

Kingship as the Embodiment of Righteousness in Israel
(Deuteronomy 17:14-20)
Veritas Class
November 10, 2013

The Significance of Deuteronomy 17:14-20

1. It presents a revolutionary paradigm for kingship.

- a. Whereas the kings of other nations often gained power by sheer Machiavellian force and at the expense of their rivals and their subjects, the kingship will be established in response to a democratic impulse and the favorable response of Yahweh.
- b. Whereas other states were often governed by foreigners, either usurpers from the outside or imperial overlords, the Israelites were to be governed by one of their own under the imperial reign of Yahweh.
- c. Whereas the kings of other nations regularly used their positions to satisfy their own lust for power, status and wealth, the Israelite kings were forbidden from using their office to amass power and wealth for themselves.
- d. Whereas other kings were perceived primarily as administrators of justice, a function they fulfilled by demanding absolute loyalty, the role of Israelite kings was to embody the divinely revealed standard of covenantal justice.
- e. Whereas other kings codified laws to protect their own interests and to regulate the conduct of their subjects, not themselves, the Israelite laws were codified by Yahweh himself, interpreted by his spokesman who has no vested interest in the kingship, and then imposed upon the king himself.

2. It presents a revolutionary paradigm for kingship.

- a. Godly leaders do not view their positions as personal accomplishments or based on personal abilities; they are chosen by God.
- b. Godly leaders recognize that although they are indeed put “over” the people, they remain one with the people—neither greater nor lesser.
- c. Godly leaders recognize that theirs is not a position of power or privilege, but of responsibility. They know they exist for the sake of the community, rather than vice versa. Therefore, rather than using their positions for personal advantage, they are willing to give up everything, even their lives, for the sake of those they are called to lead.
- d. The primary role of godly leaders is to model and embody the highest virtues and values of the community: their lives are characterized by fear of God, which derives from thorough familiarity with the revealed will of God.
- e. Godly leaders point people upward to God by submitting to him, fearing him, and serving Him without reservation.
- f. Godly leaders recognize that God does not promise success unconditionally. Success is conditional, depending on the leaders' humility before their fellows, their fear of God, and their scrupulous obedience to His will.
- g. As the Son of God and the son of David, Jesus fulfills the Mosaic model of leadership perfectly.

