

Deuteronomy 12:8-14 – BC Article 32 – “God’s Order for the Church”

Introduction: **Because God is concerned about how he is worshipped, we will make sure to worship according to his word.**

1. Improper Worship

- In our text, God is commanding the Israelites to cease the haphazard practice of the sacrifices they are offering. In Leviticus 17 God commanded the Israelites that they were only to offer sacrifices at the tabernacle – so what happened? Since that time Israel has begun to settle the Promised Land, but there is not yet a permanent place for the sacrifices to be made.
- Worshipping in God’s place was closely connected with worshipping God’s way, and establishing a central place of worship was key to keeping their worship obedient. We like things that are infused with significance, however to give significance to an object in worship is to remove glory from God. This is why the Reformers sought to remove things added to worship solely because of preference.

2. Commanded Worship

- God swore to Abraham that his descendants would receive the land as an inheritance. Here they will dwell in a rich land and will be safe on every side. He will give them laws to govern the kingdom. We do not have such a list of laws for the New Testament church, which is why we need to look to the wisdom of scripture as we establish man-made church order.
- The promise of a sanctuary of worship is first fulfilled in Joshua 18 at Shiloh and finally in the Temple in Jerusalem. There all the commanded sacrifices were to be offered. This is the pattern we see in scripture, that we worship God in the way he has commanded. Today that means receiving his word and responding in prayer and praise and giving. This is the biblical pattern for worship.

3. Blessed Worship

- The result of biblical worship is by no means dull or lifeless. God lays out their duties in worship for their joy, so that they might celebrate the God who keeps his covenant promises in setting them free. We must come with that same mentality – that God brings us near to tell us of his grace. This is the life-giving word that leads to living worship.
- And that joy produces unity among all those in Israel. Male and female, slave and free are all one at the celebration of God. Unity is what God desires from his people, and to harm that is worthy of the rebuke of the elders.
- Thus, we must strive to worship in harmony and unity according to God’s commands.