

The Protection of Justice

General Topic: God Requires Justice

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Lesson Text: Deuteronomy 5:1b-3; 10:12-13; 27:1-10

Background Scripture: Deuteronomy 5; 10; 27; 28:1-2

Deuteronomy 5:1b Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.

2 The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.

3 The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.

Deuteronomy 10:12 And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,

13 To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

Deuteronomy 27:1 And Moses with the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, Keep all the commandments which I command you this day.

2 And it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaister them with plaister:

3 And thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when thou art passed over; that thou mayest go in unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, a land that floweth with milk and honey; as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee.

4 Therefore it shall be when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaister them with plaister.

5 And there shalt thou build an altar unto the Lord thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them.

6 Thou shalt build the altar of the Lord thy God of whole stones: and thou shalt offer burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord thy God:

7 And thou shalt offer peace offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before the Lord thy God.

8 And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly.

9 And Moses and the priests the Levites spake unto all Israel, saying, Take heed, and hearken, O Israel; this day thou art become the people of the Lord thy God.

10 Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the Lord thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day.

Lesson Objective(s):

Teaching Tools:

Word puzzles may be developed from the following site: www.puzzlemaker.com. Also, www.dtlk.com has several visual aids that may be beneficial, as well as www.kidssundayschool.com which provide other helps for teaching.

Bible Journaling may be an interesting way to involve older teens in self-expression of the lessons they are taught. Visit www.lifeway.com/Articles/how-to-start-bible-journaling-in-six-easy-steps to find ways to use this valuable tool to learn and reinforce Scripture.

The Lesson:

Many man-made government authorities around the world seem to struggle with the concept of establishing justice and simultaneously protecting the people it's designed to. The Mosaic law established in the Old Testament enforced justice to the full extent, but God in His infinite wisdom always had a plan to ensure we would not be consumed by the standard of the law.

The word Deuteronomy literally means second law. It was not actually a second law but rather a repetition of the law God had already given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Because of their disobedience and rebellion, by God's command, everyone 20 years old and older with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, would not survive the forty years of desert wandering and therefore would not enter the Promised Land. So, Moses repeated God's commandments to this new generation of Israelites.

Except for Moses, Caleb, and Joshua, the first generation of Israelites who left Egypt were gone. Many of the

people had been small children when they left Egypt with their parents. Others had been born during the forty years of desert wanderings. It's true that every new generation needs to discover spiritual reality for itself. However, it is incumbent on each current generation to pass on its values to the upcoming generation so that its descendants can profit from them.

Our lesson this week finds a new generation of Israelites getting ready to enter the land that God had promised them so many years before. But before they could enter God's great blessing, Moses reminded them that obedience to God's commands was necessary in order to enjoy the blessings of the Promised Land.

Background

The people of Israel—who had been eyewitnesses to the ten plagues that visited their oppressors, seen God part the Red Sea so that they could escape an advancing army, heard God's voice at Mount Sinai, received His commandments, dined on food from heaven, and drank water from a rock—failed to believe that God could take them into the land He had promised them. Fearful, they believed it was better to die in a wilderness than enter God's Promised Land. God gave them what they wanted. Instead of moving forward, they wandered in a wilderness for 40 years until unbelief died out and a new generation was at the threshold of actualizing God's promise. Moses, knowing that he would not be going into the promised homeland, used a farewell address to remind this new generation of God's greatness and holiness. Moses conveyed God's desire for them to have just relationships with each other and foreigners, and the need to remember their history so they would not repeat it.

A Covenant Renewed (Deuteronomy 5:1b-3)

A covenant is a contract or agreement between God and His people. In the covenant, God makes promises to His

people either unconditionally or based on a certain conduct from them. There are many covenants throughout the Bible. For example, God made covenants with Noah, Abraham, the Israelites through Moses, David, and all people through Jesus Christ.

Moses, leader of the Hebrew people and messenger of God, consistently communicated commands, laws, instructions, guidance, judgments, and information to everyone in Israel. Here, Moses ensures everyone receives God's communication of statutes and judgments. Statutes and judgments are formally written enactments of an authority that legally governs a people, city, state, or country. Statutes and judgments are laws, commands, and decrees whether moral, ceremonial, or judicial. The authority in this chapter, without question, is God.

Moses calls Israel together to hear a restatement of the Ten Commandments, which had already been given to the people of Israel. In His commandments, God cited what was just and His children promised obedience. Restatement of the Law is significant for three major reasons. First, the original call to hear the statutes was for the generation of Israelites who went through the Red Sea. The sins of that generation caused them to wander and die in the wilderness before reaching the promised land of Canaan.

Their children, the survivors, were a new generation of people, and Moses needed to share the statutes and judgments with them before entering the Promised Land. Secondly, the restatement of the statutes shows the significance of hearing, learning, keeping, and doing the requirements of God. The statutes are worthy of repeating, so they will become embedded in the hearts of the people that would enter the Promised Land. Finally, and most importantly, the current people of Israel need to understand how to live, prosper, and prolong their days in the land they are to possess (Deuteronomy 5:33).

A Command Reestablished (Deuteronomy 10:12-13)

These verses ask the question, "What does God require of you?" The Israelites knew quite well that God commanded many things in the Book of Leviticus and the Mosaic Law. There were purity laws, rules for daily living, and regulations for family responsibilities, sexual conduct, and relationships. All of which were external observances that could be monitored and enforced. But respect and true love for God must come from the heart and can only be discerned by God. He and He alone can look into the motives and intent of the mind, soul, and spirit.

God, in His love for us, deposited a free will in our spirits and then asked us to love Him, the Creator and lover of our soul. How astonishing that God requested our love. He did not make us robots or mechanical beings that were forced to love Him. He made us independent human beings who must choose to love Him as an act of our will. Moses exhorted God's people to love, serve, and obey Him with every inch of their being, for their own good. God's laws were not designed to spoil their fun or make life difficult for them. They were designed for the people's good, to protect them from their own evil inclinations and to uphold justice within the community of faith. God has the same desires and requirements for us today.

How amazing that we can have the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life with God as a free gift from Jesus Christ our Lord? What a joy to show our gratitude by loving, serving, and obeying God with all our heart, mind, and spirit.

A Commitment Restored (Deuteronomy 27:1-10)

When the Israelites would finally enter the land of Canaan, Moses did not want the land's abundance to distract them from their relationship with God. Their first priority was to write the commandments on whitewashed stones and build an altar at Mount Ebal. The city of Shechem was at the base of Mount Ebal.

This was where the Lord had appeared to Abraham, promising him that his descendants would have a land they could call their own (Genesis 12:6– 7). Those entering Canaan would be fulfilling that promise. Writing the commandments for all to see would be a reminder that they had agreed to have a loving relationship with God and had chosen to obey God's just laws

Final Thoughts

For each generation, there are justice issues that selfless men and women need to address on the behalf of others. Some of our current issues include mass incarceration, child and senior care, affordable health care, adequate education, and immigration pathways. Thanks be to God that we serve a Savior that looks out for us when we fall short of the law. Jesus's shed blood stands in as the ultimate protection of justice.

Be Salt! Be Light! Be Blessed!