

Incarnate Leaders

General Topic: God: The Source of Justice

Sunday, January 23, 2022

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Lesson Text: Deuteronomy 16:18-20 and 17:8-13

Background Scripture: Deuteronomy 16 and 17

(Deu 16:18) Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment. (Deu 16:19) Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. (Deu 16:20) That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

(Deu 17:8) If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose; (Deu 17:9) And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment. (Deu 17:10) And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the LORD shall choose shall shew thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee: (Deu 17:11) According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left. (Deu 17:12) And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. (Deu 17:13) And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.

Lesson Objectives:

God loves justice. Our courts intimate that justice is blind; even the statue of justice has her eyes covered. Although there should be no partiality, and justice should be equitable, we often find that she can be brought with the right fee. While we no longer live in the era we will discuss this week, we must remember that believers respond to a much Higher Power and we are to exercise judgment led by the Holy Spirit, period.

Questions to Ponder:

1. **What measuring sticks can believers use to determine the best candidate?**
2. **How would you handle a friend who demonstrated unfair justice for certain populations of people?**
3. **Could you be a whistleblower (why/why not)?**
4. **What are some benefits of following Christ according to God's commands?**

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.kidsundayschool.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.

Movie Clips are a wonderful teaching tool to further explain or create topics of discussion for a variety of age groups; www.wingclips.com provides clips divided by movie title, category, scripture, or theme. Clips may be accessed on any electronic device.

The Lesson:

Last week, we discussed fair treatment for all of the members of the Israelites. It also extends to every believer on the planet. People outside are watching to see if we can back up our talk with our walk.

Everyone is excited because they have finally reached the apex of their journey. When they looked just over the horizon, the Promised Land is waiting for them to occupy it and call it home. In order to maintain peace, God gave Moses the final pieces of the puzzle so they fit according to His plan.

Moses is commanded to establish a just governmental system. Since he would not journey with them, they needed to get a few things in place before they settled. I'm sure God did not want them going over there and figuring things out on their own. We must remember that

the group preparing to move forward into the Promised Land is not the same group that originally left Egypt. Everyone over 20 years died in the wilderness, after forty years walking in a circle, waiting on God to fulfil His Promise: however, the curse of disbelief caused them to forfeit God's blessing and they never got to live in or even see the Land of Promise.

In the 1st outline, Deuteronomy 16:18-20, God decreed that there should be judges and officers in all the tribes. There were twelve tribes; they needed at least twelve to oversee judicial matters.

God desired to create a society of those who displayed ethical behavior and godly character in their public, as well as private lives. I'm sure it also helped if they had experienced God in some profound way during their trek to Canaan. There were members among this group of youngsters who experienced and committed themselves to following God without deviation from His principles. The Scripture does not tell us specific details of the selection process, but we can rest assured God knew who could serve.

Their primary job would be to handle disputes that may occur to avoid chaos which often leads to disobedience. He also makes a profound statement about their character: They shall judge the people with just judgment. Right off the top, God declares the personality He would permit to make decisions among His nation. Now, anyone might believe they could be a judge; however, God wanted those who demonstrated an ability to follow His commands, as they were written.

Moses gave the judges the following responsibilities:

They were to avoid wresting justice when handling disputes. Wresting means to take by force, pull, twist, to seize forcibly by violent and unlawful means. They had to stand by the decision made the first time; avoid being wishy-washy, attempting to maintain friendships with criminals. Their vote should not be influenced by threats or power. They would judge according to the specifications of the Law, which had no wiggle room. They were to base their decisions squarely on God's Law without any deviation.

They were to avoid showing favoritism and partiality. All deviates were to be treated the same. There was no set of laws that only applied to the poor, as there were no laws only applicable to the wealthy. Everyone would be treated with the same stroke.

Again, they were cautioned against accepting a bribe, as bribes would lead to a crippled system and a dysfunctional government.

Lastly, they could not pervert the words of the righteous. God laid out the plan for their actions with each other. They were to demonstrate respect for each other and their goods, even if they were enemies. God would not change His mind against those who blatantly rebelled against His Law.

In order to prosper and inherit the Promised Land, they had to commit to uphold the Law and operate this system of justice. Just imagine how this world would be when believers continue to remain obedient to God's law, to love Him above anything else and love one another as we love ourselves. Our influence in the world would be profound and we would find our society a better place to live.

The 2nd outline, Deuteronomy 17:8-13, discusses how to resolve disputes. (I have no idea what is wrong with the numbering system in my Word program, so please bear with me and my listing.)

Any matters that judges could not resolve were to be taken to the priests for resolution. The priests were allowed to adjudicate over cases when blood was shed (blood and blood), civil rights violations (plea and plea), cases regarding assault (stroke and stroke). These decisions would be made in a place of God's choosing to ensure that justice prevailed in the land where they would settle.

Following this rigid discipline that God required, He stated that the sentence of judgment was the final word in any decision. Since the priests maintained a close relationship with God and served as His voice to the people, any decision they made could not be changed or altered in any way.

The final warning against disobedience to the decision of the priests is for those who presumptuously (being arrogant and proud with their sin), perverted justice would be put to death to rid Israel of their evil. Sounds drastic, but no one will stand in the way of God's plan. He will remove every barrier.

Today, world politics are suffering and causing immense pain for the electorate because they accept bribes and pay to the highest bidder without regard to the overall outcome that will affect many lives. Christians stand at the precipice of hope and should exercise the right to protest to protect the rights of our poorest citizens. We

must elect those who first demonstrate their ability to listen to God and godly council. Only then will our America be saved.

Jesus will one day reign on earth as King, Lord, Leader!
On that day every knee will bow and tongue confess that He is Lord.

Until that time, we must follow God's truths without compromise!

Be Salt! Be Light! Be Blessed!