

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Deuteronomy: Moses' Great Appeal For Israel To Obey God For Blessing

Part V: Specific Treaty Stipulations Of The Great King, Deuteronomy 12-26

G. Heeding God's Ways Regarding Effective Human Leadership, Deuteronomy 16:1-18:22

2. Heeding God On The Selection And Function Of Good Officials

(Deuteronomy 16:18-17:13)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Officials in any institution should serve for the good of their constituents, but often that does not occur today:

(1) According to the September 12, 2013 editorial, "Sue First, Investigate Later" in The Wall Street Journal, p. A18, "Chairwoman Jacqueline Berrien and General Counsel P. David Lopez" of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission "have unleashed their regional attorneys to pursue suits that turn out to have little merit, and to browbeat private employers for political ends and headlines."

One example is the case of *EEOC v. Bloomberg*. "(T)he agency accused the media company of 'demoting and reducing the pay' of 35 women 'after they announced their pregnancies and . . . took maternity leave.' Yet a prior class-action lawsuit had been dismissed after the court discovered Bloomberg pays pregnant women relatively *more* than other employees who took . . . long leaves of absence, and that it doesn't reduce their responsibilities." (Ibid.)

"U. S. District judge Loretta Preska of New York dismissed the case," explaining "the government must investigate individual claims to discrimination before suing . . . [that] the EEOC's rush to sue 'blatantly contravenes' Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which emphasizes 'resolving disputes without resort to litigation.'" (Ibid.)

(2) Congress should serve for the good of the people, but its handling of the Affordable Health Care Act has so far failed in this regard. In March of 2010 as Congress was pushing this bill into law, Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, told the public: "We have to pass the bill so you can find out what is in it" (heritage.org, 3/10/2010). Yet, three years later, the people still don't know what is in it, though the bill starts enforcing the individual mandate nine days from now: in a recent poll, "nearly 70% of respondents said they didn't understand the health-care overhaul . . ." (Ibid., The Wall Street Journal, Louise Radnofsky, "Health Law Faces Skepticism," September 16, 2013, p. A1)

(3) This problem extends to the Church realm: Brannon Howse,'s book, Religious Trojan Horse, 2012, reports that "many contemporary 'Christian' leaders embrace and encourage the false Jesus and false gospels of Mormonism, the New Age Movement, Roman Catholicism, . . . Eastern Mysticism, and the spiritual left." (back cover) Local church leaders in droves are following these leaders to adopt such error, to the spiritual harm of many in the pew.

Need: Thus, we ask, 'If we are to elect good officials for our oversight or if we seek the position of official oversight in some capacity, what would GOD suggest regarding the selection and function of good officials?!!'

I. Deuteronomy 16:18-17:13 taught Israel to select qualified overseeing officials and for such officials to function with characteristics and actions that HIGHLIGHTED ALLEGIANCE to GOD over IDOLS:

- A. Since Deuteronomy 16:18-17:13 is part of the Deuteronomy chapters 12-26 specific treaty stipulations (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 260) that were not an exhaustive list of God's laws, but instructed Israel on specific spiritual challenges she would face in entering the land of Canaan (Ibid., p. 283; Deuteronomy 4:1), the lure to follow false Baals over trusting God for rain and idolizing possessions (see our lesson out of Deuteronomy 14:22-29) tempted Israel's **overseeing officials** in **PARTICULAR** to **lose** a **proper perspective** in their roles, **hurting** their constituents with **distorted judgments** and **actions**, breeding **distrust** and **social unrest**.
- B. Thus, Deuteronomy 16:18-20 directed Israel on the qualifications and actions of her officials pertaining to the temptation they as **officials** in **particular** would face relative to the temptation of **idolatry**:
1. Officials were to judge the people with "court verdicts; judgments" (*mishpat*) of "righteousness" (*sedeq*) Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 290; B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 841-842, 1048-1049), Deut. 16:18.
 2. They were not to "pervert, bend" (*natah*, Ibid., Kittel, p. 290; Ibid., B. D. B., p. 639-641) justice by either (a) showing partiality or (b) accepting bribes, for both vices distorted an official's judgment and subverted the cause of the upright, Deuteronomy 16:19 ESV. Since showing partiality rises from a judge's shifting his sense of accountability from God to extol the "idol" of a "humanly important person," and accepting bribes is bred from materialism, another kind of "idolatry" (Colossians 3:5), officials were to be **personally adverse** to the sin of **idolatry** in every form that they as **OFFICIALS** would **uniquely face!**

