

Civil Laws
Deuteronomy 16:18-20:20
Study Guide

God knew that if his people were going to be a nation of stability and order, they had to have a godly and strong civil government. God already has told Israel how they can specifically honor Him in their worship, now He specifically spells out how they are to conduct themselves in a God honoring way in the civil setting.

This section focuses on three main aspects of civil life. First, God enacts laws which make sure that His people are lead by godly exemplary leadership. Second, laws are given to ensure that justice and equity reign among people. Third, laws are given which regulate warfare. As you examine these civil laws this week, consider how vital of a role that government plays in the outworking of God's plan. Notice how concerned that God is with providing leadership which will accurately represent Him and His will to His people.

Day 1

Read Deuteronomy 16:18-17:13

1. What was Israel to appoint in every city? What kind of men were these to be? What activity were they to abstain from? Why?

2. The judges of the city had the responsibility to make sure that idolaters were executed. What was needed as proof that such idolatry was taking place? Why do you think that God made this a necessary rule before execution took place?

3. What was the judge to do if he was unsure about a decision that needed made? Why?

4. If a judge believed that the Levites had made the wrong decision and so he therefore changed the ruling, what was to happen to him? What made the Levite's decision more authoritative than the judges?

5. Thank God for His goodness in providing the institution of government. Having a stable government allows you to live freely by protecting you from foreign invasion and lawless citizens. While you do not live in a theocratic (ruled by God through priests) style government, thank Him for preserving in His Word how He directly governed Israel. Pray that He will help you to obey the important principles you read about today such as justice, responsibility, and obedience to authority. Pray that your state and national leaders would exhibit such godly characteristics.

Day 2

Read Deuteronomy 17:14-20

1. This passage deals specifically with the conduct of what governmental leader?
2. At this time, Israel did not have a king. However, God knew that the time would come when Israel would desire to have one. What passage of Scripture records Israel's request for her first king? Who was this king?
3. Did Israel's king have to be an Israelite? Why do you think this was important?
4. What 3 things was Israel's king not to do? Can you name some kings who broke some or all of these laws?

5. What was a new king to write out for himself? What was he to do with this? How often was he to do it? What three benefits would he receive for doing this?

6. Daily exposure to God's law was to keep the king obedient, humble, and blessed. Thank God that His word is powerful to change the heart and alter behavior. Know that if you too commit to reading His Word daily, it will greatly impact your life. Meditate on Psalm 119:9-11 while you contemplate how gracious God is to give us such a cleansing agent.

"How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119:9-11).

Day 3

Read Deuteronomy 18:1-22

1. Having already given instruction regulating judges and kings, here God gives laws on how the priests are to conduct themselves. Since the Levites were not given any land to grow food and raise animals on, how were they to be supported?

5. What was the basic test to see if a prophet was the true prophet or a counterfeit?

6. Thank God for providing spiritual leadership for His people and for giving them strict qualifications to insure their competency. Think of ways that you can tangibly minister to those who spiritually minister to you.

If you mess around with occultist paraphernalia, repent of such practices and destroy them before God destroys you. This law is not limited to Israel, but is universal as seen from the fact that God destroyed entire nations who had no covenant with Him for such practices.

Praise God that He has provided the ultimate Prophet whom we can be certain not only speaks the true Word of God, but is God Himself.

Day 4

Read Deuteronomy 19:1-21

1. In our study of Deuteronomy, we have already briefly covered the "Cities of Refuge." This passage deals with the purpose of these cities in much more detail. What was the difference between a manslayer and a murderer?

2. In that day, when a man was killed, intentionally or unintentionally, revenge was sought out by the man's family and friends. These cities gave safety for those who killed accidentally. What does this reveal about the character of God?

3. From verse 14, in what way were the children of Israel to respect the personal property of others?

4. What was the penalty for testifying falsely in the court of law? Which commandment does this sin violate? Have you ever been guilty of putting your own spin on the truth in order to get someone in trouble? If you have, repent of this, make amends to the person you hurt, and commit to speaking the truth in the future.

5. From verse 21, what was the punishment if you were to deliberately kill someone? What would your punishment be if you hit a person in the eye and caused them to lose it? What if you crippled a person's hand or foot?

6. Do these laws seem too lenient or too strict? Explain your answer.

7. Ask God to help you live a life that loves your neighbor as yourself. Ask for His forgiveness for the times that you have treated people unfairly and judged situations before you heard all the facts. Thank Him that he never judges unfairly or is ignorant of any facts. Thank Him that he does not deal with us as we deal with others. Today, start treating others the way that you would have them, and God, to treat you.

“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

Day 5

Read Deuteronomy 20:1-20

1. Israel's enemies were superior to them both in military experience and in number. In what were they to place their confidence in a battle against such a formidable foe? How could they know that this would help?

2. What was the role of the priests in battle?

3. Do you ever go through times when it seems as if your circumstances are far too difficult for you to handle? In such times, where should your confidence come from? Give an example of such a situation and write down how God was faithful to sustain you through it. Think of this example often to remind you that the same God who was faithful in the past will be faithful in the future.

