

Exegetical Notes, Deuteronomy 17:14-20

“The King”

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Deuteronomy 17:14-20

(It is important to understand that God’s intention for Israel was a Theocracy. This nation would be different from all others because God would rule over the nation directly and act as Israel’s king. See Judges 8:23. However, God knew that Israel would want to be like all the other nations of the world and would reject his plan for her government. See I Samuel 8:4-9. In this passage, God shows his foreknowledge. He gives Moses instructions for the king that Israel will, eventually, request.)

Verses 14-15

When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, “Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us,”¹⁵ be sure to appoint over you a king the LORD your God chooses. He must be from among your fellow Israelites. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not an Israelite.

- See I Samuel 8. The day did come, as God knew it would, when Israel would request a king to rule over her like all the other nations of the world. God knew it would come.
- God instructed them not to choose a foreign king. Israel’s king should be chosen from among her own people.

Verses 16-17

The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the LORD has told you, “You are not to go back that way again.”¹⁷ He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.

- Israel's king was to avoid the trappings of wealth and worldly power. The number of horses in his stable and the number of wives in his harem were signs of his wealth and his prestige among the other kings of the earth.

Verses 18-20

When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests.¹⁹ It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees²⁰ and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.

- The king is to have a time each day of his life when he reads and meditates on the Law of Moses so that he is entirely familiar with the law and may govern Israel by it.
- The king is to consider himself one of the Israelites and not regard himself as higher than the others.
- If he does these things the king can anticipate a long reign. If he does not do these things, he should expect to be removed from office by the hand of God.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The King*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)