

OpenTheo

Deuteronomy 16 - 18



Deuteronomy - Steve Gregg

This lesson on Deuteronomy 16 - 18 brings insights on God's appointed feasts, the potential need for kings, and how to avoid idolatry. Steve Gregg highlights the significance of Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, pointing to their relevance for Christians' journey in the world. He also examines the guidelines for selecting and regulating kings, warning against disobedience and idolatrous practices that can draw people away from God's will.

Transcript

We begin now at the 16th chapter of Deuteronomy, and the first part of this chapter is going to go over the three annual festivals that have been discussed actually numerous times previously. God has repeated some of this information, if not all of it, on various occasions previously, but obviously He wants it to be remembered. It almost seems like we could pass over it, and that it doesn't need to be repeated to us.

On the other hand, it's there because God apparently thought it was necessary to repeat it. And although it doesn't apply to us in the same way that it applied then because we don't have to go and do these ceremonies and these festivals, nonetheless, they do remind us of things. They are festivals that had symbolic reference to events that are spiritual and that are relevant to us.

The crucifixion of Christ, our redemption through His blood, even the first fruits of the Holy Spirit being given at Pentecost and so forth. So I suppose that just as it was important to remind them repeatedly of these things, as this chapter then goes on to do, that maybe it's important for us to follow through and have it repeated to us as well. Observe the month of Abib and keep the Passover to Yahweh your God, for in the month of Abib Yahweh your God brought you out of Egypt by night.

Therefore, you shall sacrifice the Passover to the Lord your God and from the flock and the herd in the place where the Lord chooses to put his name. You shall eat no unleavened bread with it. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it.

That is the bread of affliction. For you came out of the land of Egypt in haste and you

may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life. I would just point out that there is one thing unique to this passage, and that is in verse three, where the unleavened bread is referred to as the bread of affliction.

It is not so-called anywhere else in the other passages about the festival of unleavened bread, but that phrase passed into the Passover ritual of later Judaism, so that now when they take the bread in the Passover ritual, they say this bread is the bread of affliction of our fathers who were afflicted in Egypt. And so the bread represents the affliction of their fathers. And apparently because it was unleavened and it says in parentheses for they came out of the land of Egypt in haste.

That is an explanation for why the bread was unleavened. It is also perhaps an explanation of why it's called the bread of affliction. They had to hurriedly escape from something that was very bad from affliction.

And the fact of their hasty departure simply bears testimony to the fact that what they were getting away from was something negative, something of some affliction that they were hoping to escape from. And they didn't even have time to allow the bread to rise. So they made the bread without leaven, as God told them to that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life.

Verse four, and no leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory for seven days, nor shall any of the meat which you sacrificed the first day at twilight remain overnight until morning. You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates, which the Lord your God gives you. But at the place where the Lord your God chooses to make his name abide there, you shall sacrifice the Passover at twilight at the going down of the sun at the time you came out of Egypt.

And you shall roast and eat it in the place which the Lord your God chooses, and in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents. Six days you shall eat unleavened bread. And on the seventh day there shall be a sacred assembly to the Lord your God.

You shall do no work on it. Then the festival of Pentecost, also called the Feast of Weeks. Verse nine, you shall count seven weeks for yourself.

Begin to count the seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle into the grain. In other words, the time you begin to put the sickle into the grain is when you take the first fruits of the barley and wave it before the Lord. That's on the first day after Passover, excuse me, the first day after the first Sabbath of the Passover week.

Now, remember, the first the day after Sabbath is Sunday. So what they would do is they'd celebrate Passover. And then depending on what day of the week Passover fell on that given year, they would wait through the following Sabbath.

It might be the next day. It might be several days later, but they'd wait for the Sabbath.

And after the Sabbath on Sunday morning, they would put their sickle and take the first barley.

And then they would wave that before the Lord. That is called the first fruits. And then they would count seven weeks from that, from that Sunday.

And the next day after that would be the 50th day. And that would be Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks. It says you should keep the Feast of Weeks to the Lord your God with the tribute of a free will offering from your hand, which you should give as the Lord your God blesses you.

You shall rejoice before the Lord your God and you and your son and your daughter, your manservant and your maidservant, the Levite who is within your gates, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are among you at the place where Yahweh your God chooses to make his name abide. And you should remember that you were a slave in Egypt. And you should be careful to observe these statutes.

And then finally, the Feast of Tabernacles, you shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days. Verse 13 says, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress, you should rejoice in your feast. You and your son and your daughter, your manservant, your maidservant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates.

Seven days you should keep a sacred feast to the Lord your God. In the place which Yahweh chooses, because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands so that you may surely rejoice three times a year. All your mail shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which he chooses at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks and at the Feast of Tabernacles.

And they shall not appear before the Lord empty handed. Every man should give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God, which he has given you. Now, I haven't made any comments on these because we've made a great deal of comments on these in previous lectures.

