

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible- Presbyterian  
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Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS**

**LESSON 10**

**THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY**

**CHAPTERS 17 & 18**

**INTRODUCTION**

A nation needs good and wise kings and leaders, impartial and righteous judges, and priests and prophets that can teach the knowledge and will of God. Israel was at the threshold of entering into the land which God has given to them. But the inhabitants of the land were idolatrous and their evil ways were abominable to God. Israel will be led astray from God because of contact with them. Hence, God in preparing Israel gave to her able leaders and judges, priests and prophets to keep them in the fear of the Lord to love and obey Him. In these two chapters, Moses, under divine inspiration, gave the children of Israel important and valuable guidelines and principles on how they should conduct themselves so that they would not stray away from worshipping and serving the LORD their God.

We can draw many valuable teachings from these passages for our spiritual growth and well-being both individually and corporately as a church. Pastors, Elders, Deacons and leaders in the various ministries

in the church must take note of what is taught in these sacred pages. It is equally important to the members of the church.

Chapter 17 focuses on judges, priests, the Levites (vv.1-13), and the appointment of a king (vv.14-20). Chapter 18 emphasizes the work and provision of the priests and the Levites (vv.1-8), the presence of occultism in the land (vv.9-14), and the office of the prophet (vv.15-22).

**OUTLINE**

**A. The Local Judge to Conduct a Test Case (17:1-7).**

1. An Israelite who had apostatised (17:2-3).
2. The case was reported to the judge (17:4).
  - a) The judge heard of it (4a).
  - b) The judge carried out an investigation (4b).
  - c) The report was true (4c).
3. A public hearing would be conducted (17:5-7).
  - a) The transgressor to be stoned to death (5).
  - b) The report must be based on at least two or more witnesses (6).
  - c) The witnesses must be the first to stone the transgressor (7).

**B. The Priests Would Deal With More Difficult Cases (17:8-13).**

1. More difficult cases to be brought before the priests (17:8-9).
2. The priests would judge the case according to the law of God (17:10-11).
3. The penalty of the guilty person was death (17:12-13).

**C. The King Established (17:14-20).**

1. The people's desire for a king would be chosen by the LORD (17:14-15).
  - a) One of them (15a).
  - b) Not a stranger (15b).
2. The prohibitions for the King (17:16-17).
  - a) He must not increase his horses (16).
  - b) He must not have many wives (17a).
  - c) He must not amass wealth (17b).
3. The King must keep a copy of the law of God (17:18-20).
  - a) He must have a copy of the law from the priests and Levites (18).
  - b) He must read it as long as he lived (19a).
  - c) He must learn to fear and obey the LORD (19b).
  - d) He must not pride himself above his people (20a).
  - e) He must not depart from the law of God (20b).
  - f) The King would live and reign long (20c).

**D. The Status and Ministry of the Priests the Levites (18:1-8).**

1. The priests and the Levites depend on God (18:1-2).
  - a) They were not allotted land inheritance (1a).
  - b) They lived off the offerings of the LORD (1b).
  - c) The LORD was their inheritance (2).
2. The priests the Levites were supported by the people (18:3-4).
  - a) The people's offerings to the LORD would be given to support the priests and the Levites (3).

- b) They were to be given the firstfruit (4).
3. The priests and the Levites were chosen by the LORD God (18:5).
4. Any local Levite who decided to serve at the central sanctuary would be treated equally (18:6-8).

**E. The Israelites were Warned Against the Occult (18:9-14).**

1. Warning against practising the abominable ways of the Canaanites (18:9-11).
  - a) Making burnt offerings of their sons and daughters (10a).
  - b) Using various forms of divination (10b-11).
2. The LORD God destroyed them because of these abominable practices (18:12).
3. The Israelites must be perfect with the LORD God (18:13-14).

**F. The LORD would Provide Israel with a Chosen Prophet (18:15-22).**

1. The LORD would raise a prophet from among them (18:15-19).
  - a) He was chosen in response to the request of the Israelites at Horeb (16-17).
  - b) He would speak the words of God (18a).
  - c) He would teach the people God's words (18b).
  - d) The disobedient listener would be accountable to God (19).
2. The presumptuous prophet (18:20-22).
  - a) The presumptuous prophet was one who

spoke the word of God but not true (20a).

