

Moses continues to prepare the children of Israel to enter the land of Canaan by going over the statutes and commands the LORD has given. He instructs them to destroy all idolatrous influences they encounter when they enter the land and then reminds them of their uniqueness as the LORD's chosen people. Finally, Moses predicts the coming of a "Prophet" (Jesus Christ), the one true mediator between them and the LORD. He will speak the word of God to them and they will listen.

Deuteronomy 12

1 These *are* the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth.

Moses is prefacing his next statements as being statutes and judgments that they are to obey once they are in the land. The reason they should obey is because it is the LORD that will be giving them the land to possess all their lives. If the LORD is gracious enough to give them the land then they should obey His commands of what they are to do once they are in the land.

2 Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree:

"Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods" – When they enter and possess the land, there will still be the various places where the nations they are displacing had served and worshiped their gods. Israel is to "utterly" (completely) destroy these places in order to erase their idolatrous influence from the land.

"upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree" – The worship of false gods was often done on "high places" (on mountains and hills) because it was believed that gods lived on mountains and so to worship them on hills or mountains brought the worshiper closer to their god. Certain trees were considered sacred and worship was frequently done under these trees as well. The LORD's command to Israel is to destroy all of these places of worship devoted to the false gods of the heathen.

3 And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.

"And ye shall overthrow [tear down] their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire" – The pillars were statues or pillars of stone devoted to the worship of a false god. The groves were the groves of sacred trees devoted to the worship of these false gods. All these are to be destroyed so that they can no longer be used for idolatrous purposes.

"and ye shall hew down [to cut down] the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place" – The images of these gods are also to be destroyed as well as all references to them by name. The phrase "destroy the names of them out of that place" could also mean that the destruction was to be so complete that the places will no longer be remembered for the god for which they had been built to worship. The LORD wanted idolatry to be totally obliterated from the land lest the children of Israel should be tempted to serve these gods.

Deuteronomy 14

2 For thou *art* an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that *are* upon the earth.

"For thou art an holy [sacred; set apart] people unto the LORD thy God" – In the previous verse, Moses warns them not to engage in the idolatrous practices of cutting themselves or shaving their heads. They are not to do these sort of things that other nations do because they are a "holy people unto the LORD thy God." They are to be different because they are serving the true and living God and they have been set apart as a sacred people for that purpose.

"and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar [valued property; treasure] people unto himself" – The Hebrew word translated "peculiar" does not mean "odd" or "unique" but "treasure." The LORD chose Israel to be His treasured people. They did not earn this privilege nor was there anything inherently more valuable about them than any other people on the earth. **Deuteronomy 7:6-8**
"For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."

"above all the nations that are upon the earth" – The LORD could have chosen any nation on earth, even multiple nations, to be the people that He treasured above all others. However, He chose to love Israel for reasons that only He knows.

Deuteronomy 18

15 The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

In verses 9-14, Moses warns Israel not to follow the examples of the nations that they are displacing when they take possession of the land of Canaan. These pagan nations listened to and obeyed such people as diviners, those who consult with familiar spirits (mediums), witches, wizards, necromancers, and so on. Instead, they are to listen to those whom the LORD has authorized to speak for Him.

“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee” – The LORD will provide a man who will legitimately speak for Him who will come from inside the nation of Israel. Commentators differ as to whether Moses is speaking of prophets in general or if he is predicting the coming of the Messiah (or both). The context of the remainder of the chapter seems to indicate that he’s speaking of prophets in general. However, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, would become the ultimate fulfillment of Moses’ words (Acts 3:22-23).

“of thy brethren” – This prophet will be a Jew. The LORD did not instruct Israel to listen to a Gentile prophet.

“like unto me” – Moses was in the special position of being a mediator between the LORD and the people because the LORD would speak to him and Moses would then speak to the people. Prophets had the same responsibility of speaking the words of the LORD to the people.

“unto him ye shall hearken” – Just as they listened to and obeyed the words of the LORD that Moses spoke to them, they should listen to and obey when the prophet speaks the word of the LORD.

16 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.

“According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly” – Moses reminds them that they are the ones who wanted someone to stand between them and the LORD. He points back to when they were at Mt. Horeb (Sinai) and the LORD was speaking directly to them from the fire on the mountain (Ex. 19:16-20:21).

“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” – The people were so intimidated and fearful of the sights and sounds of God’s presence that they begged Moses to be the mediator between them and the LORD instead of the LORD speaking directly to them (Ex. 20:18-19).

17 And the LORD said unto me, They have well *spoken that which they have spoken*.

This statement by the LORD in vs. 17-18 is not mentioned in Exodus 20 where the incident was originally recorded. However, Moses mentions it in Deut. 5:28 and here. The LORD is agreeing with the people’s statement that they needed someone to act as a mediator between them and the LORD to bring His word to them. They recognized that they could not stand in the presence of the LORD to hear His voice and we today cannot stand in His presence without the mediating work of Jesus Christ.

18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

“I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee” – The LORD seems to be speaking of the office of the prophet because in v. 20 He mentions the potential for prophets that speak things that did not come from Him and their punishment. However, NT writers also interpret “a Prophet” as referring to the Messiah, or possibly His forerunner. When the Jews were asking John to identify himself, they went through a list of identities prophesied to come, including “that prophet” (John 1:21). When Peter is preaching on the Day of Pentecost, he quotes this verse as referring to Christ (Acts 3:22-23). Stephen also uses this verse to call attention to the fact that the Jews had crucified their Messiah (Acts 7:37).

“and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him” – Like Moses, this Prophet will hear the voice of the LORD and proclaim His words to the people. Prophets have fulfilled this prophesy throughout Israel’s history (men like Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, etc.) but the ultimate fulfillment was when Jesus Christ came and preached the word of God. He became the one true Mediator between God and man. **1 Tim. 2:5** *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”*