

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Deuteronomy: Moses' Great Appeal For Israel To Obey God For Blessing Part V: Specific Treaty Stipulations Of The Great King, Deuteronomy 12-26 J. Heeding God's Route To The Truth Versus Manipulating Deceit In Countering Idolatry (Deuteronomy 19:15-21)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Discerning the truth that edifies versus manipulative falsehoods that harm is a significant challenge in our era:

(1) In a letter to The Wall Street Journal (10/26-27/13, p. A12), Rod Ferrara of DeLand, Florida held: "Many people believe . . . because they have paid Social Security taxes, they are entitled to receive Social Security benefits . . . However, in the . . . case of *Flemming v. Nestor* the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that workers have no legally binding contractual rights to their Social Security benefits and that those benefits can be cut or eliminated at any time."

(2) On former Federal Reserve Chairman, Alan Greenspan's book, The Map and the Territory as reviewed by Burton G. Malkiel in the journal's "Bookshelf" (Ibid., October 22), Irene Dunn of North Hills, California, in a letter to the editor wrote: "Everyone was clueless about the financial collapse so we are told. But I recall The Wall Street Journal warning of the coming disaster . . . for years before 2008. I remember mailing your editorials to my liberal friends warning about Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and the risks of a housing bubble. Is it possible Alan Greenspan never saw those editorials, but I in my nightgown reading the morning paper in L. A. was paying heed? Puleez."

(3) The journal also reported that in 2009, President Barak Obama said, "If you like your health-care plan, you will be able to keep your health-care plan. Period," and he "repeated that message numerous times before the law passed in 2010," Ibid., Louis Radnofsky and Timothy W. Martin, "Canceled Policies Heat Up Health Fight," October 30, 2013, p. A1. However, "thousands of Americans are getting insurance-cancellation notices" (Ibid.) due to the ObamaCare individual mandate, a fact to which I can testify as one who has received such a notice is my wife!

(4) Discerning the truth from harmful error affects our faith today, too: "one of the world's" alleged "foremost authorities on Christian history," Diarmaid MacCulloch, in his new book Silence: A Christian History, claims "the New Testament is silent about the resurrection of Christ. Nowhere do the authors of the gospels describe this central feature of Christianity. Instead, 'all they offered their readers were descriptions of the effects of the Resurrection on believing humanity.'" (Ibid., "Bookshelf," November 28, 2013, p. A13 in D. G. Hart's review of MacCulloch's work)

Thus "one of the world's" alleged "foremost authorities on Christian history" implies that the idea that Jesus arose from the dead could be false! If that were so, as 1 Corinthians 15:17 claims, our Christian faith would be false!

Need: So we ask, "If falsehood is paraded as truth to the undermining of the edifying truth, how can we respond?"

I. Deuteronomy 19:15-21 taught Israel to submit to God's way of discerning the truth to avoid harmful manipulative deceit that arises mainly from the idolatry of covetousness:

- A. This passage is part of the Deuteronomy chapters 12-26 specific treaty stipulations (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 260) that were not an exhaustive list of God's laws, but instructed Israel on specific spiritual challenges she would face upon entering the land of Canaan (Ibid., p. 283; Deuteronomy 4:10).
- B. As such, Deuteronomy 19:15-21 called Israel to *trust God's WAY of discerning the truth in judicial proceedings to overcome deceitful manipulation that is fueled by the idolatry of covetousness:*
 1. With the premise that *every* man is a *potential liar* on *any* given issue (Romans 3:4a), especially in the context of the idolatry of covetousness where one can steal his neighbor's income by moving back his landmark (Deut. 19:14), **God** directed that *any charge of wrong in one's neighbor (Deuteronomy 19:15 ESV, NIV) had to be verified by at least two or three [independent] witnesses, Deuteronomy 19:15a,b.*
 2. In some cases, one witness might come forward, one who was false, who might try to use the judicial system itself to harm his neighbor, Ibid., p. 298. In that case, both the accuser and the accused had to go before God, the priests and the judges of the land at the nation's central tribunal, Deuteronomy 19:16-17.
 3. This tribunal was to make **diligent** (*yatab*, Hiphil inf. abs., "thorough, diligent," B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 405-406) **inquiry** (*darash*, "inquire of, seek a deity," Ibid., p. 205), Deut. 19:18a.
 4. Such an inquiry, by way of the use of *darash* that also meant "seek a deity" (Ibid.) and the fact that the parties in the case appeared "before the face [presence] of the Lord" (Deut. 19:17b; *lipni Jahweh*, Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 294) meant that the High Priest could use the Urim and Thummim stones placed in his breastpiece pouch to gain **God's Word** on such a *case*, cf. Exodus 28:15-30 with Numbers 27:21. [Zon. Pict. Ency. Bib., v. Five, p. 850-852] 1 Samuel 14:41 indicates these uniquely contrasting stones were

withdrawn from the pouch after God had been asked a question, and precisely how they came out indicated His answer, Ibid. [Bible scholars today are uncertain on the details of the use of these stones.]

