

Deuteronomy 12:32-13:1-18 The Disciplinary Action To Be Taken Against Idolatry

Introduction: God had instructed that the children of Israel were to have no other god and were to build no idol god to worship it. He further instructed that they were not to take His name in vain. To claim to worship God and at the same time claim to worship another god was to take the name of God in vain. In our text Moses gave strict instructions to the younger generation of Israelites that they were to take severe disciplinary action against anyone who would seek to lead them into the worship of a false god.

I. Disciplinary action to be taken against a false prophet V.1-5

- A. Even in a case in which a false prophet is able to perform a miraculous sign which may seem to indicate that he speaks the truth, the children of Israel are warned not to follow him into the worship of any other god, V. 1-2.
- B. God would allow such false prophets to arise and allow them to perform such miraculous signs in order to test or prove the people's loyalty to Him, V. 3. (If they were to go off after such a prophet and worship some other god, they would be untrue to God.)
- C. They were to prove their loyalty to God by cleaving to God only and obeying His words, V.4.
- D. They were to punish the false prophet by putting him to death, V. 5.
 1. This disciplinary action against the false prophet would prevent him from leading others astray from Jehovah God.
 2. The death penalty was severe, but it was necessary to prevent others from being led astray by the false prophet.
 3. It would discourage anyone else from seeking to lead the children of Israel astray.

II. Disciplinary action to be taken even against family members or friends V. 6-11.

- A. It would be very difficult to take disciplinary action against a close family member or friend.
- B. Nevertheless, the individual who was approached by the very closest family member or friend to seek to lead him astray from God to worship some other god was to reveal to all that this person is an idolater, V. 6-7.
- C. Instead of pitying the guilty party, he is to lead the way in getting this person put to death, V.8-10.
- D. Again the death penalty is to be used not only to stop the guilty party, but to help prevent others from being guilty of the same thing, V. 11.

III. Disciplinary action to be taken against a whole city that has gone into idolatry V. 12-18

- A. In this case, it is apparent that the two previous instructions were neglected, because an entire city has gone after idolatry.
 1. If someone had brought charges against the false prophet, the entire city would not have gone into idolatry.
 2. If someone loyal to God had been willing to bring charges against a family member or friend, the whole city would not have gone astray.
 3. But since that preventive disciplinary action was neglected an entire city had gone into idolatry.
- B. In that case it would fall the responsibility of some city which was still loyal to God to take action against the city which had gone into idolatry, V. 12-13. (Inquiry is to be made to make certain that the accused city has indeed gone after idol gods, V. 14.)
- C. If the inquiry shows that the city is indeed guilty of idolatry, then an army is to be raised and is to go against the idolatrous city, V. 15.
 1. The city is to be utterly destroyed.

2. All of the people and the cattle are to be killed.
 3. All of the valuables (spoil of war) is to be gathered in the streets and burned, V. 16.
 4. It was to remain in ruins and never to be inhabited again.
- D. Thus, the nation was to be purged of idolatry and the nation would avoid the fierce anger of the Lord, V. 17.
- E. Verse 18 concludes the way that passage begins – chapter 12.32. (Obey the words of the Lord.)

Conclusion: This passage has a likeness to the New Testament instructions about church discipline.

1. The heretics and the immoral church members are to be excluded.
2. Family members and close friends should be the ones to take the initiative. The church as a whole bears the responsibility.
3. Church discipline is designed to keep New Testament churches pure in doctrines and morals as discipline in Israel was to keep Israel pure.
4. The New Testament discipline is a lot more merciful. It does not require the death penalty for church members.