When we first encountered them in Exodus, I believe it was in chapter 23, the first time they were mentioned. And then in Leviticus, of course, chapter 23, there was the entire year's calendar of festivals that we discussed in their meaning. Obviously, Passover is fulfilled in Christ.

His death. Christ, our Passover, the sacrifice for us, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5, 7. Also, his resurrection is celebrated in the festival of waving the firstfruits of the barley, which was on Sunday morning after the Passover. Well, Jesus raised on Sunday morning after the Passover, and therefore he was the firstfruits of those who had died.

He's the firstfruits from the dead, firstborn from the dead, as the New Testament refers

to him. Then the Pentecost was, of course, the day that the Holy Spirit actually fell. Pentecost, it is not stated in the Bible, but according to Jewish tradition, Pentecost was the day that God gave Israel the law, now Sinai.

They believe that from the time they left Egypt at Passover to the time they were at Sinai and God gave the law was 50 days. And that was that was that's what they celebrate now when they celebrate Pentecost, they celebrate the giving of the law. If they are right, then, of course, that means the establishment of the covenant that God made at Sinai took place on Pentecost.

Now, again, the law, the scriptures don't say so, and so it may not be true. And if it is true, it may not be very significant because the scriptures don't mention it. But if it is true, it would be interesting in that the old covenant was established at Pentecost and then the new covenant was established, as it were, in power at Pentecost.

It was really established in the upper room with Jesus and his disciples. But. The new covenant began to harvest its its participants on the Pentecost, the Feast of Tabernacles was a memorial of the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness and tabernacles or tents or booths, Sukkoth is the Hebrew word for the feast.

It means booths or tents or tabernacles, tabernacles just means tents. And Israel lived in booths or tents as they lived in the wilderness. And so each year they were to celebrate for one week by living in booths made of branches and such in the streets of Jerusalem and to offer their sacrifices every day that week.

And it was a big camp out, but its actual fulfillment has been questioned as far as whether it's still future, whether there's a past fulfillment. The Feast of Tabernacles occurs in the seventh month of the year at the end of the cycle of the festivals. It's the later festivals.

And some people think that it has to do with the end times, with the second coming of Christ and so forth. My own opinion is that the Feast of Tabernacles, as it commemorates the wandering in the desert, is looking at the Christians wandering in this world because Paul says that Israel's wandering in the desert was a type of us in this present world. And so perhaps the church age itself and our lives in it is what is represented by the seven days of the of the tabernacles, just as the seven days of unleavened bread seem to represent our whole lives.

As Paul said, living not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. So these festivals that are week long seem as though they actually refer to the whole age of the church or at least the whole lifetime of the believer during the age of the church. In any case, we move along to verse 18.

You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates. Which Yahweh, your God, gives

you according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment. You should not pervert justice.

You should not show partiality nor take a bribe for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twist the words of the righteous. You should follow what is altogether just that you may live and inherit the land which the Lord, your God, has given you. You should not plant.

Well, let's stop right there for a moment. The setting up of courts to hear cases, complaints between Israelites is presupposed by the very giving of the laws that have been given, which are laws that forbid people to wrong each other and that even prescribe specific penalties for those who do wrong other people. There has to be some kind of court to administrate these penalties, because it's not likely that a criminal is just going to voluntarily walk up to his victim and repay him or or submit to punishment without some governmental authority doing it.

Now, in Chapter 17, we'll find that God anticipates a time when they want kings. God didn't want them to have kings, but he anticipates that they will want a king in Chapter 17, verse 14 and following. He does not command them to move in the direction of establishing kings, though he does say, if you insist on having a king, then make sure you let God choose the king for you.

But he does command them to have judges. Judges are the form of government that God intended for Israel to have. The judges are not kings in the same way that our courts are not Congress.

Congress makes the laws, the courts are supposed to uphold the laws. Now, of course, we have a phenomenon that many people complain about today, and I myself complain about is that the courts think they're Congress. They think they're the lawmakers.

Many judges actually legislate from the bench. They don't uphold the law. They make laws by setting precedents by their own high handed decision to make up their own rules.

And this is an abuse of power, of course, but judges are not really there to make laws. Judges are there to enforce laws that are made by somebody else. In Israel's case, the laws were made by their king, God.

God gave the law through Moses, and therefore the judges were simply there to make sure that the law was carried out. There would be no king in Israel, ideally, because God was their king. They didn't need an earthly king, but they did need courts to uphold God's laws.

And so here he says, you shall appoint judges. Now, whether they did this on a regular basis, once they're in the promised land or not, we don't know. We read about judges in the years after the conquest.

In fact, we even have a book devoted to a discussion of certain judges called the Book of Judges. And what we see there is that after Moses died and Joshua took the people into the promised land, then Joshua died. Although Joshua had been the successor to Moses, there was no successor to Joshua.

There was not some kind of an institution of leadership set up in Israel, of which Moses was the beginner and Joshua the second and then a third after him. It was Moses, then Joshua, and then that was it. The line ended.

