

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

By C. H. M.

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE opening paragraph of this chapter suggests a deeply interesting and practical line of truth.

“The priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and His inheritance. Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the Lord is their inheritance, as He hath said unto them. And this shall be the priest’s due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep; and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw. The first-fruits also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep shalt thou give him. For the Lord thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the Lord, him and his sons forever. And if a Levite come from any of thy gates out of all Israel, where he sojourned, and come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the Lord shall choose; then he shall minister in the name of the Lord his God, as all his brethren the Levites do, which stand there before the Lord. They shall have like portions to eat, beside that which cometh out of the sale of his patrimony” (Ver. 1-8).

Here, as in every part of the book of Deuteronomy, the priests are classed with the Levites in a very marked way. We have called the reader’s attention to this as a special characteristic feature of our book, and shall not dwell upon it now, but merely, in passing, remind the reader of it, as something claiming his attention.

Care for the Lord’s Servants

Let him weigh the opening words of our chapter, **“The priests the Levites,”** and compare them with the way in which the priests the sons of Aaron are spoken of in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers; and if he should be disposed to ask the reason of this distinction, we believe it to be this, that in Deuteronomy the divine object is, to bring the whole assembly of Israel more into prominence, and hence it is that the priests in their official capacity come rarely before us.

The grand Deuteronomic idea is, Israel in immediate relationship with the Lord.

Now, in the passage just quoted, we have the priests and the Levites linked together, and presented as the Lord’s servants, wholly dependent upon Him, and intimately identified with His altar and His service. This is full of interest, and opens up a very important field of practical truth, to which the Church of God would do well to attend.

In looking through the history of Israel, we observe that when things were in anything like a healthful condition, the altar of God was well attended to, and, as a consequence, the priests and the Levites were well supplied. If the Lord had His portion, His servants were sure to have theirs; if He was neglected, so were they. They were bound up together. The people were to bring their offerings to God, and He shared them with His servants. The priests the Levites were not to exact or demand of the people, but the people were privileged to bring their gifts to the altar of God, and He permitted His servants to feed upon the fruit of His people's devotedness to Him.

Such was the true – the divine idea as to the Lord's servants of old. They were to live upon the voluntary offerings presented to God by the whole congregation. True it is that in the dark and evil days of the sons of Eli we find something sadly different from this lovely moral order. Then, **“the priest's custom with the people was, that when anyone offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand; and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the flesh-hook brought up, the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither. Also before they burnt the fat [God's special portion], the priest's-servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, ‘Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw.’ And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, ‘Nay; but thou shalt give it me now; and if not, I will take it by force.’ Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord; for men abhorred the offering of the Lord”** (I Samuel 2:13-17).

All this was truly deplorable, and ended in the solemn judgment of God upon the house of Eli. It could not be otherwise. If those who ministered at the altar could be guilty of such terrible iniquity and impiety, judgment must take its course.

But the normal condition of things, as presented in our chapter, was in vivid contrast with all this frightful iniquity.

The Lord would surround Himself with the willing offerings of His people, and from these offerings He would feed His servants who ministered at His altar. Hence, therefore, when the altar of God was diligently, fervently, and devotedly attended to, the priests the Levites had a rich portion – an abundant supply; and on the other hand, when the Lord and His altar were treated with cold neglect, or merely waited upon in a barren routine or heartless formalism, the Lord's servants were correspondingly neglected. In a word, they stood intimately identified with the worship and service of the God of Israel.

Thus, for example, in the bright days of the good king Hezekiah, when things were fresh and hearts happy and true, we read,

“And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites after their courses, every man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt-offerings and for peace-offerings, to minister, and to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the tents of the Lord.

“He appointed also the king’s portion of his substance for the burnt-offerings, to wit, for the morning and evening burnt-offerings, and the burnt-offerings for the Sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of the Lord. Moreover, he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord. And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the first-fruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly. And concerning the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the Lord their God, and laid them by heaps. In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month. And when Hezekiah and the princes Came and saw the heaps, they blessed the Lord and His people Israel. Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps. And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him, and said, ‘Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the Lord, toe have had enough to eat, and have left plenty; for the Lord hath blessed His people; and that which is left is this great store” (II Chronicles 31:2-10).

