

## Government (Part 1)

### What is Government?

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It was Thomas Payne, who was one of the media leaders during the American Revolution, who said, "*Government, in its best state, is a necessary evil. At its worse, it is intolerable.*" Now, I would say that, at its best, that's a contemptuous statement. I heard one man say that perhaps we should say that government is an objectionable good. That is, that we might find much about government that is objectionable; but in the overall sense it is good, because the alternative of no government is unthinkable.

What are your views about government? It is obviously, I think, many things; and we have all developed complex attitudes toward and about government. And, in many cases, we feel so strongly in our attitudes about government that we are moved to act and, in some cases, even openly rebel, against it.

Our attitudes, knowledge, understanding, and conduct toward and about government may be, and indeed, are the most important aspect of life. Why? How can that be? You've probably heard the cliché that *nothing's sure but death and taxes*. Well, here's a new one for you: that nothing is more present than government because government is omnipresent. It is current. It is immediate. It is ubiquitous. It is at hand. It is everywhere. It is always there; and it impacts on every facet of life.

To many, like Thomas Payne, government was simply a necessary evil. Others see it as a game that others play in order to exercise control. There are others who seem to be indifferent to it. There are others who are ambitious about it. There are others who are contemptuous of it. But one thing is sure; our attitudes regarding it are anything but stable. They are subject to change, depending upon the situation.

There are times that we want government to be Johnny-on-the-spot and to crack down swiftly and firmly on offenders. But we want government to be looking the other way and slow to intervene and to be merciful when we are the offenders. We want the government to be quick to intervene and to defend us; but we squirm resentfully if the government begins to intrude into areas of our life where we feel it has no right being. Our feelings about government, indeed, are ambivalent.

Chief Justice Earl Warren was quoted as saying, "*Many people consider the things government does for them to be social progress; but they regard the things the government does for others as socialism.*" Now, speaking of socialism, Marx and Engles and other founders of Communism were aware of this ambivalence that we have toward government. And it was their theory that these constantly changing and mostly antagonistic attitudes toward government would gradually disappear if everyone just had what they needed, in a classless society. Well, it failed. And it failed because there is a Devil who hates government with a passion, unless he is the one who is exercising the supreme authority.

Because of this, we find the statement in Romans 8:7 that "the natural mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." It will *not* be governed by God is what God's infallible Word says.

The result of that, then, is a whole world that hates—above all things—the government of God intruding in their lives. But the converted mind is not supposed to hate the government of God, are they? Do you show, by your life, that you are in submission to His laws?

One thing is sure: government is an absolute necessity. This is more clearly seen, as a group becomes larger. As it becomes larger, its needs become more complex because of the different attitudes and perspectives that each person brings to the group.

Most of you who are a little bit older will remember Charles de Gaulle. He was the Premier of France, a noted hero, a leader of armies, and a leader of a nation. A leader in the movement, let's say, in what eventually became The Beast. (At least, he was kind of involved in getting things started at the very beginning.) But Charles de Gaulle, the Premier of France, said, "*How can you govern a nation that has 246 kinds of cheese?*" It was simply an expression of frustration about the mercurial French temperament. He recognized that almost everybody looks at government from a somewhat different perspective.

Now this begins to bring to the fore another factor, and that is that there must be common consent by each member of the group to a set of rules (or laws, or standards), or there must be force applied by the authorities in order to secure some sort of consent.

What is government? I think it's good to first define the word "govern" and, of course, its noun form "government"—which is derived from it. We're speaking here of the English language; and in Joseph Shipley's book, *The Origins Of English Words*, on page 195, he says: "The English word "govern" is derived from the Greek word" (which, as far as I know, does not appear in the scriptures. Now, he didn't say that. I just interjected it. But he says it is derived from the Greek word) "kuberna". "And that word means, "pilot" or "steer"; and it is implying controlling the direction of something."

Most of us are familiar with the term phi beta kappa. People who earn the right to be Phi Beta Kappa are generally considered to be very intelligent. It's quite a prestigious organization. Phi, beta, and kappa are letters in the Greek alphabet; and they are the first letters of a Greek phrase (Philosophia biou kybernetes), which translates into the English, "the love of wisdom is the pilot of life." Or, if we just want to interject the word that we are looking at now, "wisdom is to govern one's life." It is to be the guide. It is to be the pilot that exercises a controlling influence on the person, which keeps him going in a certain direction. Oh, brethren, that it would be so—that man would do this!

