

## Deuteronomy 17:14-20 – BC Article 30 – “Ruling in God’s Kingdom”

Introduction: **The elder must be a man of God’s choice who devotes his heart and life to God for the sake of His people.**

### **1) Must Be a Man of God’s Choice (v.14-15)**

- In Deuteronomy, Moses is preparing the people for his absence. God was the king of Israel. However, Israel had the option to establish a king who would serve under God. Thus, the king had to be one chosen and approved by God. Ultimately, Israel would ask for a king in order to try to abandon God (see 1 Samuel 8), and God gave them what they wanted in Saul.
- What does this have to do with eldership? There is a beautiful symmetry between the Old Testament offices (prophet, priest and king) and the New Testament offices (minister, deacon and elder). Jesus was anointed to fill all three OT offices, and we individually do as well because we share that anointing by faith (see Lord’s Day 12). Christ has also given special offices to function, adapted to the NT era, in similar ways as the OT offices did.
- Elders today must still be a man of God’s choice. This is not done by the mouth of a prophet, but by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all God’s people. We call men whose lives align with God’s word and we pray that God will appoint *his* man to *his* office through us.

### **2) Must Not Turn His Heart from God (v.16-17)**

- **Horses** were a huge advantage to any army. However, Israel was not to rely on the might of their army but on God, their protector (see Deut. 20:1). Even worse, the trade for horses would have brought Israelites back to Egypt, symbolically undoing God’s redemption of his people.
- **Women** were also used to solidify political alliances and demonstrate virility and power. But could one ensure that these wives were wholeheartedly committed to the God of Israel? On the contrary, we see that the kings who broke this command were lead into accepting idolatry.
- **Wealth** is a huge temptation for kings. Such wealth would have been gained by excessive taxation and enslaving one’s own people. This could not happen in Israel. This would prevent the king from complacency towards God.
- We see that Paul has very similar concerns in Titus 1 as Moses did in Deuteronomy 17. The devil uses the same methods to bring down our NT leaders. The desire to fight one’s own battles, to be discontent with one wife, to be greedy for personal gain. Elders must be constantly on the lookout for the devil’s attacks, lest their hearts be turned away from God.

### **3) Must Have God’s Law Written on His Heart (v. 18-20)**

- How can a leader avoid this sin? Having God’s law on his heart. The king was required to write out his own copy of the law (probably see Ex. 24:7) and keep it with him and read it. He needed to know the word for his own personal sanctification and to know how to punish sin in the kingdom. He was to tackle sin wherever he saw it.
- Our elders have the same responsibility. They are to know God’s word so that they can fight sin in their own hearts, and so that they can rule the kingdom of God. As rulers, they are responsible to help keep sin from cropping up in our midst and in attacks from the outside.
- As with the kings of Israel, the faithful elder must look at God’s word and confess that they are not the king. The true king is Jesus. It is Jesus who is the perfect and just ruler of his people and our el-

ders are viceroys given authority by the king. This means that we must seek out faithful elders, support them in their work, and submit to them as we would submit to Jesus.