

Deuteronomy 17:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me;

Analysis

Moses prophetically addresses Israel's future desire for a king: 'When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me.' God anticipates Israel's request (fulfilled in 1 Samuel 8) and provides regulations for kingship. The phrase 'like all the nations' reveals the fundamental problem—Israel wants to conform rather than remain distinct. God permits monarchy but regulates it to prevent tyranny and ensure the king remains under divine law.

Historical Context

Israel requested a king during Samuel's judgeship (1 Samuel 8:5), explicitly wanting to be 'like all the nations.' God granted the request but warned of kingship's dangers (1 Samuel 8:10-18). Saul's failure and David's qualified success demonstrated monarchy's complexities. The regulations in Deuteronomy 17:15-20—king must be chosen by God, must not accumulate horses/wives/wealth, must copy and study the law—aimed to prevent absolute monarchy. Israel's kings often violated these commands, contributing to national decline.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does the desire to be 'like all the nations' reflect a failure to embrace distinctive calling?
2. What does God's regulation of kingship teach about His sovereignty over human governments?

Interlinear Text

כִּי H3588	תָּבֹא H935	אֶל H413	הָאֶרֶץ H776	אֲשֶׁר H834	יְהוָה H3068
	When thou art come		unto the land		which the LORD
אֱלֹהֶיךָ H430	נֹתֵן H5414	לְךָ H0	וְיָרְשָׁתָּהּ H3423	וְיָשָׁב בָּתְּתָהּ H3427	בָּהּ H0
thy God	giveth		thee and shalt possess	it and shalt dwell	
וְאָמַרְתָּ H559	אֲשֶׁר יֵמֶה H7760	עָלַי H5921	מֶלֶךְ H4428	כָּכָל H3605	
therein and shalt say	I will set		a king		
הַגּוֹיִם H1471	אֲשֶׁר H834	סְבִיבֹתַי H5439			
over me like as all the nations		that are about			

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 1:13 (References God): Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, The LORD your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land.

1 Samuel 12:19 (Kingdom): And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.

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