

Doctrine of Capital Punishment

1. Under the Mosaic Law the death penalty was administered for at least twenty-one reasons.
 - Premeditated murder Gen. 9:5,6; Num. 35:16-21,30,33; Deut. 17:6
 - Adultery Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:24
 - Incest Lev. 20:11,12,14
 - Bestiality Ex. 22:19; Lev. 20:15,16
 - Sodomy (Homosexuality) Lev. 18:22; 20:13
 - Certain forms of promiscuity Deut. 22:21-24
 - Rape of a betrothed virgin Deut. 22:25
 - Perjury Zech. 5:4
 - Kidnapping Ex. 21:16; Deut. 24:7
 - Upon a priest's daughter who committed fornication Lev. 21:9
 - Witchcraft Ex. 22:18
 - Offering human sacrifices Lev. 20:2-5
 - Striking a parent Ex. 21:15,17
 - Disobedience to parents Deut. 21:18-21
 - Stealing Zech. 5:3,4
 - Blasphemy Lev. 24:11-14, 16, 23
 - Violation of the Sabbath Ex. 35:2; Num. 15:32-36
 - Falsely prophesying Deut. 13:1-10
 - Sacrificing to false gods Ex. 22:20
 - Refusing to abide by legal decisions Deut. 17:12
 - Treason 1 Kin. 2:25; Est. 2:23
2. The modes of execution varied.
 - Burning Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Jer. 29:22; Ezek. 23:25; Dan. 3:19-23
 - Stoning Lev. 20:2, 27; 24:14; Num. 14:10; 15:33-36; Deut. 13:10; 17:5; 22:21, 24; Josh. 7:25; 1 Kin. 21:10; Ezek. 16:40
 - Hanging Gen. 40:22; Deut. 21:22,23; Josh. 8:29
3. Minor offenses were punishable in less severe ways.
 - Scouring Lev. 19:20; Deut. 22:18; 25:2,3; Prov. 17:10; 19:29; 20:30
 - Imprisonment Gen. 39:20,40
 - Confinement within a given area 1 Kings 2:26,36-38
4. The administration of ultimate divine and social justice was to be done by the witnesses (Deut. 13:9; 17:7) or by the congregation. (Num. 15:35,36; Deut. 13:9).
5. Capital punishment could not be inflicted except on the testimony of two or more witnesses (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15).

6. The principle under-girding the administration of punishment is that individuals are accountable and will be dealt with according to their deeds (Job 34:11; Psa. 62:12; Prov. 12:14; 24:12; Isa. 59:18; Jer. 17:10; Ezek. 7:3, 27; 16:59; 39:24; Zech. 1:6).
7. Sometimes the administration of a just form of punishment is delayed or reserved for a future time (Psa. 50:21; 55:19; Prov. 1:24; Eccl. 8:11-13; Hab. 1:2).
8. The primary purpose of punishment is to secure righteous obedience and to administer a just penalty in payment for personal transgressions (Gen. 2:17; Ex. 20:3; Lev. 26:14-39; Deut. 13:10,11; 21:21; Prov. 19:25; 21:11; 26:3).
9. There will be no escape from divine justice (Job 11:20; Prov. 1:24-31; 11:21; 16:5; 29:1; Jer. 11:11; 15:1; 25:28, 29; Amos 2:14; Zeph. 1:18).
10. The worse form of divine punishment is eternal in nature. (Isa. 34:8-10; Dan. 12:2 cp. Matt. 3:12; 10:28; 18:8; 25:41; 3:29; Luke 3:17; John 5:29; Heb. 6:2; 10:28-31; Rev. 14:10,11; 19:3; 20:10).