And after that, it says for over 300 years, everyone just did what was right in their own eyes, which was OK as long as what was right in their own eyes was agreeable with the laws of God which were given. Now, during that time, when everyone did what was right in their own eyes, there still should have been judges. Whether there were, we don't know.

Most of the time there could have been there could have been lesser judges that are not mentioned. But what happened was the obedience of the people deteriorated and they began to worship other gods again and again and again during that period. And each time God would judge them, would chasten them by sending invaders in to conquer them.

And then they would get to a place where they didn't want that anymore. And so they would repent and call out to God and he would raise up somebody who would deliver them a military leader, after which he would serve as a judge until he died. Now, when there was a judge like Ehud or Gilead or Gideon, excuse me, Gideon or Samson or whatever, we don't even know how Samson operated as a judge.

I mean, he seems to be just a party animal. But and he did kill a bunch of Philistines, but we don't really know of him sitting in session in court and judging people. But he's called a judge anyway.

Deborah was a judge. These judges may have been in addition to local judges that were in each city, like it says they should appoint in their gate and all their gates should have judges. But it's also possible that they were the only judges around.

That is just because God told Israel to appoint judges on their gates doesn't mean they did. So they disobeyed almost everything God said at one time or another. And they may have during most of the time not had judges.

So people just did what was right in their own eyes and no one challenged them on it until the judge rose up and began to hold him accountable until he died. But when he died, there was no successor to him either. So the cycle went on again.

They rebelled. They apostatized. God brought judgment.

They cried out to God and he brought another judge and deliverance and so forth. That's what the book of Judges is about. But this is not probably talking about that system.

This is talking about a system where the people would appoint judges, not that God would raise up the judge necessarily as a Jephthah or a Deborah or a Gideon, but rather that they would have in every city in the gates. Judges would sit there. It became customary.

It was probably customary in other countries, too, at the time for the judges to have their session at the gates of the city, because that's where people would, you know, most of the people lived outside the city, by the way. It's a modern phenomenon that most people, most modern people live in cities. In those days, most people lived on farms.

The city would have the minority of the population living there, but most of the businesses were run there. The farmers, most people, farmers living outside the city. And so when they had complaints, they would come to the city.

But there's no reason to clog the whole city inside the walls with all the different people who had complaints. They could just meet at the gates and the judges would meet them there. And that's where the judges typically would sit in much of the remainder of Israel's history.

We find people sitting at the gates being the magistrates and the judges. And so this is simply saying that in every city, you're supposed to have these judges and they're supposed to be just. They're supposed to refuse bribes because even a man who's wise or righteous can be twisted if enough money is offered to him.

And so bribes are illegal and they should follow what's altogether just. That's the principle. Chapter 16, verse 21 and 22, you should not plant for yourselves any tree as a wooden image near the altar, which you build for yourself to the Lord, your God.

You shall not set up a sacred pillar, which the Lord, your God hates. Now, here it talks about them building an altar for the Lord God. They had an altar, the brazen altar at the tabernacle.

This almost sounds like individual Jews might make altars at their homes. And they should not plant a tree near it, because that tree might become in their mind sort of an image, because a lot of times trees were worshipped by the pagans. So don't put any tree near an altar.

Now, whether this is authorizing the building of private altars at home or simply anticipating that people are going to do that, even though it's forbidden, I don't know. These laws tell people what God's ideals are, but they also are somewhat realistic in recognizing that the people will not always obey the laws. And if they if they disobey in one thing, they ought at least not to disobey.

Beyond a certain point, they shouldn't disobey at all, but if they build altars for themselves, they should certainly not plant trees near them or do anything that might lead them into idolatry. But the making of private altars, it would seem to me, is forbidden elsewhere in the law, where it says they shall offer all their sacrifices at the tent that God had ordained, the tabernacle. Similarly, we'll find in chapter 17, verse 14, he says, when you choose, when you decide to have a king like all the nations, then do it this way.

Well, it's not right for them to choose to have a king. And when they finally did in the days of Samuel, God was angry at them for doing so. But he knows they're going to do it.

And there he says, well, when you do that, that's bad enough that you would do it. But don't be even worse by neglecting these things. Don't pick a king that's not one that I would choose.

It sounds like there's almost in some of these cases what people, what Christians have come to call God's perfect will and God's permissive will. I don't know if I like those terms, but they do seem to speak of something that is a reality. And that is that God allows certain things to go by that he doesn't really approve of, but he doesn't prevent them.

He permits them to occur. Not that he permits them by giving verbal permission to do the wrong thing, but he permits it by not interfering. He doesn't stop it.

He doesn't intervene to prevent it. And therefore, although he could, God could intervene any time he wants to stop anything he wants to stop. But he sometimes chooses to allow something to happen, even though it's not what his perfect will would be.

That doesn't mean that he had two wills in the matter. One was his perfect will and one was another will called permissive will. He really didn't want the thing to be done, but he also did not choose to intervene to stop it.

So in that sense, he permitted it. He allowed it. And God really didn't want them to choose a king for themselves.

