

Deuteronomy 18:1-22 (January 8, 2021)

Reflection: How does God's word speak into our lives? Why does the Bible have such an impact on our actions and attitudes? How is a Christian's life fundamentally different than the life of a non-Christian?

Goal: God's word speaks into every area of our lives because these Words come from God, who has authority in every area of life. After all, he created it and is sovereign over it. Christians live lives fundamentally different than non-Christians because our living is dependent on God's biblical truth.

Introduction comments: This section relates to the last section as the topic is still about "Covenant righteousness." Covenant righteousness is not about how the Israelites are saved (the Israelites were never going to be saved by how they followed the Law), but rather what does right-living look like in this covenant community. Here, Moses, continues about right-living on how the Israelites should treat their brothers, the Levitical priests, abominable practices, and looking to future prophets.

Read Deuteronomy 18:1-8- Israel's treatment of the Levites

A. Read Joshua 13:6-7,14. What was the inheritance that the tribes of Israel were to share in, and what was the Levite's share?

- Israel was to share in the conquered land of Canaan.
- Levites were to have no portion of that land as the Lord himself was their portion
 - o This doesn't mean they didn't have land
 - o Israelites had lands, but they would be sporadic lands and pastures within the Israelite towns that they would live in. (Numbers 35:2-8)

B. In v.1-4, What was to be allotted to the Levites? in v.5, what role do Levitical priests play in Israel? In v.6-8, when Levites moves from place-to-place, should he receive his benefits?

i. 1-4, , What was to be allotted to the Levites?

- And this shall be the priests' due from the people, from those offering a sacrifice, whether an ox or a sheep:
 - They shall give to the priest the shoulder and the two cheeks and the stomach.
 - The firstfruits of your grain, of your wine and of your oil, and the first fleece of your sheep, you shall give him.

ii. v.5, what role do Levitical priests play in Israel

- Act as mediators between God and men
- Spoke God's word to the people
- The Levites' inheritance was God Himself in the sense that they were the ones chosen to oversee the worship of the entire nation of Israel. The Levites were responsible for the tabernacle and its implements as well as overseeing the sacrifices and offerings of the people.

iii. v.6-8, when Levites moves from place-to-place, should he receive his benefits?

- They could move from one place to another, from central sanctuary to local shrine, without restriction.
- They would receive their share or portion.
- Patrimony – Could be earnings gained by sale of inheritances or inheritance rights, though uncertain.

C. Reflect on the lives of the priests, how is God the inheritance of the Levites?

- God was the unique inheritance to the Levites. He was the focus of their service, the source of their sustenance, and the significance of their calling. Their inheritance included cities, daily food, and a

constant vocation, but it did not include the same type of land inheritance given to the other tribes of Israel. (*Gotquestions*)

- Levite's were a symbol of God's presence to the nation of Israel (even though Israel was to be, as a whole, a priesthood to the nations) and God's providence

Read Deuteronomy 18:9-14 – Abominable Practices

A. In v. 9-12, What were the abominations that the Israelites were not to follow? Why do you think people might turn to divination, fortunes, omens, mediums, etc.?

i. In v. 9-12, What were the abominations that the Israelites were not to follow?

- There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering,
- anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer
- or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead,

ii. Why do you think people might turn to divination, fortunes, omens, mediums, etc.?

- Talking point: our society wants to be empirical, so many are quick to embrace the supernatural or "spiritual," and we each have an innate desire to want to connect with something beyond ourselves, beyond the physical world. This is a twisted desire, because what we should look to is God.
- All these to manipulate a deity or the supernatural to gain a blessing or know something
 - Child sacrifice also were used to commune with the supernatural
 - The horrific practice of child sacrifice linked with the worship of a pagan deity. Worshipers sought to obtain a blessing from their god(s) or was the fulfillment of a vow
 - Judges 11:34-40 – For Japheth, the child sacrifice was used answered prayer and thanksgiving
 - Divination – Diviners determine the mind of god
 - Omens – Omens look to know what is to come
 - Mediums, Necromancer: look to communicate with the supernatural world or the undead world to know something of this physical world

B. From v.13-14, What is Moses' rationale for why Israel should not practice these things?

- They are to be blameless
 - Blamelessness seems to have to do with listening to God, and not to other supernatural.
 - For they listen to fortune tellers and diviners
 - They take their orders from these people and not from God
 - Who do we listen to?
- But you are not allowed to do it
 - God has not commanded us

C. What are some ways that non-Christians today try to communicate with the supernatural? Do Christians have freedom to practice this type of communication, why or why not?

Goal: People around us try to connect to supernatural world in different ways. For example, tarot cards, astrology, palm readings, seeing a shaman or seer, etc. We do not have the freedom to pursue these ways of communication because God is the one we are to believe and trust in.

Read Deuteronomy 18:15-22– Prophets – God's way of Communicating with Israel

A. From v.15, What does Moses promise Israel about how God will communicate with them? How was Israel to respond?

- i. "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers

- ii. it is to him you shall listen

B. From v. 16-19, Why do prophets exist? (Cf. Deu 5:22-27) What role do they play between God and the people of Israel?

- i. From v. 16-19, Why do prophets exist? (Cf. Deu 5:22-27)
 - Deu 5:22-27 – Speaks about the time the Lord brought Israel to Mt. Sinai and gave the 10 commandments
 - o Could not hear or listen to God because of his transcendent glory
- ii. They needed a mediator who could approach God for them and who then could transmit the divine revelation to them
 - o Prophets were tasked with being God’s mouth piece and his covenant enforcer
 - Great would be that person’s authority that anyone who disobeyed their word would have disobeyed the word of the Lord and accordingly would be made accountable

C. v.20-22, how were they to test whether a prophet was real or not?

- Message must be in the Lord
- That message was fulfilled
 - o Anything short of that would brand the prophet as false and unreliable
- Note: As spoken about in the class “He Gave Us Prophets” there are different prophecies given some which depended on people would respond, and other prophecies which would happen no matter what

Read Deu 34:9-11 and Jer 7:25, though God provided many prophets to Israel throughout history, none are uniquely like Moses. This is until his prophetic office is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. As Hebrews 1:1-2 says, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.” (cf. Acts 3:19-23)

As we consider the role of communication and prophets, how does this affect our view of Jesus’ words (and ultimately all of Scripture) in our faith and life?

Goal: That Scripture is prophetic for us today, and our faith and life should conform to it.

There are many “prophetic” voices and views in our secular culture today, some that seemingly agree with our Christian ethics. How should we as Christians think through and understand these voices and views?

Goal: That we should understand everything we see and hear through the lens of Scripture

In our passage today, right living for Christians should be to love and be generous to our brothers and to look to God’s word for answers. On this latter point, many in our Western world are like the Canaanites that want to connect to the supernatural, spiritual world for answers. There are also many in our day that try to act as these prophetic voices. We as Christians should be wary of these types of answers because it is God alone who knows the truth and we should look to Him to find the answers we seek.