

Deuteronomy 16:18 - 17:13

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[0 : 00] In Deuteronomy 16 verse 18, that would take us through the 17th chapter and into the 18th chapter, throughout the 18th chapter, which one, if you were not preaching through, or let me just back it up, if I were not preaching through a book, per se, if I were not preaching through the text, I would probably be tempted to avoid because we don't as easily see our application to these matters because it is the day-to-day operations with the nation of Israel.

But in this, so I don't want you to get lost in it because it is here we begin to see political leaders with the nation of Israel. We'll be introduced tonight to the judges, or the office of judge. Then God speaks of kings in Deuteronomy 17, starting in verse 14. And then he will speak of Levites, and then he will finally speak of prophets and false prophets. Now, that has some application because Deuteronomy 18 is where Moses declares that the Lord would rise up a prophet like unto him.

All right, so that we know is pointing to Christ. That's a prophecy concerning Christ to come. So we start getting into this realm, much like Ezra and Nehemiah, where it's the day-to-day operations. We would call it the secular dealing or the worldly happenings. So one thing you need to understand before we read the text, before we get into it, before we discard and say, why do these things matter?

[1 : 19] Well, the first thing we need to do is pray, and then we'll introduce us. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much just for this evening. We thank you, God, for allowing us to gather together. We thank you for the great privilege of coming and singing and rejoicing.

We thank you for the privilege of fellowship. We thank you for the sweetness of being able to read your word. And God, we pray that the truth of your word would just speak to us. And Lord, it would constantly reveal who you are, who we are.

And Lord, where we stand with you, what it looks like to live life in fellowship with holy God. We thank you, Lord Jesus, for making that possible. And may it be just the constant rejoicing of our lives as we seek to know more of you and to grow closer to you through the study of your word and through involvement in the church.

We just ask that you be glorified, and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Let me read the text, and then we'll start explaining it. So I don't want to get ahead of myself. So let's read the text together. Deuteronomy 16, starting in verse 18.

Moses here, giving final words, right? He is declaring the law and expounding the law and declaring truths to the nation.

[2 : 28] Always taking in context, something's about to happen. They're about to go into the promised land. Something else is about to happen. Moses is about to die. Okay, Moses is going to die. From this point up to this point, the leadership of the nation has rested in one man.

It rested in Moses, right? They were dependent upon Moses. I know because of the advice of his father-in-law, he began to disperse some of those decision-making to the people around him, the elders and rulers.

But still, it all was on one man. And all that's about to change. Deuteronomy 16, verse 18. You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the Lord your God is giving you according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.

You shall not distort justice. You shall not be partial. You shall not take a bribe. For a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the word of the righteous. Justice and only justice you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

You shall not plant for yourself an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of the Lord your God, which you shall make for yourself. You shall not set up for yourself a sacred pillar which the Lord your God hates.

[3 : 40] You shall not sacrifice to the Lord your God an ox or a sheep which has a blemish or any defect, for that is a testable thing to the Lord your God. If there is found in your midst in any of your towns which the Lord your God has given you, a man or a woman who does what is evil in the sight of the Lord your God, by transgressing his covenant, and has gone and served other gods and worshipped them, or the sun, or the moon, or any of the heavenly hosts which I have not commanded, and if it is told you and you have heard of it, then you shall inquire thoroughly.

Behold, if it is true and a thing certain that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, then you shall bring out that man or that woman who has done this evil deed to your gates, that is the man or the woman, and you shall stone them to death.

On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death. He shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people.

So you shall purge the evil from your midst. If any case is too difficult for you to decide between one kind of homicide or another, between one kind of lawsuit or another, and between one kind of assault or another, being cases of dispute in your courts, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the Lord your God chooses.

You shall come to the Levitical priest or the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall inquire of them, and they will declare to you the verdict in the case, and you shall do according to the terms of the verdict which they declare to you from that place which the Lord chooses.

[5 : 11] And you shall be careful to observe according to all that they teach you, according to the terms of the law which they teach you, and according to the verdict which they tell you, you shall do.

You shall not turn aside from the word which they declare to you to the right or the left. The man who acts presumptuously by not listening to the priest who stands there to serve the Lord your God, nor to the judge, that man shall die.