When we look into English dictionaries to find the applications in our language, we find these terms in regards to "govern"—(It means) to control, direct, rule, be dominant in, to exercise continuous sovereign authority, making and administering policy, to manipulate or strongly influence the actions of. All of these definitions are not gotten from one source. I have compiled them from quite a number; but it'll give you a pretty good idea of what this word "govern" means. *The Reader's Digest Word Finder* gives these synonyms: administer, manage, rule,

direct, head, lead, guide, control, supervise, steer, pilot, oversee, exercise authority over, be in the driver's seat, pull the strings of.

Now "govern" always implies the aim of keeping on a straight course or smooth operation. But, catch this, it does not always imply for whose good the governing is taking place.

Government is three things. (1) It is the act or process of governing. (2) It is the complex of laws, institutions, and customs through which the function of governing is carried out. (3) It is the body of persons that constitutes the governing authority. Those are lengthy definitions; but I think that the subject is important enough to deserve it.

If there is anything that I would suggest that you remember, it is that it always implies the aim of keeping on a straight course or smooth operation. Govern, or government, implies an effort to create or maintain order and direction and, sometimes, education towards a certain goal; and it also, necessarily then, implies authority and power to accomplish the same. So govern always implies the aim of keeping in a straight course or smooth operation. But remember it does not always imply for whose good, or benefit, the governing is taking place.

Now let's begin in the Bible, in Genesis 1:1. We are going to begin at the beginning and, from the scriptures, we are going to see principles. We are going to see examples. We are going to see patterns develop from the great governing Force, or Being, or Personality who rules this great creation. He gives us plenty of information by which we understand what ought to be the function of government and what ought to be our proper attitudes toward it. There is much instruction in regard to this subject.

Genesis 1:1-3 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

And then, of course, the account continues with creation of various things taking place all the way through the first week of the creation. But I want you to see the position in which the very opening of God's Word places God. That God is immediately introduced in His Book as governing His creation. He is seen as exercising authority and power to bring order out of chaos. That's what government does! It either brings order out of chaos, or it imposes order—in order that there be no chaos.

There you have it, right at the very beginning—God exercising authority. And, in this case, He does it in order to bring order out of chaos. He is once again setting the creation He governs heading toward the goal He is accomplishing.

Everything that He creates...Now, I'm drawing this from, let's say, an overview of Genesis the first chapter. Everything He creates—whether it is a being (as with angels, or men), whether it is a creature (as with animals), whether it is an institution (as with marriage), or whether it is a thing (vegetation, or insects)—everything is seen as an integral part of His governance toward the accomplishing of His goals. So what was He doing in Genesis 1? He was creating an environment to bring about the conclusion of His purpose.

We understand, in verse 26, that mankind (man and woman) are created in the image of God.

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in His own image [It means "mankind" —more than just the male gender], in the image of God He created him; male and female...

Which proves that "man", at the beginning—the opening phrase of verse 27—includes male and female. It's mankind. Both man and woman are made in the image of God. He created them.

Genesis 1:28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

In this verse we see God—the great Creator, the great Governor and Ruler of everything—now confers authority to govern to mankind. This also implies that God also gave the powers, or gifts, necessary to do this. A power, or gift, might be intelligence. It may be the power to communicate. It may be the power of being able to think and devise, to think spatially. It may be even the things that we call "hands", because it takes a hand (working with a brain, a mind) to be able to create and to do things. God gave to mankind whatever was necessary, whatever powers were necessary, in order to enable them to govern the creation. So then, this implies that He gave the powers and gifts necessary to be able to carry out this function.

Now the words, "dominion" and "subdue," might inject to us a sense of foreboding because those words have a tendency, among us English-speaking people, to think of negative uses of power. That is, abuses.

Genesis 2:8, 15 God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

This has to be put together with "dominion" and "subdue", so that we understand that God is showing that His intent in giving mankind governing powers is only good and positive. Mankind is to use his governing powers to "maintain". That's what the word "keep" means. "To preserve from decay" is another application of that same word.

