

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview:
The Bible and the Rule of Law (10-15 minutes)

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS/KEY

Goal

Students see that the ideas about equality before the law often credited to the ancient Greeks actually originated much earlier with God's transmissions of the law to the ancient Hebrews.

Instructions

1. Tell students to read the instructions and that they have 8-10 minutes to finish.
2. Ask for volunteers.
3. Follow up with the wrap-up information below.

Scenarios/Suggested Answer Key

1. "Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger [foreigner], as for one of your own country"...
"Judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him" (Leviticus 24:22, Deuteronomy 1:16).

Foreigners had rights under the law and were to be treated equally and fairly.

2. "If thou buy an Hebrew servant [slave], six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing"...
"Thou shalt not rule over him [a slave] with rigour [harshness, cruelty]; but shalt fear thy God" (Exodus 21:2, Leviticus 25:43).

Slaves also had some rights and some were to be freed after a period of time.

3. ***The key idea here: King Ahab had no right—even as king!—to just take another individual's land; Naboth refused him.***

4. "Ye [rulers] shall do no unrighteousness in judgment...in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour" (Leviticus 19:15).

Rulers weren't supposed to just rule unjustly and arbitrarily; they were to rule according to the law.

5. "If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter" (Numbers 27:8).

Daughters had inheritance rights, not just sons—an almost-unheard-of principle in the ancient world.

When were the books referenced written? (Let students call out guesses!)

- ***Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy: c. 1400 BC (about 800 years before Solon, 1000 years before Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle)***
- ***1 Kings: 600 BC (about the same time as Solon, 200 years before Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle)***

Wrap-Up

Ask students:

- What is your general take on these verses from the Bible?
- How does it affect you that the Bible protected the rights of foreigners, slaves, and women as subjects?
- What does it mean to you in learning that the Bible had these protections hundreds of years before ancient Greek's rulers and philosophers "originated" them?
- What does this mean to you in regards to the Bible's take on government and justice?

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The ancient Greeks, especially Solon (c. 638-558 BC), Socrates (c. 470-399 BC), Plato (c. 428-348 BC), and Aristotle (c. 384-322 BC), are credited by many modern historians and writers for developing the idea that the law should apply equally to more individuals in society. (This did not, however, apply equally to women, slaves, and foreigners.) For example:

“While Athens contributed less to procedural law than Rome, **it offered a transformative idea: ...equality before the law.** In democratic Athens, the idea was that **all free citizens (a limited group, by today’s standards)** had equal access to justice and were subject to the same rules. **This was a radical departure from monarchical systems and laid the foundation for equality as a fundamental principle** in democracies worldwide” (“Ancient Laws That Still Influence Today’s Legal System,” Tulane University Law School, October 1, 2025, <https://online.law.tulane.edu/blog/law-in-the-ancient-world>).

Write a brief summary of the idea expressed by the Bible passages below:

1. “Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger [foreigner], as for one of your own country”...“Judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him” (Leviticus 24:22, Deuteronomy 1:16).
2. “If thou buy an Hebrew servant [slave], six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing”...“Thou shalt not rule over him [a slave] with rigour [harshness, cruelty]; but shalt fear thy God” (Exodus 21:2, Leviticus 25:43).
3. “And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth...had a vineyard...hard by [right next to] the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, ‘Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.’ And Naboth said to Ahab, ‘The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.’ And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth...had spoken to him” (1 Kings 21:1-4).
4. “Ye [rulers] shall do no unrighteousness in judgment...in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour” (Leviticus 19:15).
5. “If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter” (Numbers 27:8).

List (a) the names of the Bible books quoted from above, and (b) a guess as to when they were written: