

Bible Study – Deuteronomy Chapter 12 – The First Law

In the last study, we saw the blessings that come with obedience and the judgement that follows with disobedience. Israel must decide how they were going to follow the Lord God. In today's study, we will look at the first commandment of the Ten Commandments ("You shall have no other gods before me" Exodus 20:3).

The specific laws in this section were given to help the people surrender every area of their lives to the Lord, and to help them eradicate whatever might threaten that pure devotion. This is instruction preached, rather than codified as comprehensive instruction. Its purpose was to explain to the generation entering the land, all the laws that needed clarification, emphasis, and application, in view of Israel's imminent entrance into Canaan.

Read Deuteronomy 12:1 – 14

Moses is giving the Israelites 'battle' instructions for when they take the land. They were to destroy every place of worship that the Canaanites used for their gods. This was to be a complete and utter obliteration of all places and instruments of worship (e.g. altars, poles, idols, and memorials). When they were to worship the Lord God, they were to do it in a place as prescribed by God and to bring their offerings and sacrifices there, as they were to do this in the presence of the Lord God.

Q. When Moses says "But you shall seek the place that the Lord your God will choose to put his name and make his habitation there" (v.5), why is this important and what does the statement imply? How does the worship of God compare to the way the Canaanites worshipped their gods? In verses 29-31, Moses warns not to inquire about the Canaanite religion. Why was this warning important for Israel?

Q. The sacrifices and offerings mentioned in v. 6 and 11 are to be done before the Lord God. What is the purpose of these sacrifices and offerings? Why do you think they needed to be made at the place of God's choosing?

****The five offering categories are Burnt offerings, Grain offerings, Peace offerings, Sin offerings, Trespass offerings.**

Q. How does this section reveal the heart, mind, and will of God?

Read Deuteronomy 12:15-32

Moses talks about the consumption of meat, by both the ceremonially unclean and clean alike. However, the blood was never to be consumed and it was to be poured out on the ground (when not being consumed as part of a sacrifice). Moses expands on how sacrifices and offerings were to be made and done, adding in the consecrated things and things that were vowed to the Lord God. He finishes off with a warning that Israel was not to inquire about the conquered people's gods and method of worship as they may be tempted to do the same with the Lord God, whose worship is different from the worship of the Canaanite gods. Interwoven in this passage is the command to obey all the regulations given to them, so that it may go well with them and their children and they would be doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord God.

Q. When Moses approves the slaughter of animals for daily consumption outside of sacrifice (v.15) and outside of the place of worship (v. 21), why is this significant (cf. Leviticus 17:3-6)? Also, regarding the blood, why do you think it was forbidden to drink the blood (cf. Leviticus 17:11; Acts 15:29)? Why does it not apply to Christians today (Romans 14:14; 1 Timothy 4:4)?

Q. We have a glimpse of what the religion of the Canaanites were like (v.31, cf. Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-4). Their acts of worship were detestable and contrary to the worship of the Lord God and what he stood for. What are some ways that we can worship God improperly? How do we guard against those things?

These instructions for Israel are meant to give them a proper view of God and the expected conduct in their worship of him in the Promised Land. The specific instructions for the destruction and removal of all the Canaanite gods and places of worship was necessary in order to help the Israelites maintain their fidelity to the Lord God. This was God's way of protecting their relationship as he knew they were prone to wander. The specific sacrifices and offerings at the intended places of worship was God's way of showing Israel the best way to obey and please God so "it may go well with you and with your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God" (v.28). How great is it to know that God does not leave his children to figure out how to properly worship him, but for him to show them the right way to worship the Lord God.