"To tend," means to edify, to cultivate. It means to promote growth toward the perfection of beauty. So God's conferring governmental power and authority, and all the gifts that were necessary, were intended by God to be used in a positive way, not in any negative sense at all. The power was intended to be used in a positive way—for the good of creation, which God had just reformed and shaped.

Genesis 2:16-17 And the Eternal God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

The governor issues instructions and laws for the governed (in this case, mankind) to be edified and submitted to so that there will be order, and the governed will be prepared toward the completion of God's goal.

Do you see how everything is unfolding? Do you see how we are seeing the right and proper uses of government? Fathers and mothers, are you doing this in your home? We will continue, because here is the great Governor unfolding the *purposes of government* for all of mankind to see. We see here, clearly, that one of the functions of government is to educate its people. You see, to edify. He instructed them. Also to give laws, which would maintain order and aid in the completion of the goal (or purpose) that is being worked out. That is a major function of government!

Now, in this case, God is doing this so that mankind's conduct and goals will be in harmony with God's purpose. God is also showing us, in broad strokes, some of the major purposes of right government, and that is, to edify and to guide. Of course, He also warns of penalties (and in this case, a penalty) that may come.

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field, which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

Now here we have the introduction of a competitor of God's and also, I might add, the main competitor of mankind. And he injects a different perspective of how one should look at government. He begins to inject doubt about right functions of government.

Genesis 3:6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

The first law breaking occurs. And then what unfolds?

Genesis 3:7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened...

We begin to see a fulfilling of the instruction that God undoubtedly gave them as a part of what we see there in Genesis 2:16-17 —which I am sure is just an encapsulation of all of the other instruction that He also gave them. What we see in chapter 3 is an unfolding of the result that takes place whenever law breaking occurs. And we see again the reaction of the supreme Governor of everything; and He shows us, then, another function of government in the way that He reacts.

Genesis 3:14-16 So the Lord God said to the serpent: "Because you

have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." And to the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception: in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

And to the man, Adam:

Genesis 3:17-19, 23-24 ... "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return." Therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

The governor, the government, reacts by making a judgment and issuing a sentence. So we see here that another purpose, or responsibility, of government is to enforce its rules. We also see the warning that, because of law breaking, the process toward disorganization will be speeded. That's what we begin to see, especially in those things regarding the curse that came upon Eve and then Adam. Especially the one with Adam—"cursed is the ground for your sake."

We are beginning to see the fruit of disobedience to government—the process of disintegration, of disorganization. The movement toward chaos will be increased incrementally by the disobedience of the government, let's say, that is in power. Now, in chapter 4, we see a similar occurrence. We will not go through that, because it is very similar to chapter 3. But I want you to note that what we have here is a very clear record in regard to government; and we're only in the fourth chapter of this most important of all books.

But I submit to you that, though the word "govern" only appears three times in the King James Version and the word "government" only appears four times in the entire Bible, this is by far and away the most important of all subjects in this most important of all books. This subject is implied in virtually every bit of information given in this Book; and it is given that we might have the right understanding of, and reaction to, government—whether it is secular, or whether it is spiritual.

Now, let's take another step in this unfolding of the purposes of government, in Genesis 6, the first seven verses.

Genesis 6:1 Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the

face of the earth...

Remember I said that as an organization gets larger and becomes more complex, government becomes more and more difficult; and it is more and more important that there be consent of the governed toward the constituted authority. And that's exactly what we begin to see here in chapter six. As the population increased on earth, the problems became greater and greater because that population was not submitting to the constituted authority—which was God!

Genesis 6:2-3, 5-7 ... that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. And the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years. Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the Lord said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.

What is God doing here? God is showing what will result, generally, when the rejection of government occurs and, specifically, when God's government is rejected. When government is rejected it produces anarchy, which usually begins first to be seen in the home. That's why this chapter is introduced the way it is—focusing on marriage. That's where the breakdown first begins to appear. The homes begin to be places of instability, rather than places of stability because the government within the home is also being rejected.

Then it begins to appear in society—out on the street. And it keeps getting stronger and stronger (unless something is done about it) until it will lead to anarchy. But even that is not the end of it. What does this chapter show you? How does it conclude? This section concludes with the extinction of mankind. That's pretty sobering.

