

Deuteronomy 25:1-26:19 (May 21, 2021)

Reflection: Why does a Christian care about living biblically? What would you say to a young Christian about the value of living their lives as the Bible prescribes?

Goal: To help us to realize that there are reasons to live biblically. Examples of answers (there can be many answers to this question): because we desire to please God, there are benefits to living biblically as it affects our joy and peace in the Lord, we are like God when we live biblically including when we suffer (Phil 3:10)

Read Deuteronomy 25:1-16

1. Summarize Moses' instructions and rationale on justice and punishment in the court (v.1-3), the treatment of animals (v.4), the responsibility of a brother to his brother's wife if his brother dies (v.5-6), a brother's refusal to fulfill his duty in a levirate marriage (v.7-10), a woman who seizes the private parts of her husband's assailant (v.11-12), on weights used for trade and business (v.13-16).

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

i. justice and punishment in the court (v.1-3)

- About two things: 1) ideal or true justice and 2) fair punishment for crimes
- The punishment shouldn't go to far as you need to protect dignity of the accused
- Unclear what exactly constitutes excessive public humiliation
- 40 lashes seems to be set as the maximum for punishment
- This idea of protecting dignity is also made stronger by God reminding the Israelites that this is a "brother," and are fellow members of the covenant community

ii. the treatment of animals (v.4)

- Greedy farmers muzzled their oxen to prevent them from eating instead of working or simply eating which he hoped to harvest for himself
- Many passages about fair treatment of animals (Proverbs 12:10, 16:11, Deu 22:1-4, 6-7)
- The pursuit of right living on the farm will involve care for creatures in one's charge just as God does (Psalms 104, 147:9)

The next two deals with shameful male and female behaviour

ii. the responsibility of a brother to his brother's wife if his brother dies (v.5-6), a brother's refusal to fulfill his duty in a levirate marriage (v.7-10)

- A levirate marriage is a legally sanctioned union between a widow, whose husband has died without having fathered offspring, and the brother of the deceased. Although Deuteronomy provides the only formal instruction, it is widely attested to in the ancient world
- The main concern however is the securing of progeny for her deceased husband.
- This addresses the worse curse imaginable to have one's seed cut off and one's name forgotten
- This was a pastoral appeal to maintain the moral integrity and social order of Israelite families once they settled on land, and not meant to readdress these complicated issues
- The main case involved two brothers living together, in same household and responsible for each person's welfare. (though in actuality the practice was common even if brothers did not live together as in the Ancient near East)
- This arrangement the brother and widow would be marry as the Bible does not prescribe any sexual relations outside of marriage. Widow could back to her own father's household where she is free to remarry who she wants or she can remain as part of the family which obligated a surviving male of the family to marry her. (Deu 21:10-14, 24:1-4)

- Refusal to the levirate marriage do so undergo stigma and shame and the process safeguards the reputation and well being of the woman who has been struck by two tragedies
- Sandal was like a receipt providing concrete proof of the present legal proceedings
 - The action represented a symbolic action of shame, but it also symbolized the transfer of the in law's rights to the deceased widow and to that portion of the patrimonial estate

iv. a woman who seizes the private parts of her husband's assailant (v.11-12)

- Issue is not that wife stood up for husband, but her indecency, shameless, immodesty of the act of seizing a man's private parts.
- Possible other issue is she did so to injure him so he cannot have children. This threatens the integrity of the man and the branch from which he came. Like the above case, the ability to not have offspring was a terrible curse on people not only the stigma and shame of having crushed private parts.

V. on weights used for trade and business (v.13-16).

- Reiterates Moses' concern for honesty. Moses tries to motivate integrity in business, first by promising long life in the land that Yahweh is giving Israel and also warning those commit crimes are abominable to Yahweh

2. These commands deal with issues of justice in the courts, care of animals, the right family behaviour, and just business transactions. What principles might we learn about how to treat those around us (including animals) and those under our charge? What are some practical ways we can apply these principles in our everyday lives?

i. What principles might we learn about how to treat those around us (including animals) and those under our charge?

Could be many answers, here are a couple:

- *To treat people justly and fairly*
 - From the discussion of justice in courts and fair business transactions, levirate marriage
 - Throughout Deuteronomy is to treat people with justice and fairness no matter if they are part of the Covenant or not part of the Covenant
 - This is to be especially highlighted in dealings with those in the covenant
 - The reason is that God is just and fair
 - Passages to consider: Deu 16:20, 24:14
- To treat people compassionately
 - From the discussion about animals
 - Examples animals (1 Cor 9:9) connects it to humans that since we are greater than oxen. Paul argues that Apostle has the right to demand financial support from those he serves the gospel, just as oxen should have the right to floor it threshes. What is true of the lesser (animals) is true of greater (people).
 - Throughout Deuteronomy God calls people to be compassionate to all people with compassion, especially those who are vulnerable and those in the covenant community. The reason is because God is compassionate.
 - Passages to consider: Deu 4:31, 30:3, 14:29, 26:12
- To treat people with modesty and decency
 - From the discussion about grabbing of privates and levirate marriage
 - Throughout Deuteronomy respect of a person's purity, treating people with modesty, and decency is of grave importance to God. That is because God has a high view of purity, family, progeny.

- Passages to consider: Deu 22:5, 13-30

ii. What are some practical ways we can apply these principles in our everyday lives?

