

Study Hints for Thinking Further

International Bible Lessons

Exodus 23:1-9

Sunday, June 3, 2012

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Some Bible study groups or classes can further discussion by asking some or all of the **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** below. Others may want to send the bulletin size *International Bible Lesson* home with their students for further study in the coming week to encourage continuing Bible study. The *Study Hints for Thinking Further* below are not actually intended to be answers to the discussion questions, but hints a teacher may use to help students think through and discuss the questions in class.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. How do we know what is just and unjust?

Some might answer, "What the majority decides;" however, God says in the Bible not to follow the majority in wrongdoing; therefore, the Bible teaches there is a higher standard for right and wrong, for just and unjust, than what the majority wants. Most know from experience and observation that kings (read the Old and New Testaments) and other government leaders, legislatures, law courts, and judges have sometimes made wrong or unjust decisions, for they are only human, so human decisions (no matter how made) cannot be the absolute standard for right and wrong, just and unjust. God made people so we almost naturally know when the decisions of others (and often our own decisions) are right or wrong, just or unjust. God has built this sense of right and wrong within our minds (sometimes called the conscience), and He has given us the ability to judge right from wrong. God gave us a will so we could choose to do right or wrong. For example, a person may choose to steal and their conscience may not bother them; however, usually they will get very upset and judge stealing to be wrong if someone steals from them. But, we do know of some people who do not seem have a conscience, and we know of others who think something is wrong that the majority know is right and just. The only solution for society is to recognize that God has given us laws suited to the way He made us for our own happiness, and to violate God's laws will bring unhappiness to ourselves and others. In the Bible, we learn that God's laws are the only absolute and totally true basis for knowing right from wrong, what is just from what is unjust, and for making absolutely valid moral judgments. The Bible must be the objective guide the knowing what is just and unjust.

2. How can God's people live justly in an unjust society or where majority rules?

In accordance with the hints given in Question 1, God's people can keep living according to what God commands and teaches in the Bible no matter what others want. The decision to obey God and remain faithful to God according to the Bible at all times may lead to martyrdom, but it will also lead to eternal life with God and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The decision may lead to living a quiet, prayerful life in obscurity, praying for changes in people, government, and society, praying for leaders and churches, praying for and preparing for what God may want you to do at some point in the future.

The decision may lead to active involvement in government or politics to trying to bring about needed changes according to the laws of God. It may lead to becoming a Bible teacher, a pastor, preacher, evangelist, or missionary. God's people need to choose to live according to the Bible's teachings, especially as demonstrated, interpreted, and taught by Jesus Christ. God's people also need to pray for the Holy Spirit to guide them, empower them, and give them wisdom to do right, and for God and His angels to protect them and others from the evil one and those who would promote evil in society or the church.

3. How does the lesson teach us to be concerned for all people and all domestic animals?

The lesson tells us not to follow the majority in wrongdoing or act unjustly—this is a concern for everyone and helps everyone. We are told to help our enemies in certain circumstances—certainly we are not to help our enemies in wrongdoing and we may need to oppose them. We are to help domestic animals; helping a domestic animal in need is more important than how we may feel about an enemy. In other parts of the Bible, we learn that those animals that are killed, sacrificed, and eaten, are not to be tortured in any way—they are not to have their suffering prolonged when killed.

4. In what ways does God's law show concern for the poor?

The Bible specifically mentions the poor and that they should receive justice and be treated justly, just as everyone else is treated with justice, neither better nor worse than others. In other parts of the Bible, we learn how the poor are to be given the opportunity to work and their working conditions.

5. What is the difference between a resident alien and an illegal alien?

A resident alien is in the country by permission of the government, has certain rights extended to them so they will be treated justly, and is expected to obey and uphold the laws of the government of the nation where they reside. An illegal alien has violated the laws of the country and government when they enter the territory of that nation in violation of the government's laws. They do not have all of the rights that would be extended to a citizen or resident alien, because they have broken and are breaking the laws of the nation where they reside with their presence in that country. Though they are not to be mistreated, they can be treated as lawbreakers and suffer the just consequences of breaking the law.

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