How truly refreshing is all this! And how encouraging! The deep, full, silvery tide of devotedness flowed around the altar of God, bearing upon its bosom an ample supply to meet all the need of the Lord’s servants, and **“heaps”** beside. This, we may feel assured, was grateful to the heart of the God of Israel, as it was to the hearts of those who had given themselves, at His call and by His appointment, to the service of His altar and His sanctuary.

And let the reader specially note those precious words, **“As it is written in the law of the Lord.”**

Here was Hezekiah’s authority, the solid basis of his whole line of conduct from first to last. True, the nation’s visible unity was gone; the condition of things when he began his blessed work was most discouraging; but the word of the Lord was as true, as real, and as direct in its application in Hezekiah’s day as it was in the days of David or Joshua. Hezekiah rightly felt that Deuteronomy 18:1-8 applied to his day and to his conscience, and that he and the people were responsible to act upon it, according to their ability. Were the priests and the Levites to starve because Israel’s national unity was gone? Surely not. They were to stand or fall with the Word, the worship, and the work of God. Circumstances might vary, and the Israelite might find himself in a position in which it would be impossible to carry out in detail all the ordinances of the Levitical ceremonial, but he never could find himself in circumstances in which it was not his high privilege to give full expression to his heart’s devotedness to the service, the altar, and the law of the Lord.

Thus, then, we see, throughout the entire history of Israel, that when things were all bright and healthy, the Lord’s worship, His work, and His workmen were blessedly attended to; but on the other hand, when things were low, when hearts were cold, when self and its interests had the uppermost place, then all these great objects were treated with heartless neglect.

Look, for example, at Nehemiah 13. When that beloved and faithful servant returned to Jerusalem, after an absence of certain days, he found, to his deep sorrow, that, even in that short time, various things had gone sadly astray; amongst the rest, the poor Levites had been left without any thing to eat.

“And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them; for the Levites and the singers that did the work were fled everyone to his field.”

There were no **“heaps”** of first-fruits in those dismal days, and surely it was hard for men to work and sing when they had nothing to eat. This was not according to the law of the Lord, nor according to His loving heart. It was a sad reproach upon the people that the Lord’s servants were obliged, through their gross neglect, to abandon His worship and His work in order to keep themselves from starving.

This, truly, was a deplorable condition of things, Nehemiah felt it keenly, as we read, **“Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken?” And I gathered them together, and set them in their place. Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn, and the new wine, and the oil, unto the treasuries. And I made treasurers over the treasuries, . . . for they were counted faithful;**” – they were entitled to the confidence of their brethren – **“and their office was to distribute unto their brethren.”**

It needed a number of tried and faithful men to occupy the high position of distributing to their brethren the precious fruit of the people’s devotedness; they could take counsel together, and see that the Lord’s treasury was faithfully managed, according to His Word, and the need of His true and bona-fide workmen fully met, without prejudice or partiality.

Such was the lovely order of the God of Israel – an order to which every true Israelite such as Nehemiah and Hezekiah would delight to attend. The rich tide of blessing flowed forth from the Lord to His people, and back from His people to Him, and from that flowing tide His servants were to draw a full supply for all their need. It was a dishonor to Him to have the Levites obliged to return to their fields; it proved that His house was forsaken, and that there was no sustenance for His servants.

Now, the question may here be asked, What has all this to say to us? What has the Church of God to learn from Deuteronomy 18:1-8?

In order to answer this question, we must turn to I Corinthians 9, where the inspired apostle deals with the very important subject of the support of the Christian ministry – a subject so little understood by the great mass of professing Christians.

As to the law of the case, it is as distinct as possible.

“Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, ‘Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the com.

“Doth God take care for oxen? or saith He it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written; that he that ploweth should plow in hope, and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless”-here grace shines out, in all its heavenly luster – **“we have not used this power; but suffer all things lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ. Do you not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel. But”** – here again grace asserts its holy dignity – **“I have used none of these things; neither have I written these things that it should be so done unto me; for it were better for me to die than that any man should make my glorying void. For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward, then? Verily that when I preach the Gospel, I may make the Gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power, in the Gospel”** (Ver. 7-18).

Here we have this interesting and weighty subject presented in all its bearings.

