

## Bible Study – Deuteronomy Chapter 7 & 8 – The Second Commandment

In the last study, we looked at God being the only one true God and that we are to love Him with all our heart, soul, and strength and this was to be taught to the following generations. Today, we are looking at the second of the ten commandments from God and the examples that are shared to the Israelites in relation of they are to take and live in the Promised Land that God is giving them.

### Read Deuteronomy 7:1 – 11

Moses tells the Israelites to clear the land of all the nations that currently inhabit the Promised Land. They are not to make a covenant with these people nor to give their children away in marriage, but rather put them to utter destruction because these people will tempt them to worship their gods and draw them away from the one true God. Moses reminds the people why they were chosen by God, not because of anything they have done, but because of His love and promises to the patriarchs.

**Q.** When Moses commands that the inhabitants are to be put to death and exterminated, what do you think the justification is? (cf. Deuteronomy 9:4-5; Genesis 9:25-26, 10:15-18; Exodus 23:23). In your experience, how challenging has it been to exterminate certain sins from your life? What are some of the reasons for the difficulty? Why is it important to take drastic measures? (cf. James 1:13-15)

- One reason for God commanding the total extermination of these nations (who were idolators) was the evil effect their corrupt worship would have on the Israelites and their relationship with Yahweh (“they will turn your sons away from following me” – v.4)
- They deserved to die, not only for their many vile and violent sins (9:4-5), but also for their persistent hatred of God (v. 10; Gen. 9:25-26, 10:15-18; Ex. 23:23)
- Also, this is a way of God showing his protection for His people, knowing that the power of temptation would be strong (Matthew 26:41). Sometimes the best way to deal with temptation is to flee from it.
- Another reason is because the conquering would not be a quick action, but it seems like it would be months or years before the land of Canaan would be full occupied by the Israelites (v. 22) \*\* Best guess is about 1-5 years
  - Therefore, the longer the inhabitants were there, the greater the temptation to worship their gods
- If the question arises regarding the justification of women and children in the eradication order, I will answer it as the follows:
  - All peoples (since Adam and Eve) are sinners and have rebelled against God. No one is without sin and no one seeks to obey God (Romans 3:10-12)
  - For that, they (and we ourselves) deserve death for their(our) disobedience.
  - This is God executing the judgement, not the Israelites, and so if we believe God to be the perfect judge, then his order must be righteous, though hard for us to accept.
  - Our reluctance to accept such deaths stem from our perception of innocence and in ability to sin or to do wrong on the scale that a man could
- The reflection question is to focus the importance and severity of removing temptations that are within our lives because if they are there, it slowly grows and can ensnarl people (James 1:13-15)
- Christians are to deal ruthlessly with sin in our lives (1. Cor. 5:6) or else it will ruin them

**Q.** Moses tells Israel "...you are a people holy to the Lord Your God." (v.6). What does it mean for the Israelites to be "holy to the Lord" and what is the implication for Christians? What is the purpose of God's holy people? (cf. 1 Peter 2:9-10; Matthew 28:19-20; Ephesians 3:10)

- Israel was to be different from other nations because God had 'chosen' to bless her ('to be a people for His own possession.' – v.6)
- They were not to worship other gods, except the one true God Yahweh (Deut. 6:4)
- They were to be obedient to the commands of God
- Israel had a priestly tribe, the Levites, but the nation as a whole was also to be a priesthood. The historical function of a priest was to represent man to God. The tribe of Levi represented Israel before God; and the nation Israel was to represent the Gentile nations before God.
- Christians are to represent the non-believer before God by telling them the good news of Jesus and the need for repentance in their lives
- 1 Peter 2:9 – To declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light
- Matthew 28:20 – To make disciples of all nations and to teach them to obey all the commands he has taught them
- Ephesians 3:10 – Showing God's wisdom to those in the heavenly realms

### **Read Deuteronomy 7:12-26**

Moses continues his encouragement to the Israelites by telling them if they obey God's commands, they will have an abundance of blessings and a rich life. He warns they are not to pity the people they are to conquer, lest these people lead them astray. The Israelites are fearful of the people that God will give over to them, but Moses reminds them of God's protection and deliverance of His people, reassuring them they have nothing to fear with God on their side. He ends by giving them an additional instruction; to burn and destroy their 'gods' in fire, including the silver and gold that adorn these images, for these things are detestable to God.

**Q.** The Israelites are fearful of their enemy, even when God promises to deliver them into their hands. If you are a Christian, what are some things that make you fearful when obeying God's commands? Is it because you don't know the promises of God or are you afraid of the world 'attacking' you?

- The intent is to explore what causes each of us not to obey God's commands
- Could the reason for fear is that we don't remember what God has already done for us? Or that we are confident that He can deliver us?
- The question is also meant that we should really have nothing to fear, if we just believe that God will fulfill His promises to us when we obey Him. It doesn't mean that things will go smoothly, but it does mean we will become more like Him as he intends it to be.
- Suffering for Christ (1 Peter 4:12-19) – We are not to be surprised by trials. V.14 – talking about insulted in the name of Christ and that should be a blessing for us.

**Q.** God instructs the Israelites to destroy the Canaanite's carved god images by fire as these were detestable to Him. Nothing was to be salvaged, not even the gold and silver that adorned these images because the Israelites would be ensnared by these objects. How is this instruction similar to the warning in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18?

