

Introduction: The Central Tribunal and God's Perfect Law

Truly it is a beautiful picture when we see how God orders His people. In God's order, in God's way, He has established governments to maintain justice and order in a world marred by sin. The law of God is written and definite, clearly revealed in the statutes and case laws of Scripture. This week, we are looking deeply at the structure and wisdom of God's law as revealed in Deuteronomy 17.

This passage takes us into the heart of biblical civics, revealing how the civil sphere, and indeed all spheres of authority, should be governed according to the perfect justice of God. This is not merely an ancient civil code; it is a rich mine for the ore of government in the family, the church, and the state today. As we prepare our hearts and homes for the upcoming Lord's Day, we must cultivate a holy reverence for the institutions God has established in our own time.

Day 1: The Provision for Difficult Matters

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 17:8–9 (NKJV)

"If a matter arises which is too hard for you to judge, between degrees of guilt for bloodshed, between one judgment or another, or between one punishment or another, matters of controversy within your gates, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the Lord your God chooses. And you shall come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge there in those days, and inquire of them; they shall pronounce upon you the sentence of judgment."

The problem is never with the law of God; the problem is with ourselves. We must humbly recognize our inability as mere men and women to fully understand the complexities of life in a fallen world. The full significance and application of God's laws are not always immediately evident to us. Moses outlines the solution for when local judges faced a matter too hard for them in judgment. They were not to guess, and they were not to force their own uneducated will upon the people.

They were commanded to appeal to a central tribunal. This was a high court established at the central sanctuary, where the wisest men, the priests, and the judge would adjudicate the matter based upon God's revealed law. What do we mean by this? We mean that God provides a way for truth to be established when we are confused. We are not left to our own devices. We must have the humility to admit when a matter is too difficult for us and seek the counsel of older, wiser men and women who are grounded in the Word of God.

Prayer

Lord God, thank You for the perfection of Your law. Forgive me for the times I have relied entirely upon my own understanding instead of seeking the wise, godly counsel You have provided. Grant me the humility to admit when a matter is too difficult for me, and give me a heart that deeply desires Your truth above my own opinions. Amen.

Day 2: The Root of Anarchy and the Demand for Obedience

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 17:10–11 (NKJV)

"You shall do according to the sentence which they pronounce upon you in that place which the Lord chooses. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they order you. According to the sentence of the law in which they instruct you, according to the judgment which they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left from the sentence which they pronounce upon you."

God in His profound wisdom knows that if we allow lower courts, or individuals, to disobey the ruling of established authority, we introduce chaos and anarchy into society. Defiance of the authority of civil government leads to anarchy, and anarchy leads to the dissolution of society. He who despises the authority of government and preaches rebellion is the worst enemy of men. The central tribunal was not an appellate court to endlessly debate and overturn decisions, but a supreme trial court designed to deliver the final word of justice.

Once that word was given, meticulous obedience was required. To turn aside to the right hand or to the left was a direct violation of God's command. When a decision is rendered by those in proper authority over us, we must not act presumptuously by casting it aside. We are called to submit to God-ordained authority even when our pride desires otherwise. If their authority came merely from man, we would plead with men, but God has placed them there.

Prayer

Father, root out the spirit of rebellion that so easily entangles my heart. Teach me what it means to yield to the authorities You have placed in my life. Protect our church and our nation from the dissolution of anarchy, and help me to be a peacemaker who respects the final word of justice. Amen.

Day 3: Honoring the Civil Magistrate

Scripture Reading: Romans 13:1–2 (NKJV)

"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the

authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves."

The moral law contained in the establishment of the central tribunal should govern and guide our view of the state today. God has ordained three distinct spheres of government—the family, the church, and the state. Each has its own jurisdiction, but all operate according to the same standard of truth, justice, and divine wisdom. To usurp proper, God-appointed authority in any of these spheres is to unravel authority itself and show contempt for the living God who instituted it.

We must honor the civil magistrate. While we stand firmly against tyranny and injustice, we must not adopt the spirit of the age that speaks evil of all government. We must show honor to civil authority, recognizing that it is God's ordinance to restrain evil. As a family, we must carefully consider how we speak about civil leaders and church elders in our own living rooms. If we criticize them constantly, we are mimicking the rebellious spirit of the world rather than modeling biblical submission.

Prayer

Sovereign Lord, You alone set up kings and bring down rulers. I pray for our civil magistrates, that they would govern according to Your law and perfect justice. Keep my tongue from the wicked, rebellious complaining of the world. Let my speech reflect a deep respect for Your ordained authorities. Amen.

Day 4: The Jurisdictions of the Home

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 5:22–24 (NKJV)

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."

This profound principle of the central tribunal applies directly to the government of our own homes. In family government, the husband and father is the final court of authority. He is accountable to God for the spiritual and physical well-being of his house. The wife acts as the local judge in governing her children and managing the daily affairs of her household. She is a queen in her home, clothed with dignity and honor.

However, in difficult cases or matters with wide implications, she ought to refer the case to her husband. She must then abide by his decisions, not acting presumptuously to undermine him. She submits as unto the Lord, not merely as unto a man, but as unto the God who has given him authority. Conversely, the husband must not meddle in or undermine the authority of the lower court judge, his wife. He must lead with wisdom and

grace, supporting her daily management. Both must respect the jurisdiction God has established, working together to build a household that honors Christ.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for the beautiful design of marriage and the home. I pray for husbands to lead with sacrificial love and firm, godly wisdom. I pray for wives to manage their homes with grace and to honor the leadership of their husbands. Bind our homes together in unity, that we might picture the gospel to the watching world. Amen.

Day 5: Purging the Spirit of Presumption

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 17:12–13 (NKJV)

"Now the man who acts presumptuously and will not heed the priest who stands to minister there before the Lord your God, or the judge, that man shall die. So you shall put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear and fear, and no longer act presumptuously."

The spirit of presumption is an arrogant, haughty spirit that says, "I know better than they do." In the Old Covenant, the man who acted presumptuously in Israel, refusing to hearken to the high court, was put to death to purge the evil from the land so that all the people would hear and fear. God takes rebellion seriously. We must constantly guard our homes against this creeping attitude, ensuring that we model and teach biblical submission to the next generation.

Children are under the government and courts of their family. Young people, you are required to obey and submit to the decisions of your parents. To go behind your parents, to speak evil of their decisions, or to complain to your siblings is to sow anarchy in your home. You are tearing down the stability of your own family. True freedom is found only within the bounds of God's appointed order. When we repent of our presumption and joyfully submit to the authorities God has placed over us, we reap the blessings of stability and peace.

Prayer

Holy Father, search my heart and expose any arrogant or presumptuous thoughts. Teach the children in our church to honor their parents, that it may go well with them. Purge the evil of rebellion from our midst, that we may be a people who fear You, love Your law, and walk faithfully in Your ways. Amen.

Conclusion: True Freedom in Submission

In this study, we see the absolute necessity of God-ordained authority to prevent anarchy and ensure justice. The establishment of the central tribunal in Israel demonstrates that

while local leaders have real authority, there must always be a final court of appeal to settle complex disputes. God demands meticulous, humble obedience to these appointed authorities, warning that the presumptuous, rebellious heart is a cancer to society. As we apply this to our own lives, we are reminded that whether in the state, the church, or the family, faithful submission to proper authority is a direct reflection of our submission to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Let us walk in God's order, in God's way, trusting that His design is vastly superior to our own.