But when they did, he didn't intervene to stop it. Therefore, he permitted it. And in permitting it, he regulated it.

He said, OK, if you're going to be disobedient at that point, here's what I'm going to say you have to do. You can't, you know, I won't permit some things beyond this point. It's like when Jesus said that Moses, because of the hardness of their heart, permitted them to divorce their wives.

It wasn't the perfect will of God. He permitted that. He didn't stop them.

But it wasn't really what he wanted them to do either. God does have a perfect will. And sometimes he lets us get away with things seemingly that are not really his will.

The fact that he doesn't stop us means that he permits it, permits it not necessarily with his approval, but simply by his lack of intervention. He doesn't he allows it to happen. But many things that he actually permits to happen, he'll later judge people for for doing.

But the Christians should not be concerned about how much they can get away with and how much God might let them do of their own will. Our concern is that the perfect will of God be done in our lives. And Paul mentions that, of course, in Romans 12 to.

Or he says, don't be conformed to the world, be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. The idea is that our our behavior should be that which is seeking to conform with the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. There may be things that God will allow us to get away with, but those are not the things we should be hoping for.

We don't want to get away with doing things that aren't God's will. We want to do his will, his perfect will. Here it may be that building altars other than the one at the tabernacle was forbidden, but he knew they would do it and he didn't even physically intervene to stop them from doing it.

But if they were going to do that, they better not add to the offense by planting trees near it. And likewise, if they're going to insist upon a king, that's not a good thing. But if they're going to go that far wrong, they better not go further wrong by choosing a bad king.

That's kind of what these laws appear to be reflecting. God has something he wants them to do and there's things he doesn't want them to do. But if they do them, he's going to regulate even the plan B. Chapter 17, you shall sacrifice to the Lord, your God, a bull or a sheep, which shall not sacrifice to the Lord, your God, a bull or a sheep that has any blemish or defect.

For that's an abomination to the Lord, your God. What's an abomination is that you would offer something that is defective to God. It's what's in your heart that's the abomination, because it means that you're giving God what's not worth much to you.

You're ostensibly making a sacrifice to God, but it's not worth anything to you anyway, so it's not really a sacrifice. We read in Malachi chapter 1 that this is actually what the people had stooped to. They were actually offering God lambs that were blind or lame.

In Malachi chapter 1, the prophet rebukes them for that, verses 8 and 13. And now here in verse 2, if there is found among you within any of your gates which the Lord, your God, gives you a man or a woman who has been wicked in the sight of the Lord, your God, in transgressing his covenant, who has gone and served other gods and worshiped

them, either the sun or moon or any of the hosts of heaven, which I have not commanded. And it is told you and you hear of it, then you shall inquire diligently.

And if it is true and certain such an abomination has been committed in Israel, then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has committed that wicked thing and shall stone to death that man or woman with stones. Whoever is worthy of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses, but he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness. The hands of the witness should be the first against him to put him to death and afterward the hands of all the people.

So you should put away the evil person from among you. Again, what Paul referred to in 1 Corinthians 5, 13, put that evil person away from you. This is very much like what it said in chapter 13 about your son or your daughter, your friend or your wife or anyone.

If they if they practice idolatry, try to persuade you to do so. It's the death penalty. And in that chapter 13, it also said that if you hear of a city where idolatry has been practiced and they haven't punished it, then you go and punish that city.

But in that place as here, it says you make diligent inquiry here. You've heard of an individual, not a city, and you've heard that they worshiped idols and you don't just go out and kill them. You first make a diligent inquiry to see if the accusation is true.

You don't want to put somebody to death wrongfully. That's an injustice. Therefore, you need adequate testimony of witnesses, two or three at least.

And no one can be put to death on the witness of a single witness without any confirmative testimony. The provision in verse seven that the hands of the witness should be the first ones to throw stones at them. It's very important because it means that a person cannot just bear witness against somebody to put them to death.

Without taking ownership of that testimony, by actually throwing the first stones to execute them. It might otherwise be the people with the vague grudge against someone might testify against them and not even want to, you know, they wouldn't have the heart to watch the person die because they know the person is innocent. But they don't mind getting rid of them and they put it out of their mind.

You can't put it out of your mind if you're the one throwing the first stones to crack their skull. And if you're killing them, you better believe what you're talking about, not be a false witness. And after your hands have done that, then the rest of the people join in.

This is a community project to keep the community clean of idolatry. Everyone's involved. Everyone's welfare is at stake.

If a matter arises which is too hard for you to judge between degrees of blood guiltiness, between one judgment or another, or between one punishment or another. Matters of

controversy within your gates, then you shall arise and go up to the place where the Lord your God chooses. And you shall come to the priests, the Levites and to the judge there in those days and inquire of them.

They shall pronounce upon you the sentence of judgment. You shall do according to the sentence which they pronounce upon you in the place which the Lord chooses. And you should be careful to do according to all that they order you.

