



Bible Reading Plan : 40 Days on Justice

Day 16

Esther as Liberator of Her People III

Read > **Esther 7:1-8:17**

Contemplate > How is the theme of judgement demonstrated in this passage?

What element of fairness or justice can you see in this passage? How comfortable or uncomfortable do you feel about the Jews being able to defend themselves by destroying, killing and annihilating any armed force that might attack them, along with their women and children, and to plunder their goods (Esther 8:11)? If it was your family and people who were under threat would you feel differently about the Judgement of their persecutor? How might this passage be a fulfilment of Deuteronomy 25:17-19 and 1 Samuel 15?

LIVING AS GOD'S PEOPLE

God has expectations of his people in regards to righteousness and justice. Because we know a God of goodness, holiness, mercy and kindness he expects that as his people we will reflect his character. If God is merciful, then we should be merciful. If God is holy, then we should be holy. In this section keep an eye out for how God's expectation that his people will be righteous and just plays out in practical examples.

Day 17

Standards of Just & Righteous Living

Read > **Exodus 20:1-23:31**

Contemplate > What issues of righteousness does this passage identify? What are God's expectations about how his people will live? What issues of justice does this passage identify? Does it surprise you that social justice issues like slavery (21:1-11), the position of raped women in society (22:16-17), the treatment of refugees (22:21), orphans, widows (22:22-24) and the poor (22:25-27) are addressed in the Jewish Law along with the more traditional issues of idolatry, blasphemy, keeping the Sabbath, etc of the ten commandments (20:1-21)? What implications does it have that God lists issues of justice as being as important as issues of righteousness in the Jewish Law? Does this change your perspective on what God expects of you in regards to holiness (living in accordance with his way)?

Day 18

Sabbath, Jubilee & The Right of Redemption

Read > Leviticus 25:1-55

Contemplate > In a society that lived from its labour on the land, how radical do you think it is that God made the Jewish people give the land a Sabbath every seven years? What would the effect on the economy have been like to have produced nothing through planned agriculture, but only from what the land produced itself naturally? What level of trust in God would the people have needed to do this? How is rest for the land an environmental justice issue? How does this contrast with today's ways of exploiting the planet for all it can give us with no regard for sustainability? How revolutionary do you think it was that God asked the Jewish people to redistribute land back to its traditional owners every 49 years, so that those who had financial difficulty and had sold their land could have their family inheritance returned to them? How about the right of redemption that relatives had over family land that had been sold? How does Sabbath Year, Jubilee and the right of redemption contrast with the way property and wealth is dealt with in our world today? What effect would it have on the world's economies today if such a radical principle of wealth redistribution was implemented? What can you do to implement the justice principles behind Sabbath, Jubilee and Redemption in your life?

Day 19

The Cancelling of Debts & Freeing of Servants

Read > Deuteronomy 15:1-18

Contemplate > How is the cancelling of debts a justice issue? How does debt weigh people down and enslave them? What examples of oppressive debt in today's world can you think of? What is the effect of third world debt on developing countries? What is the effect of massive credit card debt, and mortgage interest rate rises on people? How might the world be a more just place if credit card debt, mortgages and third world debts were cancelled every seven years? If you knew that God expected you to lend to people freely, and that you might not ever make that money back if it was close to the Sabbatical year, how would you feel? How much do you trust God to take care of you financially if you are generous to others in need? In what ways are people today enslaved by financial pressures? What can you do to relieve them? How does this contrast with the calls to tighten up Centrelink benefits against abuse?

Day 20

Defending the Fatherless and the Oppressed

Read > Psalm 10:1-18

Contemplate > In what specific ways does this passage talk about the wicked oppressing the poor, the innocent, the helpless, the oppressed and the orphan? What attitude does this Psalm attribute to the wicked, about God's interest in their unrighteous and unjust activities? In verses 14-18 the Psalmist calls on God to bring about justice, in what way does the Psalmist expect that God will affect justice for the oppressed? How is judgement of the wicked justice for the oppressed? How might this principle apply to the issue of the confinement of children in the asylum seeker detention centres?