

July 6

Scriptures: Read Deuteronomy 17 & 18

Key Verse: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.” (Deuteronomy 18:15)

Overview

Chapter 17 continues the instructions (started in 16:18) regarding the administration of judges. Moses had been the chief judge and had appointed other judges under him (Ex.18:24-26). Now that Israel was about to enter the Promised Land and Moses was close to death, he modified the judicial system to make it applicable to their new life within Canaan. In each town, the people were to appoint wise, righteous, impartial, and just men to serve as judges. They were to know the Law of God so their judgments would be based upon it. If a difficult case arose, they were to bring it before the priests and Levites who served at the central sanctuary. Thus, under the guidance sought from the Lord, an authoritative and just verdict was to be reached.

The judges were to be warned never to pervert justice by taking bribes or by adopting heathen practices whereby an oracular verdict was sought through such means as a wooden image or a sacred pillar (16:21-22), but they were always to hear from God and keep themselves holy and consecrated unto Him.

A central point that Moses stressed was that the judges were to make no condemnation without first a careful inquiry with adequate and reliable witnesses, that guilt may be confirmed (17:4-6). A harsh penalty to match the crime was to be administered. The one involved in idolatry was to be stoned to death so that the evil among them would be removed and so that others would think twice before committing such a sin (17:12-13).

Moses then advised Israel concerning the eventual appointment of king, something he prophetically retold. Moses said the king was to be a reader, student, and doer of the Law. He was to be humble, obedient, and submissive to the Lord as his supreme authority. Israel's request for a king was fulfilled about 400 years later (1 Sam.8:7-8), and from the very beginning the kings did what Moses had warned against, such as multiplying horses, wives, and gold (17:16-17). This was especially true of Solomon, (1 King 4:26; 11:1-4).

The next office of leadership Moses dealt with was that of the priest. Unlike the king, the office of priest was already in existence and appointed by God. The priests had no inheritance of land, for God was their inheritance (18:2). They were to occupy their time in teaching Israel the way of the Lord and leading them in worship. Moses reminded the people to provide for them in return for their great service.

Another divinely appointed office discussed by Moses was that of the true prophet who comes in the Name of the Lord. It was to be only through the power of God that any foretelling was to be sought, not through the numerous heathen means or false prophets, for Israel was to be blameless and holy before God (18:10-13). God would send His prophets to Israel at crucial points in their history to turn them back to the way of the Lord and to prophesy concerning the coming of the Messiah.

Finally, before the close of chapter 18, we find a great Messianic prophecy that God promised through Moses. The words, “a Prophet like me”, referred to our Lord Jesus Christ being a mediator, intercessor, and the means for deliverance, as Moses had been for the children of Israel. Jesus understood this passage as pointing to Himself, as did His apostles (John 1:45; 5:43, 46; 7:46; 12:48-49; Acts 3:22-23; 7:37). He is not only the Prophet, but also the Judge, Priest, and King who fulfilled all the promises of the Old Testament. Truly, those who reject Him and His words are rejecting God and the way of salvation (18:19).

Prayer

Lord, You have told us elsewhere in Your Word that we who believe in You are called to be kings and priests unto You. Grant us the determination to live like Your kings and priests, so that we may represent Your will. We pray this in the Name of our great king and Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.