

3-1-1989

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Recommended Citation

Fike, Barry D., "Does God Bend the Rules?" (1989). Pepperdine University, *Religion Division Faculty Scholarship*. Paper 5.
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Does God Bend the Rules?

Barry Fike

It was a beautiful time when the people assembled in Jerusalem to once again celebrate the neglected holiday of Passover. Hezekiah had invited all of Israel and Judah to unite to celebrate this together. Only a remnant from Israel joined Judah in this glorious period of worship. When the service of Passover began, they ran into a big problem. Some of the crowd assembled had come quite a distance and had not been able to wash themselves, as was required, before taking part in this solemn service.

What to do—What to do? Can you see the priests pacing nervously back and forth saying, "They've got to wash! No excuses. God doesn't accept excuses. Tell them to wash themselves—no exceptions!" If the priests refused these worshippers, they would have to turn away thousands who had contrite hearts, but unclean bodies. What would you have done?

Today many would quote a six-step plan saying that not one of the steps could be left out and be pleasing to God. "Remember *Nadab and Abihu!*" goes up the shout—while honest hearts, seeking God, are crushed under a system of "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not."

Many had not cleansed themselves, says 2 Chronicles 30:18, "yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it is written." Can't you envision the monthly brotherhood journal

coming out with a scathing report concerning the liberals at Jerusalem who allowed the sacrilege of such a sacred feast by the nature of the physical body. In the report would be a fully documented word study on all Scriptures pertaining to the instruction to "clean bodies," followed by instruction

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as to why God would give such a stipulation. Then concluding the report there would be a statement close akin to, "Under such clean, concise instruction given to faithful men of God long ago, it is beyond our comprehension how such simple instruction can be so easily misunderstood. While we have great respect for Hezekiah and the Levites, this is not only troublesome, but outright blasphemous. Such shows a clear problem of pride and respect for

our heavenly Father and his will."

Let me ask you something: Does God ever bend his own rules? Does he change his mind under certain circumstances? How far does grace act upon us?

Knowing the situation, Hezekiah prayed for the people, unclean as they were, and asked God, not to condemn, but to pardon them even though they had not been cleansed externally. You know what? God healed the people! (2 Chron. 30:18-20) Wow! God bent his own rules!! It seems that God was more concerned about the preparation that was made to seek him than he was in the external rite. After all, wasn't the external rite only done as a reminder of what was supposed to be going on inside each person?

Let us be sure that we let God judge, and that we simply teach men to set their whole hearts toward God. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17). Let us not be like Jonah who pouted when God wouldn't destroy a city that repented, but like Hezekiah who prayed that those whose hearts were acceptable and pleasing would be accepted even though they were not physically cleansed.

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