Goal: to really think about our own lives and how we can apply these biblical principles. Some examples: to be aware of those around us in the church that need compassion to be willing to give generously, to treat those around us protecting their purity and modesty, to be watchful to treat everyone with fairness and justice even if they aren't part of our inner circle.

Read Deuteronomy 25:17-19

3. Who are the Amalekites (cf. Gen 36:9-11, Ex 17:8-13, 1 Samuel 15:2), and what was God's instruction and rationale about dealing with them in this passage?

i. Who are the Amalekites (cf. Gen 36:9-11, Ex 17:8-13, 1 Samuel 15:2)

- Descended from Esau, children of Amalek
- Because of what Amalek's people did in Ex 17:8-13 opposed Israelites
- Furthermore: joined Canaanites and attacked Israelite Numbers 14:45, Moabites and Midianites (3:13, Jud 6:3) to wage war on Israel, last mention was in Esther 9:5-10 Haman the Agagite
- The Amalekites' hatred of the Jews and their repeated attempts to destroy God's people led to their ultimate doom. Their fate should be a warning to all who would attempt to thwart God's plan or who would curse what God has blessed (see Genesis 12:3)

ii. what was God's instruction and rationale about dealing with them in this passage?

- to devote them to destruction they tried to oppose the Abrahamic blessing (Gen 12:3). Several reasons (some listed and some not listed in this text)
 - Amalekites seem to have been notorious for killing children (1 Sam 15:33)
 - Amalekites would oppose Israel throughout the nation's history as we see with Haman in the book of Esther. That is why the Lord is at war with Amalek from generation to generation (Exo 17:16b)

4. Do Christians have mortal enemies? (Eph 6:12, 1 Pet 2:11, Rom 7:23, Eph 6:11, 1 Pet 5:8-9). How are Christians told to combat these adversaries? (Matt 26:41, Jas 4:7)

i. Do Christians have mortal enemies? (Eph 6:12, 1 Pet 2:11, Rom 7:23, Eph 6:11, 1 Pet 5:8-9)

Yes, flesh and sin and the world and Satan

- It is those behaviours and attitudes and that oppose God
- Those worldly systems or beings that oppose God

ii. How are Christians told to combat these adversaries? (Matt 26:41, Jas 4:7)

Here is a list: Flee, resist, watchful, put on armour, prayer, and submit yourself to God

Read Deuteronomy 26:1-15

5. Summarize Moses' instructions and rationale on what Israel was to do with the first fruit of the ground (v.1-11), what they were to do after paying all the tithes of produce on third year (v.12-15).

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

i. Summarize Moses' instructions and rationale on what Israel was to do with the first fruit of the ground (v.1-11)

- This was a celebration of God's faithfulness to Israel when they went take possession of the land

- It was a response of grateful obedience to him and they were to offer first yields of produce
- Passage does not state when this was exactly to happen, but most commentators believe it was to happen during Feast of Weeks or Feast of First Fruits (Num 28:26)
- Their declaration was to represent concrete evidence of God's fidelity
 - They were to recite the history of the people
 - Aramean and the Father probably refers to Abraham but could also mean Aram who is the named father of all the patriarchs (Gen 11:31 12:4, 28:1-7, 31:16)
 - Both descended from the region of Aramea

ii. what they were to do after paying all the tithes of produce on third year (v.12-15).

- This section shifts from God's faithfulness to Israel's worship and fidelity to Yahweh. Together represents the two sides of the covenant from God's perspective and from Israel's.

6. These sections are related to worshipping God. Why is remembering God's providence and our fidelity to Him important to our worship? How do we personally use remembrance in our own worship?

i. Why is remembering God's providence and our fidelity to Him important to our worship?

- Remembering God because we are prone to forget (Deu 6:1-3, 10-12)
- Reminds us what he has done so we can worship, and in response we live biblically which means to live faithfully to God
- Reminds us of what God has already done and this gives us faith in the future, and also when God asks us to act we can be strengthened by remembering what God has already done in the past

ii. How do we personally use remembrance in our own worship?

List of ways: Prayer, singing, ordinances, wearing and being grounded in the gospel of peace as armour (Eph 6:15)

Read Deuteronomy 26:16-19

7. These four verses are an important theological statement of the book of Deuteronomy. Summarize in your own words these verses.

Goal: to put into words what Israel was to do in the book of Deuteronomy, and to be reminded that the Christian life is not all that different

8. Take 5-10 mins and sketch out a confessional statement of what God has done for you, what God's promises are for us, and how we should respond to him.

Note to Leaders: *There are a lot of answers you could say here, pay careful attention to what people say. There maybe some important aspects that your group misses that you might want to fill in. Also what "God has done for you" and "God's promises" can have similar answers.*

God has done for you: Delivered us from sin, redeemed us, given us New Life, new family, given us peace and joy

God's promises: rest from work, access to God, he will provide for our needs, adoption into his family, basically all the blessings of Ephesians 1:1-10

Response: Have faith in him, by faith live a biblical life, trust him in every circumstance, worship

This section of Deuteronomy marks the end of God's formal instruction to Israel on righteous living. I hope that through reading Deuteronomy we have learned that though we are no longer under the Law there is still much we can learn about how we are to live as Christians in this world today and that it is for our own

good pleasure and blessing to live faithfully to Him. I also want to remind us that faithful living is not what makes us righteous before God, but like the Israelites, our desire to love and please God results in good works. May we all seek to live faithfully to God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.