves

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- Slavery dwindled in Europe over 1000 years
- Slavery usually seen as unfortunate evil

For you have subjected one who was made precisely to be lord of the earth, and whom the Creator intended to be a ruler, to the yoke of slavery...

How is it that you ... bring down one who is of the same nature of yourself, to the level of four-footed beasts ...?

- Gregory of Nyssa (335-394)

4th Homily on Ecclesiastes



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- Slavery dwindled in Europe over 1000 years
- Slavery usually seen as unfortunate evil
- African slave trade: mixed reasons
 - Racism
 - “God’s chosen people” vs pagan nations
 - Africans seen as cursed (Genesis 9:25-27)

4. Mixed Christian History

- Slavery dwindled in Europe over 1000 years
- Slavery usually seen as unfortunate evil
- African slave trade: mixed reasons
 - Racism
 - Ignorance
 - Forgotten what slavery was like
 - Out of sight, out of mind

4. Mixed Christian History

- Slavery dwindled in Europe over 1000 years
- Slavery usually seen as unfortunate evil
- African slave trade: mixed reasons
- Abolitionists: image of God in neighbour
 - Image of God in all human beings
 - Awareness – Love your neighbour as yourself

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Applications for us

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- Treatment of employees/ helpers

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Applications for us

- Treatment of employees/ helpers
- Act against slavery /trafficking
 - Christian Action Domestic Helper Centre
 - <http://www.stophk.org/>
 - Do what you can if you suspect trouble

5. Spiritual slavery



³⁴ Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. ³⁵ Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

(John 8:34-36)

⁸ Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. *(Galatians 4:8)*

¹⁴ Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—
¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

(Hebrews 2:14-15)





HELP

ME