The inspired apostle lays down, with all possible decision and clearness, the divine law on the point. There is no mistaking it. **“The Lord hath ordained that they that preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel;”** that just as the priests and the Levites of old lived on the offerings’ presented by the people, so now, those who are really called of God, gifted by Christ, and fitted by the HOLY GHOST to preach the Gospel, and who are giving themselves constantly and diligently to that glorious work, are morally entitled to temporal support.

It is not that they should look to those to whom they preach for a certain stipulated sum. There is no such idea as this in the New Testament. The workman must look to his Master, and to Him alone, for support. Woe be to him if he looks to the church, or to men in any way. The priests and Levites had their portion in and from the Lord. He was the lot of their inheritance. True, He expected the people to minister to Him in the persons of His servants. He told them what to give, and blessed them in giving: it was their high privilege, as well as their bounden duty, to give; had they refused or neglected, it would have brought drought and barrenness upon their fields and vineyards. (Haggai 1:5-11).

But the priests the Levites had to look only to the Lord. If the people failed in their offerings, the Levites had to fly to their fields and work for their living. They could not go to law with anyone for tithes and offerings; their only appeal was to the God of Israel, who had ordained them to the work and given them the work to do.

So also with the Lord’s workmen now – they must look only to Him. They must be well assured that He has fitted them for the work, and called them to it, ere they attempt to push out (if we may so express it) from the shore of circumstances, and give themselves wholly to the work of preaching.

They must take their eyes completely off from men – from all creature-streams and human props, and lean exclusively upon the living God.

We have seen the most disastrous consequences resulting from acting under a mistaken impulse in this most solemn matter; men not called of God, or fitted for the work, giving up their occupations, and coming forth, as they said, to live by faith and give themselves to the work. Deplorable shipwreck was the result in every instance. Some, when they began to look the stern realities of the path straight in the face, became so alarmed that they actually lost their mental balance, lost their reason for a time; some lost their peace, and some went right back into the world again. In short, it is our deep and thorough conviction, after forty years' observation, that the cases are few and far between in which it is morally safe and good for one to abandon his bread-winning calling in order to preach the Gospel.

It must be so distinct and unquestionable to the man himself, that he has only to say, with Luther, at the Diet of Worms, "Here I am; I can do no otherwise: God help me! Amen." Then he may be perfectly sure that God will sustain him in the work to which He has called him, and meet all his need "**according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**"

And as to men and their thoughts respecting him and his course, he has simply to refer them to his Master. He is not responsible to them, nor has he ever asked them for any thing. If they were compelled to support him, reason would that they might complain or raise questions; but as they are not, they must just leave him, remembering that to his own Master he standeth or falleth.

But when we look at the splendid passage just quoted from I Corinthians 9, we find that the blessed apostle, after having established, beyond all question, his right to be supported, relinquishes it completely – "**Nevertheless, I have used none of these things.**" He worked with his hands; he wrought with labor and travail night and day, in order not to be chargeable or burdensome to any. "**These hands,**" he says, "**have ministered to my necessities, and those that were with me.**"

He coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel. He traveled, he preached, he visited from house to house, he was the laborious apostle, the earnest evangelist, the diligent pastor, he had the care of all the churches. Was not he entitled to support? Assuredly he was. It ought to have been the joy of the Church of God to minister to his every need But he never enforced his claim – nay, he surrendered it. He supported himself and his companions by the labor of his hands; and all this as an example, as he says to the elders of Ephesus, "**I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'**"

Now, it is perfectly wonderful to think of this beloved and revered servant of Christ, with his extensive travels from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum, his gigantic labors as an evangelist, a pastor, and a teacher, and yet finding time to support himself and others by the work of his hands. Truly he occupied high moral ground. His case is a standing testimony against hirelingism, in every shape and form. The infidel's sneering references to well-paid ministers could have no application whatever to him. He certainly did not preach for hire.

And yet he thankfully received help from those who knew how to give it.

Again and again the beloved assembly at Philippi ministered to the necessities of their revered and beloved father in Christ. How well for them that they did so! It will never be forgotten. Millions have read the sweet record of their devotedness, and been refreshed by the odor of their sacrifice; it is recorded in Heaven, where nothing of the kind is ever forgotten – yea, it is engraved on the very tablets of the heart of Christ. Hear how the blessed apostle pours out his grateful heart to his much-loved children – **“I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again”; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want;”** blessed, self-denying servant! – **“for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me. Notwithstanding, ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound; I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus”** (Philippians 4:10-19).

