

Deut. 13:1 ¶ If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder,

Deut. 13:2 And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;

Deut. 13:3 Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

This chapter starts off with a very thought-provoking situation. It acknowledges that there are false prophets, whether through inspiration or dreams, that can make accurate predictions that are confirmed by miraculous events. In other words, there are spiritual forces of evil that have the ability to work miracles. These miracles are always done to promote their agenda of deception. The first example that comes to mind is of the magicians in Pharaoh's court that could duplicate some of the miracles performed by Moses (See Exodus 7-8). The story of Job affirms that Satan has power over the forces of nature within God's designated parameters (See Job 1). Just as God empowers men supernaturally according to His will, Satan is allowed to empower men who have rejected God as Lord within the parameters established by God.

Moses is warning the people that the miraculous confirmation of a message that leads one to disobey God's revealed will through His word is allowed in the life of a believer to prove his/her faith and commitment to Him as Lord. If one chooses to follow the false prophet because of miraculous confirmation, He is basically calling God a liar. In other words, what we see can be deceiving.

To love the LORD with all your heart and soul is an expression of unwavering commitment to trust and serve Him no matter what—even when confronted with miracles that seem to support a messenger that denies or leads one away from God's word as revealed in scripture. This is going to be the primary method by which the future Antichrist amasses such a great following.

2Th. 2:8-9 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders....

A true prophet of God will always deliver a message that is true to God's word and will affirm His power and authority as the one true God.

Deut. 13:4 Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

"Ye" = God's chosen people, the people of Israel....

God's people are to walk after the LORD God—in the path that He has revealed is according to His will. It's a picture of placing our steps directly in the footprints left by the Lord, never straying into an area into which He would never lead us.

Walking according to God's leading is evidence of the fear and reverence you have for Him. Walking after the LORD ensures that you will be obedient to His commandments and will serve Him. If you have ever tried to take a hike with someone, you know that it takes diligent attention and effort to stay together and keep up. When you are walking in His steps, you will avoid any obstacles that would keep you from your destination; but it takes desire and effort to maintain the pace. That's how I picture what it means to *cleave* to Him. The Hebrew actually includes the phrase "to follow close (hard after)."

Deut. 13:5 And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn *you* away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.

How were the children of Israel to deal with a false prophet? They were to kill Him. I can hear all the gasps of outrage from the voices of today who would lobby for his rehabilitation or his right to freedom of speech. God's kingdom is not a democracy; it is a theocracy. He alone has the authority to declare righteous judgment. The false prophet has already rejected God and chosen his eternal destiny. To allow him to continue to live only jeopardizes the eternal destiny of others. God has been very clear in presenting Himself as a jealous God, One who will not share His glory with another.

Ex. 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God....

Ex. 34:14 For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God:

Deut. 4:24 For the LORD thy God *is* a consuming fire, *even* a jealous God.

Deut. 5:9 ...for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God....

Deut. 6:15 (For the LORD thy God *is* a jealous God among you....

Is. 42:8 I *am* the LORD: that *is* my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Is. 48:11 For mine own sake, *even* for mine own sake, will I do *it*: for how should *my name* be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

Deut. 13:6 ¶ If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which *is* as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers;

Deut. 13:7 Namely, of the gods of the people which *are* round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the *one* end of the earth even unto the *other* end of the earth;

Deut. 13:8 Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him:

Deut. 13:9 But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.

Deut. 13:10 And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

The message of this whole chapter has been tough, but now it gets even tougher. In this part of his instruction, Moses declares that you are to have mercy on no one that tries to turn you from faith and allegiance to YHWH—whether brother, son, daughter, wife, or dearest friend. Anyone who tries to get you to follow a heathen “god” is to be exposed and stoned to death. I think it is significant that the accuser, the one who exposes the heretic, is to throw the first stone and then be joined by the rest of the people. Why? As a testimony to the truth of the accusation. Surely, no man would falsely accuse someone knowing that it would result in the death of the accused and that you would have to initiate the judgment.

We have to keep in mind that this instruction is being given to people who have joined in covenant with YHWH. To find a heretic among God’s people should be quite the exception. The application to the church today is obvious.