Thus you shall purge the evil from Israel. Then all the people will hear and be afraid, and will not act presumptuously again. Deuteronomy 16, 18 through 17, 13.

If you have read your daily reading, and some of you are following that plan, others are not, but if you are following the plan where you are going back and forth between the Old and the New Testament, and you have read today's reading, then you have read something that really pertains to this in the book of Matthew this morning or this afternoon, whenever you have read it.

If you have not read it yet, then you will. So, Matthew 23, Jesus tells his disciples to pay special close attention to those who rule from the chair of Moses, right? To give attention to what they declare from the chair of Moses, and to do what they say, but not necessarily do what they do.

[6 : 16] Now, the chair of Moses, or the seat of Moses, is this that is referenced to here in Deuteronomy 17, verses 8 and following. It is that Levitical priest or judge who is at the temple who is making a declaration where they're told that whatever he says stands.

Okay, so that's the chair of Moses that Jesus refers to, and that's why it's referred to as the chair of Moses, because of the teaching here found in Deuteronomy 17, that Moses institutes this position of rulership or authority in the nation to declare truth to them.

We'll see the severity of that in just a moment. But here we're introduced to the text where we begin to meet the nation's leaders. And again, this is a text that we would be tempted just to bypass, and a text that we would be tempted not to spend much time upon if God didn't declare it and really dedicate so much space to it in his word.

And since we are committed to just going through the word, we will address it as we come to it. And we begin to see here the references to the leaders of the nation, and in particular, we're introduced to the judges. So tonight, we want to pay special close attention to the judges, which God has declared that would rule upon his people or rule over his people.

So not only is the nation of Israel getting ready to go into the promised land, they're about to change leadership completely. When Moses dies, everything changes. Moses is both leader and priest, right?

[7 : 37] He is the one who intercedes in the presence of God. He goes and he speaks to God face to face, and he comes back and he declares these truths. He is also the political leader, the one who makes all the decisions and the ruling leaders.

He makes all the, when they move, when they stand still, who they fight battle with. All these things are flowing through Moses. No other time in history do we see the nation of Israel resting such

authority and power in one man until the coming of Christ.

This is why Deuteronomy 18 is so important. Because upon the death of Moses, much like when Solomon dies, the kingdom is divided under Jeroboam and his sons, right?

We see that, that Jeroboam failed to take wise advice there. I just completely, I know, I read this, this, I'm reading this book right now by a pastor named Rico Tice who is out of England.

And he talks about being involved, I thought it was just so fitting, and I thought I'd share this with you. In a pastoral counseling called Jeroboam's Men. And the reason it's called Jeroboam's Men, remember Jeroboam did not listen to the wise counselors of his father, but went after the people he grew up with.

[8 : 40] And when the people came and said, are you going to be kind to us or gracious to us? And he said, well, come back later. And those who ruled with his father said, be nice and they'll be loyal to you. And then his wise men said, well, tell them you think my father was hard on you.

My little finger weighs more than my father's thigh, right? Tell them I'm going to be hard on you.

Well, Jeroboam follows advice of his young guys and the nation splits. This is inevitably what leads to the division of the nation of Israel.

So Rico Tice says, Jeroboam's Men is a group of pastors, older pastors, who hold younger pastors accountable, saying, listen to us, not your friends. So I thought that was wise.

So I'm looking for some of Jeroboam's men here in America. I'm going to try to find me some older pastors who would look at me and go, now very quickly I'm becoming one of Jeroboam's men. That is, I'm becoming one of those older pastors who needs to look at the younger pastors and say, don't pay attention to your friends, listen to these things.

But anyway, we digress and we come back. What we find that is this theme throughout scripture, when Moses dies, no single man arises with this type of authority or this type of position.

[9 : 46] Joshua becomes the political leader, right? Joshua is the military leader. They follow Joshua into battle. Joshua is the one who is there leading them, dividing them. But Joshua is not the religious leader.

This is the descendants of Aaron. They assume that, the priests, right? Joshua had to be anointed by a priest upon the death of Moses, right? So we see the division here.