What a rare privilege to be allowed to comfort the heart of such an honored servant of Christ, at the close of his career, and in the solitude of his prison at Rome! How seasonable, how right, how lovely, was their ministry! What joy to receive the apostle’s grateful acknowledgments! and then how precious the assurance that their service had gone up, as an odor of sweet smell, to the very throne and heart of God!

Who would not rather be a Philippian ministering to the apostle’s need, than a Corinthian calling his ministry in question, or a Galatian breaking his heart? How vast the difference! The apostle could not take any thing from the assembly at Corinth; their state did not admit of it. Individuals in that assembly did minister to him, and their service is recorded on the page of inspiration, remembered above, and it will be abundantly rewarded in the kingdom by and by. **“I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus; for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours, therefore acknowledge ye them that are such”** (I Corinthians 16:17, 18).

Thus, then, from all that has passed before us, we learn most distinctly that both under the law and under the Gospel it is according to the revealed will, and according to the heart of God, that those who are really called of Him to the work, and who devote themselves earnestly, diligently, and faithfully to it, should have the hearty sympathy and practical help of His people.

All who love Christ will count it their deepest joy to minister to Him in the persons of His servants.

When He Himself was here upon earth, He graciously accepted help from the hands of those who loved Him, and had reaped the fruit of His most precious ministry – **“certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto Him of their substance”** (Luke 8:2, 3).

Happy, highly privileged women! What joy to be allowed to minister to the Lord of glory, in the days of His human need and humiliation! There stand their honored names, on the divine page, written down by God the Holy Ghost, to be read by untold millions, to be borne along the stream of time right onward into eternity. How well it was for those women that they did not waste their substance in self-indulgence, or hoard it up to be rust on their souls, or a positive curse, as money must ever be if not used for God!

But on the other hand, we learn the urgent need, on the part of all who take the place of workers, whether in or out of the assembly, of keeping themselves perfectly free from all human influence, all looking to men, in any shape or form. They must have to do with God in the secret of their own souls, or they will assuredly break down, sooner or later. They must look to Him alone for the supply of their need. If the church neglect them, the church will be the serious loser here and hereafter.

If they can support themselves by the labor of their hands, without curtailing their direct service to Christ, so much the better; it is unquestionably the more excellent way.

We are as persuaded of this as of the truth of any proposition that could be submitted to us. There is nothing more spiritually and morally noble than a truly gifted servant of Christ supporting himself and his family by the sweat of his brow or the sweat of his brain, and, at the same time, giving himself diligently to the Lord’s work, whether as an evangelist, a pastor, or a teacher. The moral antipodes of this is presented to our view in the person of a man who, without gift or grace or spiritual life, enters what is called the ministry, as a mere profession or means of living. The position of such a man is morally dangerous and miserable in the extreme. We shall not dwell upon it, inasmuch as it does not come within the range of the subject which has been engaging our attention, and we are only too thankful to leave it and proceed with our chapter.

The Danger of consulting with mediums

“When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits; or a wizard, or a necromancer; for all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners; but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do” (Ver. 9-14).

Now, it may be that, on reading the foregoing quotation, the reader feels disposed to ask what possible application it can have to professing Christians. We ask, in reply, Are there any professing Christians who are in the habit of going to witness the performances of wizards, magicians, and necromancers? are there any who take part in table-turning, spirit-rapping, mesmerism, or clairvoyance? *

*** Some of our readers may object to our classing mesmerism with spirit rapping and table turning. It may be they would regard it in the same light, and use it in the same way, as ether or chloroform, in medical practice. We do not attempt to dogmatize on the point. We can only say that we could have nothing whatever to do with it. We consider it a most solemn thing for anyone to allow himself to be placed by another in a state of utter unconsciousness, for any purpose whatsoever. And as to the idea of listening to, or being guided by, the ravings of a person in that state, we can only regard it as absolutely absurd, if not positively sinful.**

If so, the passage which we have just quoted bears very pointedly and solemnly upon all such. We most surely believe that all these things which we have named are of the devil. This may sound harsh and severe, but we cannot help that. We are thoroughly persuaded that when people lend themselves to the awful business of bringing up, in any way, the spirits of the departed, they are simply putting themselves into the hands of the devil, to be deceived and deluded by his lies.

