HUMAN-MADE THEOCRACIES

At twenty-eight, John Calvin moved from France to Geneva, Switzerland, where he found a robust community of people from across Europe who had fled the severe religious persecution in their countries. Geneva provided a place where the people could follow the Bible’s guidelines for study and worship, for the city had freed herself from Rome’s rule and was the perfect place for a new form of church and government. Rather unfortunately, however, this new order followed the same old spirit of religious control. Having gained political power, Calvin instituted another human-made theocracy in which every citizen was expected to publicly swear allegiance to Christianity. With Calvin becoming the leader of both church and state, there was very little distinction between civil and religious institutions. Calvin succeeded in passing many laws geared toward enforcing Christian practices.

Calvin's religious intolerance is especially exemplified in how he handled Michael Severtus, a man he deemed a heretic for denying the doctrines of the Trinity and infant baptism. Even though Severtus had narrowly escaped death at the hands of Roman Catholics in France and was therefore a fellow escapee from persecution, Calvin ordered that he be immediately arrested upon his arrival in Geneva. In 1553, a general council condemned Severtus and burned him at the stake on a pile of his own books. The persecuted had again become the persecutor. This week’s lesson examines why believers should reject the theocratic form of government and why God hasn’t appointed another theocracy since Israel.
Write out Ezekiel 21 from the translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out verses 24–27. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the passage.
Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw Arrows to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

Do you think it was God’s mercy or justice or both that led to His decision to overthrow the throne of David? How so?

What does this prophecy teach about the mission of the Messiah?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/RL07-3
After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks seem to point to overall?

What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

Why did God choose to overthrow David’s throne if He promised it would last forever?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/RL07-4
What relationship do the following verses have with Ezekiel 21?

Genesis 49:10
Jeremiah 22:1–5
Jeremiah 23:1–6
Lamentations 5:16–19
Ezekiel 19:1, 10–14
Revelation 5:5

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with the primary passage?

Review your memorized verse from Ezekiel 21
In what ways did Jesus overturn old power structures?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

What is He saying to you personally through the text of the week?

Prayer Response:

Meditate on the primary passage again and look for where Jesus is.

Read more at www.inversebible.org/RL07-6
Review the memory verse. How does it apply to your life this week?

After this week’s study of the passage, what are some personal applications you are convicted of in your life?

What are some practical applications you must make in your school, family, workplace, and church life?

Read more inSight from the Spirit of Prophecy at www.inversebible.org/RL07-7
inQuire

Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

How is a true theocracy where God’s in control supposed to function?

What’s the problem with people attempting to build their own theocracy without a commission from God?

Why should a theocratic form of government be rejected today?

In what ways has Jesus fulfilled His role as King?

What are some examples of how Jesus exalted the humble and humbled the exalted? What methods did He use, and how can we put them into practice in our own lives?

How can we guard against becoming too exalted?

What lessons can we learn from the stories in church history where people tried to build their own theocracies?

Are there still theocracies in the world today? What are some examples?