According to the sentence of the law in which they instruct you, according to the judgment which they tell you, you shall do. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left from the sentence which they pronounce upon you. Now, the man who acts presumptuously and will not heed the priest who stands to minister before the Lord your God or the judge, that man shall die.

So you shall put away from the evil person from Israel and all people shall hear and fear and no longer act presumptuously. So the death penalty was to serve as a deterrent to crime. Everyone will hear that this person was killed for doing that.

And presumably they'll be smart enough not to do the same thing themselves because they don't want the death penalty. Now, this is the priest would not be the judge in most court cases. But this is if a case arose that was just too complex or too difficult or that there weren't sufficient witnesses to know exactly what to do.

And it had to be brought to the priest. Now, the priest, the reason the priest's judgment would be of value is because the priests had the law of Moses right there. They were the experts on the law of Moses.

But more than that, they had the *Irmin Thummim*. If it really came down to it, they had ways of consulting the mind of God that the average Jew did not have available to them. And therefore, the really hard cases were brought to the priests and the priests were the final court of appeals.

Once you've gotten it from the priest, you have to submit to his judgment. Of course, the assumption is the priest is honest and not corrupt, unfortunately, in Israel, there are many priests that were corrupted in later days.

But the assumption here is we're dealing with a priest that really is taking his job seriously and seeking the mind of the Lord and seeking to represent what the law says. And maybe even although it doesn't say so, maybe even consulting the *Irmin Thummim* or some other means available to them to discern the mind of God about a thing. And now about kings, when you come, verse 14, to the land which the Lord your God is giving you and possess it and dwell in it.

And say, I will set a king over me like the nations that are around me. This is exactly what they later said in first Samuel, chapter eight. They came to Samuel and said, give

us a king to rule us like all the nations again, being like all the nations is not what God had in mind for them.

God had my friend be a holy and different and separate nation, not like all the nations. And therefore, this desire to have a king like all the nations is a rebellion against God. And when the children of Israel actually did come to that point, hundreds of years after Moses day, in the days of Samuel, like 500 years after Moses time almost.

Or probably. It was viewed by God as rebellion. It was viewed by Samuel as rebellion.

God said they've rejected me, that I should not reign over them, he told Samuel in first Samuel, chapter eight, when this occurred. But he anticipates that Moses knows these people are rebellious. And later oracles near the end of Deuteronomy, Moses is going to say, I know that you're going to depart from the Lord.

I know you're going to do wickedly. I know you're going to have to come under all these judgments. So the law realistically, Moses is a law, a lawgiver, but he's also a prophet.

And he knows that they are going to do the wrong thing sometimes. But he doesn't just say, well, if you do the wrong thing, all is lost. He said, if you do the wrong thing, don't do it more wrong than you have to.

If you get a place where you're too unspiritual to have God as your king directly and you insist on having earthly kings, then at least let them be the kings that God appoints who read his laws and judge according to him. So at least that way, God can still be governing through the king. That's the suggestion here, he says, when you come into your land and this comes to your mind and you say, I will set a king over me, then verse 15, you shall surely in such a case set a king over you whom the Lord, your God chooses.

If you're going to reject God as your king, at least let God choose who's going to be his replacement. One from among your brethren, you shall set as king over you may not set a foreigner over you who is not your brother. But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses.

For the Lord has said to you, you shall not return that way again. Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself. Now, these are strange requests to make of a king.

Horses represent military strength. He says, don't build up his military strength, don't have a lot of wives. Now, a king having multiple wives.

Now, by the way, lots of people had more than one wife, but for a king to have multiple wives that usually had political significance. Usually a king would enter into political alliances with other kings. And in the course of sealing the deal, they would contract a marriage with the princess of the land, as Solomon did with the princess of Egypt and

with many other women from other countries.

Who apparently were, I mean, Solomon had an awful lot of wives. He violated all these commandments here for the king. He multiplied horses, he multiplied wives, he multiplied gold for himself.

The three things he said not to do. Solomon totally violated these things. And Solomon had so many wives, it's not likely that they were all the result of political alliances.

I'm sure he just took whatever women he wanted to be his wives. But some of them, we're told, were the result of political alliances. And that was fairly common.

It was a way of seeking security against your enemies. That if you marry the daughter of the king in the neighboring land, and she is now a queen of your country, it's not likely her dad is going to invade your country and attack you and conquer you because his daughter is the queen. He's not going to, there's going to be friendly relations is the idea.

And so these political marriages were fairly common. But just like having a large military force, it was a means of seeking security. And essentially, God is saying, I will allow you if you insist, I will allow you to have king, but I have to choose him.

And he can't be like other kings who seek their security from large military forces and from political alliances with many wives, you know, entering into relations with many women and having lots of silver and gold. Again, something that gives a king prestige, but also security. Most people who amass lots of silver and gold to themselves, they're looking for security, financial security.

Though they may also be looking simply for an opulent lifestyle. And that's possible, too. The interesting thing is that kings ordinarily have as their goal to elevate themselves in glory and in wealth and in power.