So things are changing for the nation of Israel. Their organizational structure is going to completely change when Moses passes away. But one thing you need to understand in rightly interpreting scripture in the Old Testament in particular, and while we see all this intertwining of what we refer to here in America as the separation of church and state, while I believe that is a good thing historically because I think when the Romans accepted Christianity as their national religion in AD 30+, and things started changing, the state had a big influence on the church and not necessarily for the good.

It did a lot for the spread of the gospel. It opened up a lot of avenues. But it also did a lot for the weakening of the gospel. Read your church history and you understand that. So I think the separation of church and state is a good thing where we don't need the state telling the church what to do, nor does the church get to dictate to the state what it should do, right?

I understand these things, so I'm not trying to get into that. But let's understand how the people of God were called to him and how they lived. They lived under what is called a theocracy.

[11 : 17] They did not live in a bureaucratic or dictator nation. They lived in a theocratic society. A theocratic society means that God ultimately is their ruler.

Okay? He is king. He is ruler. This is not a monarchy. This is not a, you know, bureaucracy. This is not a majority rules.

This is a theocracy. Theo, that is God. God rules. And when God rules his people, one thing we need to understand, God does not separate the secular and the sacred.

There is no separation. Because God's concern for his people includes all of their life. How they live in society. How they operate.

How they worship. But also how they judge. The standard that they have. Read the Ten Commandments. Half of them deal with how man interacts with God.

[12 : 19] The other half deals with how man interacts with fellow man. Right? God is concerned about how much interest you charge your fellow countrymen. Just as concerned as he was about what animal you brought to sacrifice upon the altar.

Now that has application to us today. Even though we don't live under a theocratic society or with a theocracy. As God is our king. As individuals he is.

We have a king. Right? As individuals we have a Lord and Master and Savior. And that shows us God is still concerned with every aspect of his people's life.

Every aspect. Every aspect. He is just as concerned about how we do life in general as how we come and worship him in particular.

Which means every bit and piece and part of our life matters. We don't have the right to separate the secular and the sacred. We can't say well today's church day or I'm doing church stuff or I'm doing you know today I'm floating.

[13:20] But how we do life Sunday through Saturday matters. And this is what we see as he begins to dictate to them what the nation is going to look like.

He is setting up a people that look differently and they are going to be differently. And he is telling them. He is dictating to them through Moses what their judges are going to look like. Now this does not mean we take the application also from the Old Testament into the New Testament.

Paul says that we are to submit to rulers. Right? To submit to those who rule over us knowing that they are from the Lord. That does not mean. I'm going to rightfully interpret this. That does not mean that God has specifically put in place every individual who has ruled throughout history in the good and the bad.

That means that the position and the place and the standard of that office is dictated and determined by God. God determined that man would have rulers over him. Now is God in control of who ascends and descends rulership and places?

Absolutely. Because God is in control of all things. But as God's people we also ought to be wise in our discernment and in our great privilege that we have in this nation and our electoral responsibilities.

[14:28] Instead of saying that well God is in control so I am going to let him do what he wants to. Well true God has created the position but look also what it says. You shall select from among you. While God was in control of who the judges were going to be God also gave that responsibility to the individuals.

Enough introduction. So let's see this office of judge. Number one we see the character of the judge that matters. The character of the judge that matters.

He declares to his people through Moses you shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns. Little reading of towns there is gates in all your gates.

Now if you have by the way this helps us understand other scriptures so we pay attention to this. Some translations say the gates of every town. Some just say towns. New American Standard says towns.

I believe there are a couple other translations that says in every gate of every town. In the gate of every town. But it says you shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the Lord your God is giving you according to your tribes.

[15:34] And they shall judge the people with righteousness and judgment. Here we begin to see the character of the judge. The first thing we understand is that the judge is to be local and accessible.

It is to be someone from among them who lives among them and is accessible by all to them. The gate was always a place of judgment.

Remember when Boaz went to declare that he would take Ruth as his wife. Remember that? Read the book of Ruth. And Ruth has been following Boaz around.

And Boaz is a kinsman, redeemer, another great picture of salvation. And Naomi is just so happy because Ruth has found the fields of Boaz because Boaz is a wealthy man. There might have been a drought in the land but it didn't affect Boaz much, right?