Again, remember that God is showing us these principles in great, broad strokes; but there are wonderfully clear principles that we can gather from it. When government begins to be rejected, it will lead to the extinction of the institution—whether family, whether organization, whether it even be life on the earth. So either mankind submits, or it becomes extinct. Either we will wipe ourselves out through the anarchy, or God will intervene and do it for us (to save us the agony of experiencing the anarchy).

As we continue to see what the function of government is to play in our lives, I think now we have to begin to look at what God did when He chose Israel to be His nation; because, again, there are patterns that are going to be valuable means for our learning.

We are going to slow down here, because this is important in understanding the God-ordained functions of government. Let us turn first to Exodus 18. The time setting here is, of course, before they arrive at Sinai. The covenant has not yet been made. But Israel is forming into a

nation. They are out of their captivity, their slavery, in Egypt just a couple of months. Back when we get to Pentecost, when the giving of the law takes place—when we get to Sinai—we are only 50 days, roughly, from the time that they left Egypt.

So things are developing rapidly within Israel. All the while that they were in Egypt, they were under the government of Egypt; but now they are on their own, and a government has to be formed. We get to Exodus 18 and Moses was the only visible form of government. Now we're talking here about 2-2 ½ million people. I mean, you can have a lot of trouble for one man to try to reach judgments on. You know how much trouble we have in our families; and there are only less than five or six in most cases. Can you imagine how many cases, how many situations that Moses had to hear?

Exodus 18:14-24 So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?" And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws." So Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you. If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace." So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said.

Jethro saw a problem; and he proposed a solution. I want you to notice here that Jethro did not try to force it on Moses but, rather, made the suggestion that Moses use it only if God was pleased with the advice. "I will give you counsel," he says in verse 19, "and God will be with you."

God was pleased with the advice; and it's obvious that God accepted it. God did permit these men to now join the structure to govern. And they are called here a "judge". Let's remember that this was a carnal nation. I don't know how many people were converted, as we would view conversion—Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb, maybe others as well. But we are talking here

about a secular nation. But I want you also to notice that the extent of the judges' authority, the limit of their authority, is not given. It is only given that they are to judge—that is, render decisions that are based on the law of God.

Now, this may surprise you, but neither God nor Moses directly appointed these men. The people chose them, and Moses confirmed their choices. How do I know that? This is very interesting, because it begins to give one maybe a hint of what we might consider to be democracy. Were the people to have a voice in whom it is who is going to rule over them. Is that a possibility?

Let's go to Deuteronomy 1. Remember that "Deuteronomy" means "the second law." It is a summary of events—highlights of things that took place—during the 40 years in the wilderness. And we have this summary given in order to inform the people and to prepare them for going into the land.

It's very interesting that one of the first things that he covers is what occurred there in Exodus 18. I mean, one of the first things that he covered in regards to his summary. Now verse 6. I want to set the chronology here for you.

Deuteronomy 1:6 The Lord our God spoke to us in Horeb, saying:  
'You have dwelt long enough at this mountain.

The time setting of this was while they were still at Sinai. Horeb is the general name of the area. Sinai is the name of one particular mountain in that area. So, this was while they were in Horeb.

Deuteronomy 1:9-12 And I spoke to you at that time, saying: 'I alone am not able to bear you. The Lord your God has multiplied you, and here you are today, as the stars of heaven in multitude. May the Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times more numerous than you are, and bless you as He has promised you! How can I alone bear your problems and your burdens and your complaints?

Now look at what Moses said to the people.

Deuteronomy 1:13 Choose wise, understanding, and knowledgeable men from among your tribes, and I will make them heads over you.'

An interesting insight into a function of the government of God is that it received the counsel of the governed as to who was going to rule over them as a judge. And then, God's government, through Moses, exercised its authority and 'passed on' these men. It is entirely possible that Moses was given quite a list of people; and that, from that, he then selected those he considered to be the most capable for fulfilling this responsibility. This is interesting when we get to the New Testament, because we will find that the people chose the deacons who were to serve them. And the apostles, like Moses, confirmed those people into their office.

Deuteronomy 1:14-15 And you answered me and said, 'The thing which you have told us to do is good.' So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and knowledgeable men, and made them heads over you, leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, leaders of tens, and officers for your tribes.

So they were set up in a military type of organization.

Deuteronomy 1:16-18 Then I commanded your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear the cases between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the stranger who is with him. You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment is God's. The case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it.' And I commanded you at that time all the things which you should do.