- b) The presumptuous prophet would be put to death (20b).
- c) The test for knowing the presumptuous prophet (21-22).
  - The difficulty faced.
  - The standard applied.

### **COMMENTARY**

#### **A Test Case For the Judges**

Having described the character and conduct of the judges and leaders of Israel, Moses presented a sample case as a teaching lesson for the judges. The case involved a man or a woman who was reported to have transgressed the commandment of God. He had gone to serve other gods or worship the sun or moon and any celestial bodies in the heavens. When a judge hears this, the first thing he should do was to thoroughly investigate and verify the truth of the accusation. A public trial was convened and by the testimony of two witnesses, not just one, the transgressor would be stoned to death. He had broken a law that carried the death penalty. A significant factor was that the two witnesses must be the first to stone the transgressor. This was probably imposed in order to deter false witnesses. The purpose was to remove the evil from among the people. This strongly suggests that if this evil was not removed, it could spread and corrupt the people. Judges and leaders of the people must realize their responsibility and carry them out accordingly without fear and favour of man.

If a case was more difficult for the judges to make a judgement, it could

be brought to the central sanctuary which God chose and where the priests were. Such cases would be judged by the priests according to the law of God. The judgement arrived at would be final. There was no other appeal. That was it. And if anyone who had the audacity to oppose the judgement given by the priest, he too would be put to death. Israel must be kept pure and purged of any evil thing. The people would hear of it and fear and would not take things for granted.

#### **Choosing a King**

When the people had entered the land and were more settled, they might want a king to rule over them just like the other nations, a king they would get. But the king must be chosen by the LORD God. There were certain requirements and restrictions. The king must be one of them, an Israelite. A stranger could not be made a king over them. Three restrictions were imposed on the king. First, he must not multiply his horses to himself or cause the people to return to Egypt. It may seem strange for us today that the king was forbidden to increase his stable of horses. In those days, horses were a symbol of power and strength. Horses were used to draw chariots of war. The military strength of a king was measured by the number of horses that they king had. This restriction upon the king was to stop the king from depending on his own military strength instead of depending on the LORD God. It was for the good of the king, and if he disobeyed, the king would incur the displeasure of God. The king must implicitly trust and depend on God who is more powerful than the horses. A second restriction was that the king must not have many wives. The reason given in Scripture

was that wives would turn the heart of the king away from the LORD God. These wives were from foreign and pagan countries and the king's affection would shift from loving and obeying God to loving and obeying his wives. King Solomon was the example - how in his reign he allowed the erection of pagan altars and groves. A third restriction was that the king must not amass silver and gold. He must not be materialistic. Wealth breeds in one an attitude of self-sufficiency and self-pride. Another effect that could result from the king's greed to amass wealth was that he would tax the people more and more, thus making the people to suffer. God would not allow this.

It was required of the king that he personally wrote for himself a copy of the law which was kept by the priests and the Levites. His copy of the law was for him to read the law of God, to learn to fear the LORD, to keep His commandments and to do them. The king must have a humble heart. He must not lift himself up above his brethren. He must faithfully keep the word of God. In return, God promised to prolong his reign, and his children too. It is sad to learn that king Solomon broke all the three prohibitions (1 Kings 10:14, 23, 26-28; 1 Kings 11:3-4, 6). A king must be reminded that he is not autonomous, He is not God; he is but an instrument of God, by which he should touch the lives of his people for good. This applies to pastors and leaders of the church.

### **The Priests & the Levites**

The next focus is on the priests, the Levites and the tribe of Levi. The Israelites were reminded that the priests and the Levites were not given land inheritance like all the other tribes. The LORD was their

inheritance. The priests and Levites who were chosen by God to minister in His name lived off the offerings, tithes, and firstfruit brought by the people to the LORD. Those sacrificial offerings that were separated from the ones burnt on the altar, the priests and the Levites could eat before the LORD. The people of Israel were reminded of their responsibility and duty.