And Boaz is a righteous man. And Ruth goes and does some really unthinkable things. Uncovers the feet of Boaz when he's sleeping. Oh man, shamey, shamey. He says make sure nobody knows you did that.

[16:29] That's risque business there, okay? And I'm not joking. That's pretty risque. Don't let anybody know you uncovered my feet while I was sleeping because I want to come under your umbrella. I want you to be my provider, my kinsman, redeemer.

And Boaz in all his righteousness says I am a near kinsman, redeemer but there is one closer than me. Remember that? Where did he go to settle that account? To the gate of the city.

And it's there that he went to the gate of that city. And it's this weird scene. And the man says, oh, I'll redeem. I'll redeem that because, you know, he has a lot of fields. I'll take all Naomi's fields and all those possessions.

And Boaz goes, now if you take his fields, you also have to take his daughter-in-law. And that closer kinsman, redeemer says, well, I'm already married and have kids. And I don't think I need another wife.

A lot of men say amen to that. I don't think I want to go there. So, Boaz, you can have it. I'll give you the rights. And do something strange. Take their sandals off their feet and throw them over each other's shoulders.

[17:30] And that's just a way of making a judgment. And then Boaz says, let it be known here at the gate. The judgment has been passed. Right? The judge saw the sandal fly over his shoulder. That means now Boaz has redemption rights.

And Boaz gets to take everything, including Ruth and the fields and all those things. But all this took place at the gate. You know what's beautiful about that is they didn't have to go to Shiloh. Because that's where the place of the Lord was at that time.

They wouldn't have to go to Jerusalem. They went to the gate of their own city. Because what God had determined is that one of the character traits of the judges is that they would be accessible to all. That righteousness would be available for all to approach.

And the judge would reside at the gate of the city. Which means anybody could come there. Right? They didn't have to say, well, if I can travel up. Now think about this. Well, I have a case against this. I have a case against my brother.

I have something that I needed a verdict rendered on. And I've got to wait until we get the funds together to go to Shiloh. Or later on we get the funds together to go to Jerusalem. I know you didn't have to do that. One character trait that God said is it needed to be someone from among you that was accessible to you.

[18:34] And this is beautiful because the application is we have a judge who is accessible to all. We have a judge who is the ultimate judge. Who has made himself accessible to everyone.

And we can come to him now and allow him to pass verdict. Or we will go to him someday and stand before him and allow him to render his judgment. But whether or not he will judge us is not an issue.

We will either judge now and he declares our righteousness based upon his payment of our penalty. Because the one on the throne is the same one who paid our penalty. Right? Or we go before him in our own self-righteousness.

And stand before that great white beam of the throne of judgment. And we are just as transparent before him then as well because he is accessible even to the unrighteous. But we see that the first character trait is they must be accessible.

And he goes on and he describes these judges. Right? He says, you shall not distort justice. So be careful. Don't distort justice.

[19:37] You shall not be partial. This is a character trait. These are good quality traits by the way. He says, don't distort justice. I mean, don't twist things around and try to make right what is really wrong.

Or try to make wrong what is really right. And also don't be partial. So you can't look and say, well, okay, I know this guy. He's okay. No, you have to be an impartial judge. So you can't be partial. And you do not take a bribe. Because bribe blinds the eye. We understand that, right? All these character traits they're supposed to have. And he says it this way.

Justice and only justice you shall pursue. So the responsibility of the judge of the nation was to be one that pursued justice and only justice.

Another great application we see here. Listen, when Christ judges the sinner, he is impartial in his judgment. He is righteous in his judgment. And he pursues justice with his judgment.

[20:35] And when we come to him in all of our faults and weaknesses and messes and we cry out to him for mercy. It's not like he looks at us and says, oh, well, you're a pretty good person. No, he looks at us and says, you don't deserve this.

And in my grace and in my mercy, I extend this to you. Right? There's no one who's going to go to the bema seat of Christ as he is standing before the bema seat of Christ. In Christ is that day the judge of those who never professed him. No man or woman is ever going to stand before him and make a plea case for all of the good reasons why God should do this or should not do that.

