

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		תָּבֹא	אֶל	אֲשֶׁר	הַיְהִי	הַ	אֲשֶׁר	הַ	יְהִי	הַ	אֲשֶׁר	הַ	
H3588	When thou art come	H935	H413	unto the land	H776	H834	which the LORD	H3068					
בְּ	אֱלֹהִים	נָתַת	לְךָ	וַיַּרְשֶׁת	תְּ	בְּ	וַיֵּשֶׁת	בְּ	בְּ	בְּ	וְ	בְּ	
thy God	giveth	H5414	H0	thee and shalt possess	H3423	H3427	it and shalt dwell	H0					
therein and shalt say		H559	I will set	H7760	H5921	a king	H4428	H3605					
מִ	לְךָ	עַלִּי	אֲשֶׁר	יְמָה	וְאַמְرָת	כָּל	מִ	לְךָ	עַלִּי	אֲשֶׁר	רְ	סְבִיבָתִים	
over me like as all the nations		H1471	H834	that are about	H5439								

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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