So what we see here is the delegation of responsibility in the administration of the government of God. The government of God? Yes. Notice verse 17, where it says, "*The judgment is God's.*" Even though the men would be doing the actual judging, God is seen, we would say, as being 'in the loop.' He is part of the process.

I also want to interject at this time that He is not insuring the quality of the decision. Rather, this is instruction to the judges to be aware and careful because they are going to have to give account to God for their judgments. It was a way of putting 'the fear of God' into them.

Notice, again, verse 18. Moses said, *And I commanded you at that time...*" It means that he authoritatively taught them their responsibilities. Moses, then, performed his function in the government by providing guidance in these civil affairs that were, undoubtedly, under-girded by God's spiritual law. So again we see the function of education that God's government is taking.

Let's go to Numbers 11 which, chronologically, it is not far removed from the occasion in Exodus 18. By 'not far removed' I mean that it was less than two years. In fact, it may have been less than one year from the occasion in Exodus 18. So here we have a separate but similar event that took place a little bit later. So, let's set the stage. The people were complaining. In verse 5, they remembered the wonderful food that they felt that they had eaten in Egypt.

Numbers 11:6 Now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna [to eat].

Numbers 11:10 Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families [Remember that it begins to break down in the family first; and then it hits the streets], everyone at the door of his tent; and the anger of the Lord was greatly aroused; Moses also was displeased.

While Moses was probably displeased at what the people were doing, he was also displeased with God and what He was doing. Moses didn't understand what was going on, either. So he makes a complaint.

Numbers 11:11 So Moses said to the Lord, "Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people on me?"

Now remember that he already had the other ones appointed.

Numbers 11:12-15 Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child, to the land which You swore to their fathers? Where am I to get meat to give to all these people? For they weep all over me, saying, 'Give us meat, that we may eat.' I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me. If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now—if I have favor in Your sight—and do not let me see my wretchedness!"

I don't think Moses felt very good. Did he? Now look at what God's response was.

Numbers 11:16-17 So the Lord said to Moses: "Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone."

I want you to notice that *the title* shifted here—from "judges" to "elders." Does that indicate anything to you? The pattern is already set in what happened following the experience of Moses with his father-in-law, Jethro. The pattern is set; but here assistance is given to Moses of a spiritual—rather than a secular—nature. The problem here was bad attitudes. Moses was simply unable to minister spiritually to all of these people. And so God took of His Holy Spirit (that He had given to Moses); and He distributed to the seventy the same Spirit. So we have a group of men; and it is quite possible that many (or, some) of these seventy were the same men as in the Exodus 18 incident.

Again, we see that those who are appointed are also given the wherewithal to function in the government. And, again, we see that there is a limit to that authority. The limit seems to be imposed in the sense of being spiritual, and not civil.

Now back to Exodus 18—back to the original group. Jethro is here talking to Moses.

Exodus 18:20 And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do.

In researching this subject, it's interesting that one commentary said that what this amounted to was a leadership class. Moses was to authoritatively instruct the people chosen as judges in the way of God. That is, he was to lay down commands and explain to them the purposes of God—the law of God—that they might understand it.

Again, we are focusing here on the function of a leader in God's government. A governor, a leader, a ruler, or an elder's main function is to teach. Even God showed that. That's what He did in the Garden of Eden. He *taught* Adam and Eve.

Exodus 18:25-26 And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. So they judged the people at all times; the hard cases they brought to Moses, but they judged every small case themselves.

Now, one final thing here—I want you to compare this with the American system of justice. In our system, if one gets an unfavorable decision from the court, the thought is always that one can appeal to a higher court. In this system in Exodus 18, there is no thought of appeal by the litigants given. It seems to be that only the judge passed it on, at his discretion, if he thought it was too hard for him to handle. Boy, that would clear up the court system in America in a hurry; and we wouldn't have this big logjam of cases, if there were no court of appeals.

Let's turn to Exodus 19, as we continue to unfold the functions of government.

Exodus 19:4-8 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord.

We've advanced to the place chronologically to where God formally proposes an agreement with them in which He will be their ruler (governor, king) if they will consent to be obedient. There's the "if." How many times have you heard the statement that "*God will not save anybody He cannot rule*"? If a person does not voluntarily consent to be ruled by God, then God will not be that person's governor (king, ruler)—Savior.