What, we may ask, do those who hold in their hands a perfect revelation from God want of table-turning and spirit-rapping? Surely nothing. And if, not content with that precious Word, they turn to the spirits or departed friends or others, what can they expect but that God will judicially give them over to be blinded and deceived by wicked spirits, who come up and personate the departed, and tell all manner of lies?

We cannot attempt to go fully into this subject here; we have no time, nor space, nor inclination, for anything of the sort. We merely feel it to be our solemn duty to warn the reader against having anything whatever to do with consulting departed spirits. We believe it to be most dangerous work. We do not enter upon the question as to whether souls can come back to this world; no doubt God could permit them to come if He saw fit, but this we leave.

The great point for us to keep ever before our hearts is, the perfect sufficiency of divine revelation. What do we want of departed spirits? The rich man imagined that if Lazarus were to go back to earth and speak to his five brethren, it would have a great effect:

“I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ Abraham saith unto him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.’ And he said unto him, ‘If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead’” (Luke 16:27-31).

Here we have a thorough settlement of this question.

If people will not hear the Word of God, if they will not believe its clear and solemn statements as to themselves, their present condition, and their future destiny, neither will they be persuaded though a thousand departed souls were to come back and tell them what they saw and heard and felt in Heaven above or in hell beneath; it would produce no saving or permanent effect upon them. It might cause great excitement – great sensation, furnish great material for talk, and fill the newspapers far and wide; but there it would end. People would go on all the same with their traffic and gain, their folly and vanity, their pleasure-hunting and self-indulgence.

“If they hear not Moses and the prophets, [and, we may add, Christ and His holy apostles] neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.”

The heart that will not bow to Scripture will not be convinced by anything; and as to the true believer, he has in Scripture all he can possibly want, and therefore he has no need to have recourse to table-turning, spirit-rapping, or magic.

“And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:19, 20).

Here is the divine resource of the Lord’s people, at all times and in all places; and to this it is that Moses refers the congregation in the splendid paragraph which closes our chapter.

He shows them very distinctly that they had no need to apply to familiar spirits, enchanters, wizards, or witches, which were all an abomination to the Lord.

“The Lord thy God,” he says, **“will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; according to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.’ And the Lord said unto me, ‘They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words into his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto My words which he shall speak in My name, I will require it of him. But the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him”** (Ver. 15-22).

We can be at no loss to know who this Prophet is, namely, our adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In the third chapter of Acts, Peter so applies the words of Moses:

“He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, ‘A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the People’ “ (Ver. 20-23).

How precious the privilege of hearing the voice of such a Prophet! It is the voice of God speaking through the lips of the Man Christ Jesus – speaking, not in thunder, not with flaming fire, nor the lightning’s flash, but in that still small voice of love and mercy which falls in soothing power on the broken heart and contrite spirit, which distills like the gentle dew of Heaven upon the thirsty ground.

This voice we have in the Holy Scriptures – that precious revelation which comes so constantly and so powerfully before us in our studies on this blessed book of Deuteronomy. We must never forget this. The voice of Scripture is the voice of Christ, and the voice of Christ is the voice of God.

We want no more. If anyone presumes to come with a fresh revelation, with some new truth not contained in the divine Volume, we must judge him and his communication by the standard of Scripture and reject them utterly.

“Thou shalt not be afraid of him.”

False prophets come with great pretensions, high-sounding words, and sanctimonious bearing. Moreover, they seek to surround themselves with a sort of dignity, weight, and impressiveness which are apt to impose on the ignorant. But they cannot stand the searching power of the Word of God. Some simple clause of Holy Scripture will strip them of all their imposing surroundings, and cut up by the roots their wonderful revelations. Those who know the voice of the true Prophet will not listen to any other: those who have heard the voice of the good Shepherd will not listen to the voice of a stranger.

Reader, see that you listen only to the voice of Jesus.

~ end of chapter 18 ~

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