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Everyone Did What Was Right in Their Own Eyes

A preliminary note on understanding:

Dear reader,

Everything that follows rests upon the vision of the New Jerusalem as presented in the closing chapters of the Book of Revelation (written by John), and as illuminated by New Christian teachings. Far more than a future city, the New Jerusalem represents a new spiritual era—a community and mindset founded in genuine love, wisdom, and usefulness: living

according to God's Word. These teachings offer insight into how our "proprium" (selfhood or ego) can hinder spiritual growth, and how opening ourselves to the Lord's guidance can lead us into this new heavenly state, both individually and collectively.

I highly recommend exploring the quotations from the Teachings of the New Jerusalem, written by Emanuel Swedenborg, which are found throughout the text. They are among the most profound of writings. For those not used to these works, I encourage perseverance, as understanding grows with familiarity with Swedenborg's terminology. Nevertheless, I have endeavoured to make this article as readable as possible for all. All the links direct you to the New Christian Bible Study website: [The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Teachings \(New Century Edition\) o - Author: Emanuel Swedenborg](#)

I wish you an enlightening experience!

The phrase "everyone did what was right in their own eyes" originates from the Book of Judges:

"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" ([Judges 21:25](#); [Judges 17:6](#)).

This statement describes a time of spiritual disorder, when people followed their own self-derived sense of right and wrong rather than turning to Divine law or heavenly order for guidance.

In the literal, historical context of the Book of Judges, "no king in Israel" referred to the absence of an earthly monarch. In New Christian teachings, however, a "king" also symbolises the "internal King"—that is, the Lord Himself—and the importance of Divine truth as the "law" that rules spiritually within us ([Heaven and Hell 356](#); [Apocalypse Explained 684](#)).

From a New Christian perspective, this phrase depicts a state in which people have turned away from the Lord and the truths of His Word, choosing to act from their own proprium (selfhood or ego) rather than from love of God and neighbour. When people rely solely on their own understanding and desires, spiritual confusion, disorder, and ultimately evil ensue—just as occurred during these periods in Israel's history ([Judges 21:25](#)).

This condition is echoed in the Psalms:

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works; there is none that doeth good" ([Psalms 14:1](#); [Psalms 53:1](#)).

Here, those who reject God and follow only their own desires are portrayed as having turned away from genuine goodness.

On a deeper level, "doing what is right in one's own eyes" signifies acting from self-love and the illusion of freedom, disconnected from Divine order and the love that flows from the Lord ([Arcana Coelestia 8455](#); [Apocalypse Explained 831](#)). The phrase thus illustrates the spiritual danger of rejecting Divine guidance, which leads to disorder and loss of what is truly good and true.

Why Do People Believe It Is Good to "Do as They See Fit"?

There are several reasons why people may find it acceptable—or even good—to act as they see fit:

- **Freedom and Reason:** Divine order grants us the ability to act from reason and in freedom. Genuine goodness must be chosen freely, not imposed; otherwise, it does not truly become our own. For this reason, some see “doing what is right in their own eyes” as a proper use of freedom and rationality ([Arcana Coelestia 10777](#); [The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Teachings 271](#)).
- **Self-Originated Goodness:** Many believe that good done by their own will is truly good, not distinguishing between the good that comes from the Lord and what comes from oneself. Doing what seems right in one’s own eyes thus feels both natural and justified ([The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Teachings 9](#); [Arcana Coelestia 9974](#)).
- **Love of Self:** Self-interest can motivate people to seek merit or reward for what appears good—often for their own sake, rather than for others or for the Lord. Such actions may appear good, but are not genuinely good spiritually ([Arcana Coelestia 9982](#); [Arcana Coelestia 9975](#)).
- **Delight in Autonomy:** People naturally desire autonomy and may feel most "alive" when making their own choices; there is a powerful attraction to exercising personal freedom—even to the extent of seeking what is forbidden ([The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Teachings 271](#)).
- **Mistaken Self-Wisdom:** Some trust only their own judgement, believing themselves wiser than others; they disregard Divine or external guidance, wrongly supposing that truth and goodness originate within themselves ([Arcana Coelestia 4532](#)).
- **Lack of Awareness:** Not everyone realises that true freedom and genuine goodness come from the Lord; many believe their actions come from themselves, not understanding that true freedom—especially to do good—flows only from the Lord ([Arcana Coelestia 2882](#)).

Conclusion

The belief that it is good to do as one sees fit arises from the appearance of autonomy granted by the Lord, the desire for merit or self-fulfilment, limited understanding of the true source of goodness, and the natural human delight in freedom. However, New Christian teachings emphasise that genuine goodness, wisdom, and enlightenment come only when we look beyond ourselves to the Lord as the true source of all that is good and true ([Divine Providence 93](#); [Arcana Coelestia 10777](#)). When people act solely from

themselves, spiritual disorder and confusion follow; but when they turn to the Lord for guidance, genuine freedom and true spiritual order are found. Truly doing what the Lord asks of us through His Word can be extremely challenging and may take time, but the rewards are 'out of this world'.

Notes on [Arcana Coelestia 8455](#) and [Apocalypse Explained 831](#)

- **[Arcana Coelestia 8455](#):** This passage discusses the concept of true peace, which can come only from the Lord and is anchored in trust in His Divine providence. Peace arising from reliance on self and one's own desires is only an apparent peace, not genuine. Thus, this section is pertinent to the theme of "everyone did what was right in their own eyes" because it contrasts true spiritual order (trusting and acting from Divine truth) with the disorder that comes from acting from selfhood or proprium, which disrupts real inner peace.
- **[Apocalypse Explained 831](#):** This section explains that spiritual life is born from Divine truth received from the Lord, not from human reasoning or self-derived ideas, even if such reasoning appears spiritual. It warns against forming doctrine or morality on one's own and emphasises that true spiritual life is living from the Lord and not from self. This makes it especially relevant to the danger addressed in "doing what is right in one's own eyes," highlighting the disorder and absence of true life when guidance from the Lord is disregarded.

Summary: Both passages show that turning away from the Lord to trust in one's own self—"doing what is right in one's own eyes"—leads to spiritual disorder. True peace and real spiritual life are found only in the Lord's order and truth, never in anything that originates from ourselves ([Arcana Coelestia 8455](#); [Apocalypse Explained 831](#)).

Glossary: Explanations of Frequently Used Terms

For further clarity, here are brief definitions of some terms used in this article:

- **Connecting "no king in Israel" to the Lord as the "internal king":** In New Christian thought, the absence of a king in Israel symbolises what happens spiritually when we do not let the Lord guide us as our highest truth and authority, leading to disorder in our lives ([Heaven and Hell 356](#); [Apocalypse Explained 684](#)).
- **Proprium:** Our "proprium" means our selfhood or ego—the tendency to rely on ourselves rather than on God's guidance.
- **Order:** "Order" refers to the divinely established pattern for living that brings harmony when followed.

- **Freedom:** In this context, “freedom” is not just doing as we wish, but the capacity to choose goodness and truth for ourselves, with the Lord’s help.
- **The internal meaning of “Israel” and “king”:** In the spiritual sense, “Israel” represents all people striving to live a good life from spiritual principles, and a “king” represents Divine truth—God’s wisdom and guidance that spiritually governs us ([Arcana Coelestia 3654](#), [1672](#), [2015](#)).

If you have questions or would like further references, please visit <https://newchristianbiblestudy.org/>.

Revd D Gaffney