- How could the darkness and light, righteousness and lawlessness, have anything in common?
  - There is nothing that either of these opposites have in common

- By keeping these objects that were made for the purposes of worshiping an untrue 'god', they would say that the God of creation has something in common with this created god, which is completely false.
- Eventually, God knows that these objects will entice the Israelites to wander from worship the true God
- Believers are not to be in partnership with unbelievers for the purposes of Kingdom ministries (2 Cor. 6:14-18)
  - This passage is used to explain that Christians and non-Christians are not to marry, but from the context, it talks about a broader partnership.
  - In a broader context, Christians should not form a binding interpersonal relationship with non-Christians that can result in their spiritual defilement
  - Such alliances can prevent the Christian from living a consistently obedient Christian life
- It doesn't say that we are not to associate with non-Christians at all:
  - Encouraging the saved partner in a mixed marriage to maintain the marriage relationship as long as possible (1 Cor. 7:12-16)
  - Christians are ambassadors of Christ and are to evangelize to the lost (1. Cor. 5:20)
- Where the relationship poses a threat to the Christian's faithfulness to God, the relationship with Christ must come first at the expense of losing or forfeiting the relationship with the non-Christian
- Christians are quite different from the heathen, who worship 'idols' in temples made with hands
- The main reason for Paul's prohibition is that Christians belong to Christ. We already have a relationship with Him, and we must not be unfaithful to Him by going after another.
- Remember, God stated that "I will be their God, and they will be My people" (cf. Leviticus 26:12), meaning they were chosen for special blessing and so there was the expectation they remained faithful to God
- The connection here is that Israel (and by extension Christians) are to be faithful to the one and only true God, Yahweh. They are not to compromise that relationship by bringing in another that could compromise that relationship. Therefore, keeping the remnants of carved images has the potential to ruin that relationship and so God commands it to be destroyed, for the sake of keeping the Israelites faithful to Him

### **Read Deuteronomy 8:1 – 20**

Moses reminds the Israelites of how God took care of them during their wilderness wanderings by providing for their basic need of food and clothing. He also reminds the Israelites that God is the one providing for them and that they should not forget Him when they have thoughts that their wealth is by their own hands. He also reiterates the need to follow the commandments of the Lord by walking in His ways and by fearing Him, reminding them they are not to forget these things.

**Q.** God tests the Israelites so he can know if their heart is obedient to His commands. How is God's testing different from Satan's testing? (v.3, 5; 1 Peter 5:8) How do we tell the difference between God's and Satan's testing in our lives? (James 1:2-4, 12-15; John 8:43-44)

- The devil tempts us to bring out the worst in us, but God tests us to bring out the best in us – Wiersbe, pg. 395
- 1 Peter 5:8 – Satan is like a roaring lion, looking to devour people, specifically those who are in Christ
- Satan's testing is to draw us away from God
- God's testing is for our benefit, to shape and mold us in Christ likeness
- James 1:2-4 – The purpose of the testing is to produce steadfastness (resolutely firm, unwavering)
- V. 12-15 – God cannot be tempted by evil and tempts no one (v.13)
- Temptation is by the devil and seeks to devour you and to bring forth sin in its fullness

- Satan is the father of lies and will use lies to tempt us to believe things that are contrary to what God commands us (John 8:43-44)
- God can allow Satan to test us (e.g. Job and Joshua (Zechariah 3)) for his purposes
- **\*\*The question may be the same, but the intent is 1) The purpose of God's testing and Satan's testing (drawing near and pushing away from God, respectively) and 2) What the result of the testing would be (either producing steadfastness or falling into sin)**

**Q.** Moses asks the Israelites to "remember" (v. 2, 18) and to "not forget" (v.11, 14, 19) several times in this chapter. When he says to remember, the focus is on God's provision for them. When he says not to forget, the focus is on His commands (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15). When you look at the blessings in your life, do you attribute it to God? When you go about your daily life, do you ensure that God's commands direct you?

- To remember is to recall something that you have 'forgotten' or is not top of mind
- To not forget is losing something you already have in your mind
- The difference can be subtle; however, the point is that we should always know in our mind about who God is, His promises, and the acts He has performed in our lives
- We need to remember His faithful provision in the past
- If we do not remember, we may turn aside and stop following Him faithfully in the present
- Failure to remember, and follow faithfully in the present, will also result in God's punishment in the future (1 Cor 3:12-15)
- "Always remember to forget; The troubles that passed your way. But never forget to remember; The blessings that come each day"
- There are two basic reasons that God blesses people:
  - God sovereignly chooses to bestow a blessing on a particular person or group or nation and not on another (cf. Malachi 1:2-3; Romans 9:13)
  - When a person chooses to walk in God's will, whether a believer or non-believer, that person will enjoy more of God's blessing than the person who chooses not to walk in God's will
- God wanted Israel to learn that material blessings are not rewards for godliness, but essentially sovereignly given gifts of grace from her loving God. They were tools with which to serve Him.
- This was to prevent the Israelites from becoming proud and self-reliant

The second commandment tells us that the Israelites (and Christians as well) should not make any carved images for themselves and that those who disobey would be punished, to the third and fourth generation, but those who love God and obey his commands would be shown love to a thousand generations. God tells the Israelites how they are to deal with the idols they will encounter in the Promise Land, which is to destroy these things completely. The main reason is because the Israelites are the chosen people of God, who are set apart for Him and to be the priestly people that would bring the other nations to holy worship of God. This applies to Christians as well. In order to be effective for God, our lives must mirror that of God's, where we love what he loves and hate what he hates, meaning that we need to eradicate any idols in our lives that would threaten to take God's rightful place in our lives.

The second part of the commandment is a promise to those who love Him and to keep his commandments. God is testing the Israelites to know whether they would keep His commandments or not (v. 2). In doing so, He is trying to ensure they do not stray and become self-reliant, but rather that they would depend on God and know the blessings He has promised to them. God also does this with Christians. He tests them to refine and sanctify them so they can enjoy a closer relationship with Him. Though it may be painful and unpleasant at times, it should be a comfort that God cares for His children's well-being and does what is needed to ensure that.