And there will be no robbery. There will be nothing there. It's justice and only justice. Man is judged by that. Our penalty must be paid. But here are the character traits of the judge.

The second thing we see concerning the judge among the nation of people is the concern for all matters. There's a concern for all matters.

[21 : 32] Now, again, in the theocracy, there is no separation between political matters and religious matters. This is why we see Nehemiah and Ezra intertwined.

This is why we see them overlapping each other. This is why we see quite often this this intermingling, if you will, of of prophets, because some prophets are both of royal assent politically and priestly assent religiously, for lack of a better word.

So they have this office that seems to always be this intertwining of sacred and secular. And so when God establishes these judges, he doesn't tell them the only things you can be concerned about are the worldly things.

Right. He extends their concern. And this is where the world kind of got in trouble in our. Well, you know, when church and state started getting together is this over extension, this overstepping of these concerns.

But when God is speaking to his people here, he says this great transition in verse 21. You shall not plant for yourselves an asher of any kind of tree beside the altar of the Lord your God, which you shall make for yourself.

[22 : 37] Now, I don't want to really get into a lot of the details here, but these asherah poles were there and they were kind of symbols of bell worship.

Bell worship did a lot with fertility. And I'm not going to take you any further than that. And you can kind of let your imagination go. And the asherah pole was something that would be set up as a reminder of the fertility.

And they would put that there or what God is really declaring they cannot do here is don't set that up beside my altar. Or this is called syncretism or or blending of worship.

What he's saying is you can't worship bell and worship me at the same time. OK, you can't blend the two. You're either going to worship me and only me or you're going to worship that and only that.

So the syncretistic worship, which today happens a lot, by the way, where people want to worship self and worship God or to worship this and worship that. The greatest picture we have of that in our own time is Hinduism.

[23 : 36] Hinduism is not opposed. Hindus aren't opposed to any God. As a matter of fact, Hindus love gods, right? When you go into a Hindu nation or when Hindus were coming to your nation, they didn't tell you you couldn't worship your God.

As a matter of fact, they would come in. They wanted to absorb your God and they would add it to their temple in case there was a God that they had forgotten to worship. So their temples are just literally full of millions and millions and millions of gods to make sure and to ensure that they worship all the right ones.

And they just kind of want to blend it all together into one big happy union. And God says, you can't do that. That doesn't happen. And he tells the judges to keep an eye for that, right? You're going to judge and make sure.

So one of the responsibilities of the judge here is to ensure the purity of the worship of the nation. He says, you're not just going to be concerned about how people are treating one another. You're also going to be concerned about how people treat me.

Ensure that there is sincerity and purity. There's no blending of these things. We read of atrocities done in the church and church history of these things where people say, oh, well, your interpretation of that passage is wrong.

[24 : 39] Well, my interpretation of this passage is right. There's some great church fathers even in the 1700s into the 1800s or actually it's in the 1500s, 1600s after the Reformation.

And Martin Luther kind of led this Reformation movement. And people are coming to salvation through grace and grace alone and not by works. And they're kind of splitting out. And there are all these schisms that divide.

And some of them still believe in infant baptism. Some of them didn't. And there's just all these battles and battles and battles. And they're butting heads. And, you know, they get so mad. I'm talking about believers get so mad that they would burn their best friends at the stake for heresy. Like, oh, you're wrong. Well, no, I think I'm right. Well, you went out and baptized somebody and you're not a pastor. And that's only for pastors to do. And they would just, you know, do away with it. That's not exactly what he's talking about here, okay?

That's not what he's talking about. That's not misinterpretation of scripture. This is false worship of false gods is what this is. This is trying to worship the true God and false God.

[25 : 41] And he said the judges were to be set up in the nation of Israel to ensure that there was a purity of worship and that that worship was acceptable because then he says, And you shall not sacrifice to the Lord your God a sheep which has an ox or a sheep which has a blemish or any defect.

So he says, tell us the judges here. Make sure they're worshipping pure and sincerely. Because, again, God's concerned about every aspect in life. If you treat your brother or your sister or your fellow countrymen as you should, but yet you're bringing God what is unacceptable to him, you're still in the wrong, right?