And these are the very things that God said they're not allowed to do. The king of Israel shall not do it because he has to acknowledge that God is their defense, not horses and chariots and God, not alliances with other nations and God, not silver and gold are his security. And so if Israel is to have a king, that king is supposed to have an entirely different spirit than the kings of other nations because of his trust in God.

And it says in verse 18, and it shall also be when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book from the one before the priests, the Levites, as the Levites and the priests have their own copy of the law. Almost nobody else would have one. But every time a new king came to power, it was his assignment to handwrite himself a copy of the law from their originals.

Now, I doubt that most of the kings of Israel end up doing this, but the idea was that he

has got to it'll certainly prove that he's familiar with the law. He has to know the law and you memorize things much better if you not only read them, but also write them down. In fact, there are a number of books out about memory techniques and some of them about memorizing Bible and so forth.

And one of the things that's often recommended is that you read it out loud and then you write it down and writing it down is an important part of sealing it in your mind. And the king was supposed to have his own handwritten copy of the Bible that he wrote himself, copied from the original that the priests had. This was because he was to rule the people according to God's law.

In other words, he became something more like a judge than a king. It's true, his position be somewhat different than that of a judge, because as a king, he could leave his kingdom to a son. There'd be succession to the throne as there was not in the period of the judges.

But he was still really a vice regent under God, who is the real king. And therefore, he had to memorize or know, be acquainted with God's laws and make his own copy of it. So he would have a copy on hand and having written it himself.

It would be something he took more ownership of and it shall be with him that and that copy of the book of the law shall be with him. And he shall read it all the days of his life that he may learn to fear Yahweh, his God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes. That his heart may not be lifted up above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

So this is acknowledging that the difference between a king and prior arrangements with the judges is that he and his children would have an ongoing kingdom. There'd be succession, there'd be a dynasty started. Saul was the first king of Israel, but he didn't actually start a dynasty because God rejected him.

He had sons who could have been king, except his dynasty was rejected and God chose another man, David. And David's dynasty was perpetual and still is, still sits. David's dynasty is still in power.

And Jesus is the current ruler of that dynasty, the current and eternal ruler of that dynasty. There will never be another one afterwards. And so the establishment of kings is anticipated, but regulated.

Now, we can see that people not only disobeyed God by establishing kings, but also those kings eventually became extremely corrupt. Solomon was not the first because David himself corrupted himself with Bathsheba and by killing Uriah. But as far as you know, it was the only real grievance that God had against him.

David did meditate on the law of God day and night. He did have his flaws, but he was a man still devoted to God. Solomon was, too, initially.

But then, of course, his wives, he violated this thing about marrying many wives, and they turned his heart away from God, just as it says they will. Right here in verse 17. Lest his heart turn away, he should not multiply many wives, lest his heart turn away.

You see, the idea is if you're marrying a lot of political marriages with pagans, you're bringing pagan women into your kingdom. And they're going to want to worship their gods. And it says that Solomon loved many women, and they turned his heart away from God because he built shrines for their gods in the land.

This is in First Kings 10, verse 14. So the law is given, but it's not obeyed. OK, chapter 18.

The priests of Levites, indeed, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel. They shall eat the offerings of the Lord made by fire and his portion. Again, this idea that they have no part or inheritance means they don't have any land inheritance.

Inheritance in Israel almost always referred to real estate. Because people were farmers and ranchers, they needed land. Levi would not be given any land.

His inheritance was God. And that was a privilege. It was like an otherworldly inheritance.

He didn't have an inheritance in the world, just like we don't in this present world. We're just passing through. We're strangers and pilgrims.

But we do get to eat at an altar at which those who served at the altar had no privilege of eating. It says in Hebrews, we do have God as our portion. Therefore, he shall have no inheritance among their brethren.

The Lord is their inheritance, as he said to them. Verse three. And this shall be the priest's due from the people.

Now, they don't have farmland or ranchland, but they do have income. And this is going to enumerate some of the forms of income that the priests have to survive. This shall be the priest's due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice, whether it is a bull or a sheep, they should give to the priest the shoulder, the jowls, the cheeks, that is, and the stomach of the animal.

The firstfruits of your grain and the new wine and your oil and the first of the fleece of your sheep, you should give to him. For Yahweh, your God, has chosen him out of all your tribes to stand to minister in the name of Yahweh, him and his sons forever. And if a Levite comes from any of your gates, that is, any of your towns, from where he sojourns

among all Israel and comes with all the desire of his mind to the place which the Lord chooses, then he may serve in the name of Yahweh, his God, as all his brethren, the Levites, too, who stand there before the Lord.

They shall have equal portions to eat besides what comes from the sale of his inheritance. Now, this is referring to the fact that the Levites, though they were not given farmland, they were given cities. There were 48 cities distributed throughout the whole land.

So they were in the tribal boundaries of other tribes. But each tribe was to give a certain number of cities for the Levites to live in. And that was his inheritance.

