

July 4

Scriptures: Read Deuteronomy 13 & 14

Key Verse: “But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the Lord your God... So you shall put away the evil from your midst.” (Deuteronomy 13:5)

Overview

Wherever there is something good from the Lord, the enemy will try to copy it in a way that will lead to destruction. Many people have been led into cults by this type of deception. Here, Moses warned Israel about this very thing: disobedient people, even those from among the chosen people (could be a next of kin), would try to entice others into sin. In this case, it was the detestable sin of idolatry that was a great threat to Israel, especially since they were about to enter a land full of heathen practices. God hates that which leads to disobedience ordered that all such abominations be abolished.

A false prophet might even be able to imitate signs and wonders and predict future events that may come true; this would be done either by evil spiritual forces at work or by deception. He is not sent by God and does not speak the whole truth but, rather, twists it. His purpose is often for self-Glory, material gain, or position. Moses exhorted Israel to be careful that they not be led astray from the true worship of God by such people. Jesus also gave a warning against false prophets who would perform signs and try to deceive the elect of God (Matt.24:24). Remaining faithful to God under these circumstances serves as a test of love for God (13:3). The Israelites were responsible, just as believers are today, to carefully test and discern whether the words of anyone claiming to be a prophet were in agreement with what God had previously revealed, regardless of any miracles he may have performed (cf. 1 John 4:1).

If, after careful inquiry (13:14), it was discovered that a person attempted to lead others into idolatry, or a whole Israelite city had fallen into idolatry, the punishment of death was to be carried out by those who remained true (13:5, 9, 15). God’s judgment in this matter, although seemingly severe, reflects His love and care for His people. Just as a little leaven can work its way through the whole mass, so unremoved sin could quickly spread and cause the downfall of Israel (history later proved this). “So you shall put away the evil from your midst” (13:5; cf. 1 Cor.5:13), and thereby do away with the detrimental influence of the sin and the sinner, that true worship of God will prevail.

Our God is the same yesterday, today, and forever; He has not changed. Although, in this new covenant era, our Lord does not put such severe judgments into the hands of His people, He Himself will one day bring a great judgment upon false and lying prophets who have tried to infiltrate and bring harm to His people (2 Thess.2:8; Rev.19:20). May the Lord strengthen our faith and knowledge of His Word, and may He give us the spiritual gift of discernment that we may not fall prey to Satan’s tactics.

In chapter 14, Moses continued to stress the importance of Israel’s obedience to God and their separation from heathen ways, be it in the manner of mourning for the dead (14:1), or issue of

everyday life such as diet (acceptable and forbidden foods, 14:20; cf. Lev.11), and methods of cooking (14:21). Verses one and two of that chapter give the main reason for these injunctions: “You are the children of the Lord... For you are a holy people to the Lord”. In every way, Israel was to be distinct from the ungodly, reflecting their peculiar sanctity to the Lord their God.

Their consecration, obedience, and worship to God was also tested by their yearly tithing to Him, as well as a designated tithe every third year, not only for the ministering Levites who had no inheritance, but for the poor as well. If they were faithful and obedient in giving and providing for the stranger, orphan, and widow, God’s blessing was promised (14:29; cf. Mal.3:8-10).

Prayer

Lord God, please give us the grace to be true to You. Help us to carefully check up all claims by Your Word, and knowing that “No scripture is of any private interpretation,” we must check those claims with a godly pastor and other brothers and sisters in Christ.