You're still in the wrong. And the judge has a concern about this. And then he brings that transition on down. A few chapters ago we read of if there was a host city that adopted this idolatrous practice and this host city gave itself to idolatry and was worshipping idolatry, then you were to go in and hit the edge of that city with the edge of the sword and completely annihilate that city.

And now he goes to the individual. He says, if a man or a woman, by the way, and God's not concerned on gender here, he says, if a man or a woman begins to go into idolatrous practice, then pass judgment.

Now look at the concern here, though. Look at the caution. If you investigate these things and if you find them to be true, and if this individual, be male or female, is indeed involved in idolatrous worship, then stone that person so that all may see and you may remove the evil.

[27 : 03] You will purge the evil from amidst. But here's the stipulations that God puts in, right? Here are the checks and balances, if you will. He says, on the testimony of two or three witnesses, no man shall die on the testimony of one witness.

Quick question. How many testified to the reality of Jesus? How many people testified that led to the crucifixion of Jesus? There's a little book.

I read it. I lost it. I read it when I was working with a phone company. I know it's called The Illegal Trials of Jesus Christ. A lawyer wrote it. It's kind of an outdated book. Some of you can probably find it. It's pretty handy.

Very first time I was ever introduced to this. It's a pretty new believer. And then I went back and checked it. How many witnesses did they utilize to bring the charge of blasphemy against Christ? It led to death. One. Because they brought in a number of witnesses. Remember the scripture? But these could not agree in their story.

[28 : 08] Whose testimony did they use to bring the charge of blasphemy against Christ? Jesus. Jesus.

Because he said, I'll tell you the truth. You will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds. Which is a direct reference to Daniel chapter 7. And they tore their robes and said, blasphemy, blasphemy. You have heard it for yourself.

He has declared himself to be the Son of God. What do you cry? Blasphemy, blasphemy. And they brought the charge of blasphemy against him. Which was a capital offense. And based upon Jewish tradition, no man could die at his own profession.

And no man could die without the testimony of two or more witnesses. But God's in control. But the reason that was, is checks and balances.

God originally put this in. No man should die on the testimony of one. Because if you had a vendetta against an individual. Now it could be your word against their word. So there had to be this agreeing testimony of two or three witnesses.

[29 : 12] That's the first check. Here's the second check. That when that penalty was declared. The death penalty given. The witnesses were to be the first one to cast the stones.

Which means, if you're going to stand up and declare this person guilty. You better be ready to stand behind that declaration. To be the one who throws the first stone.

So essentially, it better be big enough for you. To lead this person to his death. Checks and balances. Right? God put it there. To make sure that there was no unfairness here.

He didn't put all of the onus on the judge. He put it among the people. Again, in righteousness and justice. So before we said that God is so big. God was just telling them to stone everybody.

Right. But he also ensured that not just anybody would be stoned. He put the checks and balances in there. And there's a concern for all these matters.

[30 : 12] Both the secular and the sacred. Third and finally. We are introduced here to the confidence one could have in a judgment. The confidence that one could have in a judgment.

Moses says, If there's any case that comes before you that is just too difficult for you to decide. Between this homicide and that homicide. Between this offense and that offense. Between this trial. Because, I mean, there's some difficult cases out there. And maybe the witnesses don't agree so much. And, you know, understanding that these judges were local. And they were there. And they probably knew what was going on. And you just didn't know.

There was always a, what we would call today, a court of appeals. Or not really a court of appeals. We would call it the Supreme Court. Where you would take it to the higher authority. Now, understand this. This is not a court of appeals.

So if the judge in your city declared a verdict. You couldn't take it to the temple court to get that verdict appealed. You couldn't do that. Right. This was for the judge to determine.

[31 : 09] If the judge said, I don't know. I can't figure this one out. He had somewhere else to go. Not the people who brought the charge. So that's the difference. Right. So the judge couldn't decide.

So he decided, well, we're going to have to take this to a higher court. Then they would go to the place where God had caused his name to dwell. That place being Shiloh or Jerusalem. Wherever that place may be.