5. If the single witness bringing the charge was then found to have given false testimony in an effort to use the judicial system to harm his neighbor, the punishment he had intended for the court to administer upon his neighbor would be administered by the authority of the court upon himself, Deuteronomy 19:18b-19.
6. Such just punishment would create respect for the legal system and cause everyone in Israel not to try to manipulate others by falsehood to their harm, but to be honest in alignment with God's will, Deut. 19:20.
7. From the view of government justice, there was to be no legal leniency for the convicted: precisely what he had intended to see done by the judicial system to the one he falsely charged was to be done to himself, the *lex talionis* applying (eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, hand for a hand, life for a life), Deut. 19:21.

II. Applied to us, we believers are to heed God's Word versus relying on a sinful world to discern the truth:

- A. In cases of major sin, Scripture calls us to rely on multiple witnesses for the truth, Matt. 18:15-17; Titus 3:10.
- B. Then, with today's lack of the Old Testament High Priest's access to the Urim and Thummim, Scripture directs us to submit to the judgment of godly believers in the local church (1 Corinthians 6:1-4) who rely on the wisdom and guidance of God's indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 7:40) and Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- C. To discern truth from error in general life, (1) Psalm 119:105 reveals Scripture is used of God to direct us one-step-at-a-time in a world of darkness so that our entire life's pathway becomes eventually lit by the truth, that when we *need* to know the **truth** for our **good** at **every step** in life we take, it **will then be revealed!** (2) Yet, for this process to work, we must *consistently expose* our **minds** to **Scripture reading**, Deut. 17:18-20.

Lesson: *God directed the people of Israel to discern the truth from harmful, manipulative falsehood particularly as it rose from the idolatry of covetousness, discerning by testing every charge of wrong with multiple [independent] witnesses, and by taking single witness cases before God, the nation's leaders and Scripture for just judgment.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ for salvation according to the Word of God, John 3:16. (2) As believers, may we (a) utilize multiple witnesses, godly believers in the local church and God's Word to discern true from harmfully manipulative charges, and (b) consistently read written Scripture for God to use it to guide us a-step-at-a-time amid the field of destructive landmines in which we live, the world of spiritual darkness.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

(1) In our introduction, we mentioned several hurdles we face in obtaining the truth from various government entities: (a) a Supreme Court ruling has allegedly determined we have no legally contractual rights to the money we pay in taxes into Social Security though many citizens think otherwise; (b) a former Chairman of the Federal Reserve reports he with the other financial experts were surprised by the burst of the housing bubble that wrought the great recession though a reader of The Wall Street Journal allegedly claims the journal had warned for years about the great potential for it and (c) President Obama has many times claimed his health-care bill would allow any American who wanted to keep his health insurance policy to do so, what has been proved to be a false claim in many cases.

(d) To handle all this, Scripture directs: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man . . . and whose heart departeth from the Lord," Jeremiah 17:5. We must thus not take any statement made by any government entity as the ultimate truth. Rather, until the rapture, we must use Scripture as our final authority on all matters relative to Social Security, to investing and to health care (2 Timothy 3:15-4:2), trusting God as our Final Guide and Provider, Hebrews 13:5-6.

(2) Also, we reported in our introduction how "one of the world's" alleged "foremost authorities on Christian history," Diarmaid MacCulloch, in his new book, Silence: A Christian History, claims "the New Testament is silent about the resurrection of Christ," that all the gospels offered "their readers were descriptions of the effects of the Resurrection on believing humanity," a claim implying Christ might not be raised from the dead that would mean Christianity is false. (Ibid., The Wall Street Journal, 10/28/2013, D. G. Hart in reviewing MacCulloch's cited work)

However, even key events in history are often treated as having truly occurred though there was no verifying witness to the event itself. Take, for example, the idea that Abraham Lincoln authored the Gettysburg Address: no one else actually saw how he came to pen its words, so it is logically possible to suggest Mr. Lincoln copied another person's words to form it! Now, no reputable historian asserts he did such a thing -- there are too many witnesses surrounding the address event that indicate he authored it! Similarly, the lack of a witness to Christ's resurrection is not needed to establish its validity due to the overwhelming evidences of the witnesses that surround that event!

May we believe in Christ for salvation from sin. As believers, may we utilize multiple witnesses, godly believers in the local church and God's Word to discern true from manipulative false charges that can harm.