But if there was a Levite who lived, let's say, in some city in the land of Itzishar, but he was very pious and he really thought, I'm not satisfied living this far from the tabernacle. I want to go serve right there in the presence of God. Now, most Levites didn't have to do that.

They could represent God in their towns. They would probably teach the law. It probably would be the main function of the Levites when they weren't at the tabernacle.

They could just live where they live. And they could just make their trips to the tabernacle at times when they had things to do there. But some Levites might just want to be there all the time.

They just want to live there under the spot where the glory comes out all the time. So they're not satisfied to just be part-time ministers. They want to serve God all the time and be in the presence of God all the time.

And so if a heart of a Levite was stirred that way, God honored that and said, OK, they can come down and live wherever the tent is, wherever the tabernacle is. And they can share the portions that the priests and the Levites there get. And he can also sell his house, his inheritance in the Levitical city.

Presumably, he'd have to sell it to another Levite. Not sure really how that all works, selling his inheritance, but he could do it. And verse 9 says, When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations.

There should not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire. That is a term that refers to offering infants to Molech. And I've told you before, Molech was a statue made of bronze, a human body with its arms outstretched at the elbows with the palms up, and its head was the head of a goat.

And it was a hollow statue in which fires were stoked. So they'd build a fire inside the bronze statue till it glowed red hot. And then they'd put a live baby in its hands, which

would, of course, burn up.

They'd burn their babies alive to this demon, Molech. And this was the worship of the Canaanites and some of the people around them. And that procedure was called causing your sons to pass through the fire.

Sometimes in some passages, it says causing your sons to pass through the fire to Molech. It specifies Molech as the one who requires this kind of sacrifice. Anyone who does that, it's forbidden.

Or one who practices witchcraft or a soothsayer, which is what Balaam was. Or who interprets omens or a sorcerer, that is, interprets omens to be someone who looks at the liver of a goat or the gizzard of a chicken and deduces some kind of divination from it, or tea leaves or whatever. Those would be someone who reads omens.

Or a sorcerer, which is like a male witch. Or one who conquers, who conjures spells or a medium or a spiritist. Now, mediums and spiritists are pretty much the same thing.

A medium was somebody who had a familiar spirit, a demon. Spiritists would be someone who contacts the dead. Both of these people would contact the dead.

Or one who calls up the dead. So there's kind of some overlap of these things. There might even be some synonymous terms used here, just for emphasis.

Anyone who's involved with mediumship, it's forbidden. Or magic, witchcraft, or divination. By the way, astrology is a form of divination.

Palm reading is a form of divination. Tea leaf reading. Those are forms of divination.

That's where someone seeks to get spiritual revelations, by doing some kind of a spell or some kind of a... looking at some kind of a mysterious physical object. And those are all forms of the occult. And there's good reason to believe that all of those things have demonic powers behind them.

And so this would be... They were practiced by people who worshipped other gods, who worshipped demons, of course. And so that was something that was to be absolutely avoided. And it is possible, and likely in fact, that it is these practices more than any other that leads to demon possession.

The Bible doesn't say so exactly, but many times in scripture, demon possession is associated with people who are mediums or fortune tellers. It does not say they became demon-possessed by getting involved in those things, but the two things are related so much. And in many modern cases, it is apparently through getting involved in such things that a person became demon-possessed, like the boy whose true story was the basis for the movie *The Exorcist*.

In *The Exorcist*, the main character was turned into a girl for the movie, but it was a boy, a 14-year-old boy in real life. And he got demon-possessed when he and a relative began playing with a Ouija board. And there are other cases I've heard of people using Ouija boards and other forms of divination that led them to get demon-possessed.

A man named Kurt Koch, a German theologian, has written a number of books about the occult and about bondage and about deliverance. In fact, one of them is called *Occult, Bondage, and Deliverance*. And there's other similar titles.

He claims that he's had experiences like, I think he said 40,000 cases. I don't know how he fits that into his lifetime, but it was some huge, maybe it was only 4,000. But still, it was a lot.

He said that he's had thousands of counselees who were demonized or in bondage to the occult. And the vast majority of them seem to have come into that state by getting involved in mediumship, that is, trying to contact the dead, going to seances and things like that. So this is not a safe thing.

Stay far from those things. It says in verse 12, For all who do those things are an abomination to the Lord. And because of these abominations, the Lord your God drives them out from before you.

You shall be blameless before the Lord your God, for these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners. But as for you, Yahweh your God has not appointed such for you. That is, God has appointed something different for you, for guidance to know his will.

It's not these occult means, but rather, he says in verse 15, The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me, like Moses from your midst, from your brethren, him you shall hear. Now, this prophecy came to be understood by the Jews as a reference to a specific prophet. One could deduce otherwise that he's saying, instead of going to a soothsayer or a medium, God will send you a prophet, which could be at any given time a different prophet.