That appears right here in the Old Covenant; and these people gave their consent. Now notice the next thing that happened. Please, if you don't get anything else out of the sermon, *please, get this!* (And remember this, because it becomes very important to the Christian.)

Exodus 19:9 And the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever." So Moses told the words of the people to the Lord.

Exodus 20:1 And God spoke all these words, saying...

Exodus 20:18-21 Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin." So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.

At this time, brethren, when God was about to begin His formal governance of Israel, His people, those who had consented to be ruled by Him, there was nobody between them and God. There was no governmental structure. God spoke to them face to face, and they rejected it!

*"God is testing you!"* Moses said.

Now I want you to compare this with Numbers 12 and the relationship that this converted man, Moses, had with His Creator God.

Numbers 12:1, 4, 6-8 Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman. ...Suddenly the Lord said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three [I don't know how He said it; but I'm sure that it was said in a pretty authoritative way.], to the tabernacle of meeting!" So the three came out. ...Then He said, "Hear now My words: "If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. I speak to him face to face..."

There was *nobody* between God and Moses. There was *nobody* between this converted man and his Creator, and his Ruler, and his Savior.

Numbers 12:8 I speak to him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not

afraid to speak against My servant Moses?"

Let's go all the way back to Genesis 17; and let's look at the kind of relationship "the father of the faithful" had with his Creator.

Genesis 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.

Did you see that? The Lord appeared to Abram.

Genesis 18:1 Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day.

I believe that Exodus 20 was indicating that God was prepared to do for the entire nation of Israel the same as He had done with Abraham, with Moses, and with others as well. But He presented Himself in such a way as to impress upon them the weighty responsibility of such a situation. (Paul said, "*Our God is a consuming fire.*") And they quickly chose a mediator to stand between them and God.

Now, what is the purpose of government of God? God laid down a lot of laws—which begin in Exodus 20 and continue through Exodus 23. But those laws express something that is important to you and me. Again, we are going to look to the book of Deuteronomy just to get a summary statement, just to be reminded, so we can see the purpose of government—the government of God.

Deuteronomy 30:11-16 For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live...

There it is. There is the purpose of His governance of His creation—as expressed in His laws. His government's *intent* is to produce life. Now I'm not talking about living and breathing. We already have life. I'm talking about eternal life, with all of the qualities that go with it. (Things that we are to learn here and now.) But I am also talking about *abundant life*, the way that God intended that it should be lived. I'm talking about a wonderful, free, prosperous and full life that God wants to give to every person.

At this point, I think that it is good to insert that the Hebrew word "*torah*", which is usually translated "law" or, "laws" in English Bibles, which is more closely related to the English word "instruction." But "law" is included within instruction.

God is shown, in His Word, as the Great Educator—preparing His people for living, and teaching them a way of life that will produce an abundant life. Some of His teaching comes in the form of law. It has to be that way, because that is a major responsibility of government.

It is very similar to the teaching of a coach, trying to teach people to play a sport well. When he teaches, he not only shows people how to do the mechanics; but he also teaches them the rules of the game. And he lays down rules for remaining on his team.

All of those things are part and parcel of instruction. All of those things are part and parcel of governing. It is a way to keep people moving in an orderly direction.

Deuteronomy 28:1-6 Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God: "Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

And on and on it goes. Just look at the kind of life submission to the government of God would produce!

"But it's so hard," people say, "to be obedient to God's law." No! It isn't. How can I say that dogmatically? Because in His Word God says the same thing.

I John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. [That we keep His law! That we keep His way of life!] And His commandments are not burdensome.

They produce the good things!

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

It's not God's government that is burdensome. It is Satan's, and man's. What is so difficult is

overcoming the enmity against God—the attitudes, and the character, instilled in us by living under those governments of Satan. In our lives, we have followed the patterns exemplified before us. That is, we see these things happening all the time by our leaders. And the vanity, and the competitiveness, and the greed, and the deceitfulness—we have picked that up, from the leaders of this world.

This world and God's people greatly need a change of government. A government that will teach us, lead us, and guide us in the ways that will produce the right things. If you are converted, then you are a part of that body of people who have consented to be ruled by the government of God. That is, those who have consented to live by *this way of life* that will produce an abundant life.