3. The officials were thus to heed "*sedeq, sedeq*" (Ibid., Kittel; Ibid., B. D. B., p. 841-842), "righteousness, righteousness," adhering to God's righteousness *exclusively* over any other focus, Deut. 16:20. [Note: this priority differs from our American legal system where "individual rights" are often upheld over "justice"!]
- C. Then, Deuteronomy 16:21-17:1 gave these officials specific responsibilities in their oversight *particularly* as it pertained to **inhibiting idolatry** in their *constituents*:
1. These officials were not to tolerate religious syncretism in their constituents, not allowing idolatrous items to be set up or placed near the altar of God, Deuteronomy 16:21-22; Ibid., *B. K. C., O. T.*, p. 294.
 2. They were also to direct their constituents to offer sacrifices without defect to God (Deut. 17:1), for giving the Lord a defective animal disrespected Him, making it easier for the worshiper to turn to idols, Ibid.
 3. Thus, if even the priests at the tabernacle turned to idolatry, these officials were responsible to intervene to correct and punish them for the sake of keeping the nation faithful to the Lord, Ibid.
- D. Deuteronomy 17:2-7 directed the officials on punishing subordinates found guilty of **idolatry** in *particular*:
1. Moses commanded that if a report arose about a man or a woman going into idolatry (Deut. 17:2-4a), the officials were to make careful inquiry into the matter to discern the credibility of the report (Deut. 17:4b), and if one was found guilty of sin, the officials were to direct his execution by stoning, Deuteronomy 17:5.
 2. To establish credible guilt in such a case, the officials were sentence one to die only if at least two or three witnesses confirmed the party's guilt (Deut. 17:6), and the hand of these witnesses were to be the first to throw the stones in the execution event itself (Deut. 17:7), thus purging the evil from the people.
- II. Moses also directed that an authoritative "Supreme Court," a head tribunal be established for difficult cases to make the rule of God's righteousness a dominant emphasis in Israel, Deuteronomy 17:8-13:**
- A. Aware that some cases would arise that were too difficult for local officials to judge, God had Moses direct Israel to establish a Supreme Court, a head tribunal at the tabernacle, Deuteronomy 17:8; Ibid.
 - B. There, the religious Levitical priests and a supreme civil official of the nation, a "Judge," would hear the case, with their joint decision in the matter becoming the final verdict, Deuteronomy 17:9-10 NIV.
 - C. To enforce the authority of this head tribunal, God directed that anyone who failed to heed its verdict exactly as it had been given would be guilty of a capital crime, and thus be executed, Deuteronomy 17:11-12.
 - D. This punishment would impress the rest of the nation to respect the head tribunal's authority, Deut. 17:13.

Lesson: Since GOD viewed SIN against extolling HIMSELF as GOD the BASIC CRIME in SOCIETY, and thus the basic crime that Israel's OFFICIALS were to INHIBIT, He directed that officials be chosen who had a SOLID COMMITMENT to GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS above ALL forms of IDOLATRY, and that they administer RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT especially relative to EXALTING the LORD versus ALL forms of IDOLATRY.

Application: May we (1) believe in Christ as Savior to become a child of God, John 1:11-12. (2) Then, may we SEEK to elect officials over us (or serve as such officials), be it in the civil realm or in the Church, who (a) best UPHOLD GOD versus any COMPETING "IDOL," be it a human ideology, materialism or person(s), etc., and who (b) administer RIGHTEOUSNESS based on a DEEP SENSE of ACCOUNTABILITY to ALMIGHTY GOD.

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

In a town here in Connecticut, an elected town official, a Christian, recently faced strong pressure from other local leaders in that official's political party to make a ruling that favored their party versus heeding a town statute.

Realizing the need to revere God and heed His Word on obeying every ordinance of man (1 Peter 2:13), at significant personal political risk, the believer chose to heed the statute, and received criticism from party members.

However, the town's lawyer got involved to clarify that the decision by this Christian official to follow the statute saved the town a potential and an expensive lawsuit, meaning this official had served the taxpayers well!

This is the kind of official God wants, be it in the civil realm or in the Church. We need overseers in all our institutions who so revere the Lord above money, fame, people, human ideology or anything else that can be a false "idol" to heed, that they officiate what is **RIGHTEOUS** as **GOD** views righteousness! Only then can those under such officials come to trust them as officials of integrity, and only then can there be rest in their constituents.

May we believe in Christ as Savior to become a child of God. Then, as believers, may we seek to elect officials either in the civil or the Church realm who BEST revere God so as to deal justly in His honor versus following any other "god," be it a man-made ideology, or materialism, or people, etc.

May we who officiate in civil or Church realms realize we are accountable to GOD for our every official action, and so WORSHIP and heed HIM that we do what is RIGHTEOUS for the good of our constituents!