But there will be a prophet from the Lord sent from the same God that Moses was sent from, not one of these diviners or soothsayers. But it is not talking about prophetic persons generically, but a specific prophet like Moses. And we find at the end of Deuteronomy, the final words almost, are that there has not yet arisen a prophet like Moses at the time that Deuteronomy is written, after Moses died.

And yet the New Testament writers understood Jesus to be the fulfillment of this. And Peter in Acts chapter 3, Stephen in Acts chapter 7, both quoted this verse and applied it to Jesus. And therefore, they identified this prophet with the Messiah.

And by the way, so did the Jews, from what I understand. The rabbis tended to think this

prophet would be the Messiah, though it doesn't say so here. It just says there'll be another prophet like Moses.

But that this would be the Messiah came to be the belief of most rabbis. And it says, The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren, him you shall hear. According to all you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor let me see his great fire anymore, lest I die.

Now, what he's saying is this. You people didn't want to hear directly from God. So you asked me, Moses, to speak to God for you and him to speak to me.

And I would speak to you for God. That is, you wanted somebody else to speak for God to you and vice versa. You wanted a mediator.

You didn't want direct contact with God. And that's what I have been. And there'll be another prophet that'll be like that, too.

Another mediator like me. Someone who stands, as it were, as God's spokesman to the nation of Israel. And that would be Jesus, of course.

They didn't recognize him as that prophet like Moses. But that's who he was anyway. And there's a sense in which it's quite unfair for many people to say, well, if there's really a God, why doesn't he just come out of the sky and say so? Why doesn't he just write his name across the sky so we can all make no mistake about it? Well, he tried something like that once with Israel.

They didn't like it. People don't respond well to that. They're terrified.

And therefore, he said something a little less intimidating, a man. To speak for him. And that's what Jesus was.

And the Lord said to me, what they have spoken is good. That is, I will speak to you, Moses, and you speak to them. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren.

And I will put my words in his mouth and he shall speak to them all that I command him. Now, God said he would put his words in the mouth of that prophet. That prophet is Jesus.

And therefore, when Jesus spoke, it was the words that God put in his mouth. And he was he spoke the words of God, not just his own opinions. And it shall be that whoever will not hear my words, which he speaks in my name, I will require it of him.

But the prophet, by the way, verse 19, the way that Peter quotes that in Acts chapter three, instead of saying I will require of him, it says they will be cut off from his people.

Whoever does not hear that prophet will be cut off from the people of Israel. Since that prophet is Jesus.

The statement is, as Peter quotes it, those who do not listen to Jesus will be cut off from Israel. And therefore, it can only be considered that those who are faithful to Jesus, those who listen to Jesus are the true Israel. And there was a portion of the nation Israel that did so and it still does so.

Verse 20, but the prophet who presumes to speak a word of my name, which, of course, is not this real prophet has been talking about, which I have not commanded him to speak or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, how shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken when a prophet speaks in the name of Yahweh? If the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously and you shall not be afraid of him.

Don't take him seriously. In other words, so there's gonna be a true prophet, the Messiah. There are also false prophets.

And he gives them here another way, as he did in chapter 13. He gave them one way of knowing a false prophet. Here's another way.

Yeah, in chapter 13, if they lead you to worship other gods, they're false prophets here. If they make a prediction that fails to prove their false prophet. It's amazing how many Christians who ought to know these verses still follow men who make false predictions.

I think of Benny Hinn, a man that I don't have any personal grudge against. I have never even watched the man's ministry. I'm not familiar with him, except from quotes from him by Stephen.

I understand Benny Hinn made all kinds of predictions in the past that weren't true, including that he actually predicted a date which came and went many years ago, where he said that Fidel Castro would die. And he lived much longer than that date. Well, there's a number of similar predictions that not only Benny Hinn, but many television evangelists have made.

And their predictions fail to come true, and they just keep ministering as if they never said anything. It happens a lot and people still follow them. There was a man who called himself a prophet in Bandon, Oregon, where our first school was held.

He was not at our school. He was a local Christian man. I guess we'd call him a Christian.

And he thought himself a prophet. And he went down to Los Angeles during the Four Square Denominations Convention down there once, and he stood up in the midst of them and predicted that an earthquake was going to destroy Los Angeles during that

convention. Well, it didn't happen.

But some years later, he was still going around claiming to be a prophet. And there were some people who, a few people who paid heed to him. And it's amazing to me that people can miss this clear test that Moses gave.

You don't have to listen to a prophet if he predicts something and it doesn't come true. He's not from God. In fact, not only should you not listen to him, that he should be put to death if we were under the law of Moses.

He would not be able to keep making mistakes again and again and again. One mistake would be enough and he'd be put to death as a false prophet. It says that at the end of verse 20, that prophet shall die.

So although we don't execute such people, we should excommunicate such people. Paul said those people who do things that are worthy of death under the law, they are wicked people and they are to be put away from Israel. They're supposed to be without.

And Paul says we do that by putting them out of the church. We don't kill them, but we should put them out of the church. They should not be considered Christians, as long as they are unrepentant and doing those kinds of things.