Levites lived in forty eight cities of refuge that God had set apart for them. Their welfare and well-being must be taken care of. If any Levite desires to go to the place which God had chosen for the people to worship Him i.e. the central sanctuary, he should be allowed to go. And when he serves in the central sanctuary, he must not be discriminated. He must be treated the same as those who serve in the central sanctuary.

### **Occultism**

Among the other pagan nations, the practice of the occult was not uncommon. Moses gave an exhaustive list (18:10-11). This was abominable to the LORD God. God realized that once the people of Israel were settled in Canaan, they will be drawn to imitate the ways of the Canaanites. This would incur the anger of God and Israel would be severely punished. Israel was warned not to follow these abominations, but was commanded to be perfect or upright before God. It was for this very reason and that the sins of the Cannanites were full that the LORD God commanded Israel to utterly destroy all the Canaanites.

### **A Prophet Like Moses**

The last category of leadership was the prophet. God would raise a prophet from among them like

Moses. The people were commanded to hearken unto him. This was to accede to the request of the people at Horeb when they said to Moses that he be their mediator and spokesman between God and them. It had the approval of God, and now God announced that He would raise a prophet who would be like Moses. God, who will raise up this Prophet, will give His word to him and he in turn would declare it to the people at large. And anyone who would not hear the LORD'S Word preached by the prophet was accountable to God (cf. Jn. 6:14).

Pastors, Elders, Deacons and other office-bearers of the church should inculcate the qualities God expected of a king: an attitude of total dependence on God, a sound and solid knowledge of God's Word and living by it, and a humble heart. May the LORD our God grant His grace, strength and courage to do His will. AMEN.

However, any prophet, who claimed presumptuously to speak in the name of the LORD but found to be a false prophet, must be put to death (18:20). The only way to know whether the prophet was genuine or false or presumptuous was to check his words against the Word of God. If the word spoken by the prophet was not what the LORD spoke, the people should not be afraid of him, for prophets in the Old Testament time were highly regarded. NOTE that the emphasis concerning the prophet focuses on His forth-telling the word of the LORD rather than fore-telling here.

### **SUMMARY**

There are precious lessons that we can learn from these two chapters. We learn that God is displeased with Christians who do not put Him first in their lives. God cares for His people and taught His people how they could remain strong and well and their days prolonged by removing the evil that exists among them. We also learn that in our relationship with one another, we must be honest. We must beware of accusing another brother in Christ. We are accountable to God if we lie.

**DAILY READING & DISCUSSION  
QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**MONDAY:** Deuteronomy 17:1-7;  
Luke 17:3; Galatians 6:1; Matthew  
18:15-16

**TUESDAY:** Deuteronomy 17:8-13; 2  
Timothy 3:15-17

**WEDNESDAY:** Deuteronomy 17:14-  
20; Proverbs 30:8-9; 1 Timothy  
6:13-16

**THURSDAY:** Deuteronomy 18:1-14;  
1 Peter 2:5, 9; Ephesians 6:12

**FRIDAY:** Deuteronomy 18:15-22;  
Acts 3:19-24.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What guiding principles can we  
learn on tackling reports of sinful  
conduct in the church? What  
penalty should be given?

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2. What do you think is the reason  
for the witnesses to be the first to  
put the idolater to death?

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3. What was the basis of the  
decision of the central court  
being final and binding?

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4. What is to be the character of a  
pastor and leaders in a church?  
And what is to be the source of  
their wisdom?

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5. What reasons can you think of that the king of Israel was forbidden to marry many wives?

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6. What issues concerning the priests were brought to the attention of the people of Israel?

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7. Based upon 18:14-22, what is a suitable definition of a prophet?

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8. What kind of people in the heathen religion did the prophets in Israel take the place of?

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9. In whom was the prophecy of 18:18-19 finally fulfilled? Quote the supporting Scriptures.

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10. In these two chapters what specific means of giving guidance did God give to the people of Israel? What parallel means do you see in the church today?

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