

Deuteronomy 13:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying,

Analysis

City-wide apostasy: 'If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying.' This introduces worst-case scenario—not individual apostasy but civic rebellion. The phrase 'one of thy cities' indicates Israelite city, part of covenant community, now corrupted. The rumor ('thou shalt hear say') requires investigation before action (v.14). This section (v.12-18) addresses corporate apostasy, distinct from individual (v.6-11) or prophetic (v.1-5) seduction. When whole communities apostatize, more comprehensive judgment follows. The threat of entire cities corrupting others necessitates dramatic response.

Historical Context

No clear biblical record exists of this law's implementation—possibly because it was deterrent never needed, or because Israel never fully obeyed. Judges 19-21 records Gibeah's wickedness leading to Benjaminites civil war, approaching this scenario. Prophets condemned cities for idolatry (Hosea 4-5 on Samaria; Jeremiah 7 on Jerusalem) but national apostasy prevented local enforcement. The destruction of Canaanite cities at conquest prefigures this judgment. Revelation 2-3's church judgments show Christ still removes lampstands (churches) for apostasy.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How should Christians respond when entire churches or denominations abandon biblical truth?
2. What is our responsibility when corporate religious bodies embrace heresy or immorality?
3. How do we maintain gospel witness while separating from apostate communities?

Interlinear Text

יְהִי הָאָשֶׁר תְּשִׂמֵּחַ עָלָיו יְבָאֵת בְּאַחֲת תְּשִׂמֵּחַ עַל יְבָאֵת אֲשֶׁר יְהִי הָאָשֶׁר

H3588 If thou shalt hear H8085 say in one H259 of thy cities H5892 H834 which the LORD H3068

לְאָמַרְתָּ לְבָבְךָ בְּתַת לְבָבְךָ שְׁמַע בְּתַת נָתָת | אֱלֹהֶיךָ יְהִי

thy God H430 hath given H5414 H0 thee to dwell H3427 H8033 there saying H559

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