Nevertheless, the question obviously arises as to the possibility of false accusation. There is a wonderful example in scripture of God’s provision for the innocent though the circumstances describe a group action rather than a single accuser. The accusation was against the true prophet and not a false prophet; still the accused was innocent. It is found in Acts 6-7—the stoning of Stephen. Stephen was bold in sharing the truth of Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, and was stoned to death for his testimony. He never waived from the truth in the face of unjust judgment and was given a vision of the glory of God in heaven with Jesus standing at His right hand. He knelt in prayer asking forgiveness for those who killed him and committing his spirit to God. I personally don’t think the Lord allowed him to feel a single stone.

Deut. 13:11 And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.

Such direct and severe punishment is meant to deter anyone else from doing such a thing. Israel was not a huge nation, and that type of news travels fast.

If justice were carried out as swiftly and severely today for the crimes qualifying for capital punishment, I believe we would see quite a decrease in that type of crime. In fact, if trial and judgment period were carried out expediently, it would deter crime. The scary thing about the justice system as a whole in America today is that it is a system supposedly based on equality and truth, but is quite obviously influenced by wealth, personal agenda, and with no fear of God.

I believe this is an example of how Christ will rule on the throne of David with a rod of iron during the millennium. No rebellion will be tolerated. Sin will be judged immediately. There will be no possibility of unrighteous judgment.

Deut. 13:12 ¶ If thou shalt hear *say* in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying,

Deut. 13:13 *Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known;*

Deut. 13:14 *Then shalt thou enquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you;*

Deut. 13:15 *Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword.*

Recognizing the powerful influence of peer pressure and/or a charismatic personality, Moses goes on to give direction as to how to respond in the event that a whole city is deceived into turning away from God to serve “other gods.”

“Children of Belial” is a phrase describing wicked men; Webster describes them as “the personification of evil.” It is truly an amazing truth of history that so many of these evil men are possessed with the charisma to generate masses of followers.

This section describes a terrible accusation that could result in the death of hundreds. Notice that the first source of evidence comes in the form of “hear say” or rumor. Moses instructs that they are not to act in judgment according to the rumor. They are to enquire, search (examine intimately) and ask diligently to find out the truth. If it is proven true, then they are to kill all the inhabitants of that city with a sword and completely destroy it—cattle and everything else in it. I can hear the question now, “But what if there are innocent people in that city?” If the “whole” city is involved, there are no innocent bystanders whether or not they participated in the worship of the false gods. Their sin was of omission and direct disobedience to God’s command. Instead of preserving life by disclosing the truth, they were essentially condemning others to eternal damnation through their silence just as surely as those that led them into rebellion. The longer evil is allowed to prosper, the more that fall victim to its influence.

This is a very sobering truth. We are responsible before the Lord to speak out against false teaching. If we knowingly stay quiet and allow those in our sphere of influence to be deceived by such teaching, we are as guilty as the false teachers before God. We are so conditioned by our culture to be tolerant and oh so careful of not hurting anyone’s feelings and be politically correct that we, as a church, have become mute as a whole in identifying false teachers and their teaching.

Deut. 13:16 *And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, for the LORD thy God: and it shall be an heap for ever; it shall not be built again.*

Deut. 13:17 *And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and shew thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers;*

Deut. 13:18 When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do *that which is right in the eyes of the LORD thy God.*

Moses goes on to instruct that nothing is to be taken as booty from the destruction of such a city. Everything that could normally be classified as the spoils of war is to be piled in the middle of the street and burned. The whole city is to be burned and the ruins left forever as a deterrent to others who might face the same temptation. They are not to salvage one thing. Never again is that city to be rebuilt. This will ensure that the nation is shown the mercy of God and spared the judgment of His anger. God's desire is to bless them and multiply them according to His unconditional covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. If they want to be those that inherit the blessings of that covenant, they must keep their own conditional covenant with the LORD. If they don't keep their own covenant with God by doing what is "right in the eyes of the LORD," the God of Israel, they will suffer judgment and those blessings will be reserved for a future generation.