

Sunday, 01-23-22

Justice, Judges, and Priests

Bible Background: Deuteronomy 16:18-20; 17:8-13; 19:15-21

Devotional Reading: Proverbs 15:25-26

Aim for Change:

1. DISCOVER why God established the roles of judges, officials, and priests and what those roles entailed
2. VALUE people who make decisions based on God's justice
3. PRACTICE justice in our roles as leaders

****Judge – a person appointed/elected to hear evidence of legal matters and pass judgment/sentence in a court of law**

****Official – a person appointed/elected to an office, charged with certain duties**

****Priests – a person to perform religious rites, an ordained pastor, member of clergy (depending upon denomination), minister**

Background:

- God wanted Israel to be a theocracy (a system of government where priests rule in the name of God) where His people would reflect His government
- Moses was doing it all on his own, serving as prophet and judge (Exodus 18:13-26)
 - Using the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) as his guide
 - The Books of the Law (First five (5) books of the OT) were instructions on how to live long and prosperous in the land (Deuteronomy 5:32, 6:17-19, 11:22; Joshua 1:7, 23:6)
 - God, through His ordinances, decrees, and precepts, set the culture for Israel (1 Peter 2:9)

What is the mark of God's presence in our culture? Do others feel God's presence when you are around?

Focal Verses:

1. Just Officials – Deuteronomy 16:18-20

- a. God directs those leaders (judges) are chosen among the people to administer justice (Numbers 11:14, 17)
- b. The leaders chosen must have the following qualities: Proverbs 11:1, Leviticus 19:35-36
 - i. God fearing (Exodus 18:21)
 - ii. Trustworthy among the people (Psalm 111:7; Proverbs 12:22; 1 Timothy 1:12)
 - iii. Wise (Exodus 28:3; Deuteronomy 4:6; 1 Kings 3:12)
 - iv. Impartial (Romans 2:6)
 - v. Have integrity (1 Kings 9:4; Job 31:6; Proverbs 11:3)
 - vi. Ability to discern between right and wrong (1 Kings 3:11; Ezekiel 44:23; Malachi 3:18)
 - vii. Not subject to bribery (Exodus 23:8; Isaiah 33:15)

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- c. Judges are to have four (4) characteristics:
 - i. Availability (Isaiah 6:8)
 - ii. Impartiality (Acts 10:35)
 - iii. Uprightness (1 Kings 3:6; 9:4; Psalm 25:21; Proverbs 14:2)
 - iv. Dedication (Ezra 6:16; Romans 12:10; Hebrews 13:1; Ephesians 5:21; Philippians 2:3)
- d. Moses implores (begs earnestly) that the judges and officers among the people have unwavering commitment to justice and truth above all things
- e. Must be representatives to listen to facts (not opinions), give rule to the law, and wisdom of God to administer fair judgment

What is the evidence of a Godly leader? Do you have to have a title in order to influence others toward Jesus?

2. Civil Disobedience – Deuteronomy 17:8-13

- a. Priests were used as spiritual advisors to judges to help their discernment in interpreting the Law.
- b. The judge was the one responsible for rendering the decision of the matter (like the Supreme Court for today)
 - i. Three (3) kinds of cases beyond local judges that required referral (2 Chronicles 19:8, 10; Jeremiah 18:18, Malachi 2:7)
 - 1. Blood for blood – murder, whether intentional or not
 - 2. Plea for plea – lawsuit, theft, damage
 - 3. Stroke for Stroke – assault, bodily or property damage
- c. Two (2) reasons why you didn't appeal a decision of the high court:
 - i. Decisions were divinely sanctioned
 - ii. Judges of higher court were men of experience and knowledge above those in the local courts
- d. Any contempt of ruling from the high court lead to the death penalty (turning away from God's Law)
 - i. This was to set an example so that others would not imitate the crime
 - ii. Disobedience to the ruling was punished as severely as idolatry and direct defiance to God

Discuss the Meaning:

- 1. What was the significance of God's command to appoint leaders in the land? Why was it important for these leaders to exhibit excellent moral character and sound judgment?
- 2. Why do you think God established an order to deal with difficult cases? Why was God stern on the consequences of disobedience to the judge's decision?