

JUSTICE FOR ALL Sunday School- June 3, 2012

Unifying Topic: RULES FOR JUST LIVING

Lesson Text

I. Stay Away From Wrongdoing (Exodus 23:1-3)

II. Fairness And Equality (Exodus 23:4-5)

III. Stand Up For What Is Right (Exodus 23:6-9)

The Main Thought: Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment. (Exodus 23:2, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Everyone desires and deserves justice. How do we act justly toward friend and foe? By treating everyone the same, we reflect the justice of God.

Lesson Aim: To teach students that God gave His Word so that it could be used as His guide for justice and right living.

Life Aim: To show that most people agree that justice should be done for "the least of these." But God also made clear that the wealthy and powerful do not deserve less justice than the poor.

23:1 Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.

23:2 Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment:

23:3 Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause.

23:4 If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.

23:5 If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.

23:6 Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause.

23:7 Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked.

23:8 And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.

23:9 Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

SYNOPSIS:

Chapter 22

¹The laws of this chapter relate...

I. To the eighth commandment, concerning theft (v. 1-4); trespass by cattle (v.5); damage by fire (v. 6); trusts (v.7-13); borrowing cattle (v.14, 15), or money (v.25-27).

II. To the seventh commandment; against fornication (v.16, 17), bestiality (v.19).

III. To the first table, forbidding witchcraft (v.18), idolatry (v.20); commanding to offer the firstfruits (v.29, 30).

IV. To the poor (v.21-24).

V. To the civil government (v.28).

VI. To the peculiarity of the Jewish nation (v.31).

²If a man steals, he should restore multiples of whatever he stole. If a person borrows and what he borrows is destroyed, he should restore it. If a man lies with a maid, he should marry her. He who sacrifices to another god shall be destroyed. Do not vex, oppress, or afflict others. God will be angry if this does happen. Do not lend money with interest to the poor. Do not delay in your offerings. You shall be holy men to me.

LESSON:

Exodus 23:1-3 Stay Away From Wrongdoing

Chapter 23 states more laws the Lord had handed down in Chapter 20. This deals with basic laws that deal especially with protection of human life and property—justice for all.

23:1 Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. A false report is something that's not true. They were not to be a false witness by giving false reports; neither go in partnership with, join hands with the wicked. Sometimes we cannot avoid hearing a false report, but we must not receive it, we must not hear it with pleasure, nor give credit to it.

23:2 Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment: It doesn't matter what the crowd is doing, we are not to follow to do evil. Frequently, rich people bought their acquittal by bribing false witnesses; buying public's support. The Israelites were warned against buckling under such pressure. Don't give in to peer-pressure. "Wrest" means to turn, twist, or distort. Don't answer in a cause to pervert justice. We can withstand the pressure of the crowd by remembering that popularity and success are temporary, while the things God offers are everlasting.

¹ http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/comm_view.cfm?AuthorID=4&contentID=700&commInfo=5&topic=Exodus

² http://www.access-jesus.com/Exodus/Exodus_22.html

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

23:3 Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause. A poor man should not be misrepresented or be shown unfairness in judgment, nor suffer wrong because he didn't have resources to help himself. Justice is to be fair. There should not be any partiality by altering testimony; even pitying the poor must not sway one when judgment is to be given.

Exodus 23:4-5 Fairness And Equality

23:4 If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. The thought of being kind to enemies was new and startling in a world where revenge was the common form of justice; even returning a lost animal owned by their enemy gone astray was to be returned at once, even if the enemy would use it to harm them.

23:5 If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him. ³This would be for the animal's benefit, as well as the enemy's. Probably, this would cause these enemies to forget their differences. Helping all who are in need is always the thing to do, whether they are friends, enemies, or strangers. To apply God's laws of fairness and kindness to our enemies was to show that we are truly different from the world.

Exodus 23:6-9 Stand Up For What Is Right

23:6 Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause. This is the refusal to take advantage of the poor in a lawsuit; his rights should not be tampered with. ⁴Comparing verse 6 with verse 3 was the part of the judge to defend the poor against the oppression of the rich, and the part of the witness to take care lest his feelings of natural pity should tempt him to falsify evidence. Verse 6—be fair and honest in judicial proceedings. Verse 3—treat with equality. ⁵Do not deny justice to the poor, in their lawsuits. Don't have anything to do with false charges, and don't put innocent people to death.

23:7 Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. Keep away from giving false judgment; be cautious of inflicting capital punishment on one whose guilt was not clearly proved. Don't bring death on an innocent man that has justice on their side, for a righteous God will not leave such wickedness unpunished. In His own time God will sooner or later inflict the deserved punishment upon them.

23:8 And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous. There are no bribes to be taken. Being paid to lie is even worse than just lying to get something done. A bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the righteous.

23:9 Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. The Israelites were not to oppress strangers, since they knew what it was like to be strangers in a foreign land. The warning against oppressing the foreigner refers to the oppression of a stranger in judicial matters by the refusal of justice, or by harsh and unjust treatment in court.

SUMMARY:

This Chapter gives more general basic laws and instructions involving staying away from wrongdoing, fairness and equality, and standing up for what is right in the legal system of justice. Here are, cautions concerning judicial proceedings; it was not enough that they had good laws, better than ever any nation had, but care must be considered for the due administration of justice according to those laws.

- a. ⁶Be a true witness and not to side in with the unrighteous in legal cases (v.1).
- b. Do not pervert justice by being influenced by the crowd (v.2).
- c. Do not show favoritism to the poor (v.3).
- d. Be kind, even to the animals of a person you have a legal dispute with (vv.4, 5).
- e. Never deny justice to the poor because of their social status (v.6).
- f. Do not give a false testimony in court that might result in their death (v.7)
- g. Accept no bribes for favoritism in court (v.8).
- h. Never take advantage of a stranger (v.9).

APPLICATION:

Treat others how we would want to be treated. Our rules for just living come from God. He is a just God to the rich and to the poor.

³ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/Exodus/40.html>

⁴ <http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Bible.show/sVerseID/2151/eVerseID/2151/RTD/Barnes>

⁵ <http://sernabibleblog.blogspot.com/2006/11/exodus-23.html>

⁶ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/exodus-231/>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>