Because Moses is declaring it on the other side of the Jordan River. And what he's saying is you can take it to God's presence. Here's the confidence. Right. Take it to the presence of the Lord. And the Levite or the judge that is there.

This Levitical judge who is in the presence of God. Will be able to render you a verdict. This is comforting because what he declares to them. Is that there will be no judgment that will ever come before them.

That will ever, ever be too difficult for the presence of God to determine. Right. That the very presence of God would ensure. That there would always be wisdom.

[32 : 06] And they could always take it there. Because they weren't necessarily trusting in that Levite, that individual. Or that judge that is there. They were coming to the presence of God. And they were trusting that God's presence would give the wisdom to his messenger.

As they had with Moses. To the one who was before him. And that the presence of God would ensure that there would be a verdict rendered. Nothing would be left unknown.

No. Now here's the catch though. When you go to that place. When you go to the tabernacle or the temple. And when you come into that place. When that verdict is handed down. You have to follow that verdict.

When they declare it is so. Whatever they declare to you. Then you have to do exactly what they said. Because this is coming not from the opinion of man. But from the very presence of God.

And this is something that you must take seriously. Because if you're going to bring a matter to God. Which is too hard for you to decide. Whatever he determines or dictates that you should do.

[33 : 07] You need to do it. And he says. Don't be presumptuous and think. Oh well I don't really have to do that. Listen. When the God of all the universe declares a judgment.

His judgment is final. And complete. And he's declaring it through his people. Sure. He's declaring it through that Levitical priest. Or through that judge that is there.

But yet you came to the presence of God. Seeking an answer. And you don't have the right. When you get that answer to say. I mean I see what you're saying. But I'd rather not do it that way. Let's bring that application to us.

How many times in our lives. Are we faced with things. That are just too difficult for us to decide. On a personal level. And this may not be a case. It's definitely not between this homicide. And that

homicide. Between this verdict and that verdict. Just something that's too difficult for us to decide. We have the same opportunity. We have the same confidence. We know in all reality. That we can run into the presence of God. We don't have to go to a location. We can go to the place. Where he's called his name to dwell.

[34 : 08] And that is. He came to make his abode with us. His people. Right. We can come with one another. And this is where we can sharpen one another. Iron sharpens iron. We can also go to him in prayer. And we can cry out to him in prayer.

James says. If any man lacks wisdom. Let him ask of the father. Who freely gives to all. Right. So we can go to the scripture. We can go to the father himself. And God will declare an answer to us. But.

Let us not be presumptuous. That when he declares that answer. That we think we have the right to go. Well I mean. I see that. But I really don't think I want to do it that way. Because if we came to him.

Seeking wisdom. And he declares an answer to us. And gives us wisdom. Then we now have the responsibility. To follow that wisdom. Don't be so presumptuous.

To say. Well the difficult. The matter was too difficult for me. And God. God I appreciate your opinion on this matter. But I think I'm going to wait. And weigh my odds. God says against what? In Jewish culture.

[35 : 09] If that verdict was declared. From the temple. Or the tabernacle. And you decided not to do it. You were killed. You died. Death penalty. You know why?

So that all may learn to fear. Not to act presumptuously. Upon the things that God has declared. And I believe. That holy reverence.

And holy fear. Should resonate within the church. Body locally. And the church universally. Where when the church lacks wisdom. And cries out in the presence of God.

And God declares truth. Then the church needs to act upon that truth. And not to act presumptuously. To think well. Yeah I mean that could be one way to do it. No that is the way.

To do it. The only way. Because he has declared it to us. And we see that God is concerned. About how his people are led. Not just in worship.

[36 : 06] But also throughout life. And one of the ways. That he demonstrates that concern. Is through the establishment of these judges. We have a great judge. That we come to. Who declares truth to us.

And we still operate in this realm. Sure. With imperfect people. And are these completely full? No I mean. We see God's people failing. In each and every one of these. But this is the standard.

This is the standard. That God sets for his people. Let's pray. Lord thank you for this evening.

Thank you God. For your word. Thank you for the truth of it. Lord may we be people of your word.

Not acting presumptuously. But Lord acting obediently. For your glory. And we ask it in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

[37 : 55] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[40 : 25] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[42 : 55] Thank you.