



A STUDY OF THE WHOLE BIBLE THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

NOT LIKE THE NATIONS (12:1–16:22)

The Place of the Passage

With his passionate appeal for Israel to give all of their loyalty to God still ringing in the people's ears, Moses now gets specific. The next 15 chapters of the book (Deuteronomy 12–26) expand on the Ten Commandments set out in 5:6–21, which themselves are extensions of the great command to love God with all that they are (6:5). Here God shows us in detail what it means for Israel to love him in the Land of Promise. And as Moses reminds them (and us) at the beginning and end of this section (12:1; 26:16), these laws are from God and thus bear His divine authority.

Amid all of the details of these laws, Moses is anxious that those he instructs should never lose sight of what is in effect the gospel. Just as the Ten Commandments are the outflow of Israel's identity as the Lord's redeemed people (5:6), so Moses reminds the people repeatedly that they are bound to keep these laws because of God's saving work on their behalf.

The Big Picture

In contrast to the abominable practices of the nations, God commands Israel to be holy, rejoicing in the Lord alone as the source of all blessing.

Gospel Glimpses

THE JOY OF OBEYING GOD. Israel must obey God strictly, with no exceptions. And yet, we completely misread Deuteronomy if we picture God as a tyrannical dictator like Pharaoh. His laws are aimed at bringing about Israel's good. When Israel obeys God even at great cost, God promises that they will not regret it, for He will crown their obedience with life and blessing (12:28; 13:17; 14:29). This is true liberty, the liberty Christ purchased for us in the gospel: not to be our own masters but to be joyous servants of the King who seeks our good, whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light (Matthew 11:30; John 8:36; Romans 6:18, 22).

GOD THE GIVER. Again and again God emphasizes that Israel must bring its sacrifices and tithes to the one place he chooses (12:1–14, 17–18, 26–27; 14:22–29). The three great national feasts all happen in this one central place (16:1–17). And yet, once they arrive, God has a surprising command: rejoice (12:7, 12, 18; 14:26; 16:11, 14). Deuteronomy 14:23–26 even pictures a big party with all the tithe they have brought—all Israel is rejoicing in the lavish gift of the land! But the whole command is crucial: they are to rejoice “before him.” What makes the central place unique is that God's presence dwells there (first in the tabernacle, then in the tem-

ple) in a special way. Even as God knows that Israel will become wealthy in the land, He is jealous that they never forget that He is the gracious giver of all that they enjoy, lest they lapse into thinking, “My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth” (8:17). The greatest joy comes not in miserly hoarding but in enjoying God’s gifts with hearty thankfulness to Him and with generous giving to others (I Timothy 6:17–19).

Theological Soundings

GOD’S HOLY PEOPLE. The very first command in this section is to avoid worshiping the Lord as the nations worship their gods, and to destroy their places of worship (12:2–4). There is not the slightest hint of compromise here, as though it were acceptable for Israel to incorporate some elements of Canaanite worship into their worship of the Lord. Likewise, chapter 13 deplores the very suggestion that Israel would go after the gods of the nations, and chapter 14 insists that they must not mourn or eat in the ways the nations do, for they are a “people holy to the Lord your God” (14:2, 21). To be holy is to be different, set apart in our morality from the rest of the world. God is the standard for how we are to be different: “Be holy, for I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44). The New Testament reiterates the command to be holy as God is holy (I Peter 1:15–16), but we must remember that the way we show the holy character of our God in the new covenant sometimes differs from how Israel showed their holiness. We now may eat the foods once prohibited to Israel (Acts 10:13–15), but we still eat as holy children, refusing, for example, to participate in the pervasive sins of indulgence and gluttony (Philippians 3:19).

Whole Bible Connections

THE PLACE FOR THE NAME. The central place of worship will be the “place that the Lord your God will choose out of all your tribes to put His name and make His habitation there” (Deuteronomy 12:5). In contrast to the nations and their gods, whose names will be erased from the land (12:3), God’s name will dwell at a particular place in the land like a permanent stone inscription. But better than something etched in stone, the central place will be where God’s glory and kingly presence shines forth as nowhere else. Because of the uniqueness of the place as God’s dwelling, Israel must go only there to worship. Indeed, God even makes provision for their grain and animal offerings to be changed for money if the journey is too far (14:25). As the story of Israel unfolds, God’s name is established in several places where the tabernacle abides, including Shiloh (Jeremiah 7:12), and His name finally comes to rest in the temple Solomon builds in Jerusalem (II Samuel 7:13; I Kings 8:20; Psalm 76:2). However, the rest of I-II Kings records the Israelites’ repeated abandonment of the temple by worshiping wherever they please, on every high hill and under every green tree (I Kings 14:23; II Kings 21:3). Eventually, God abandons His house in Jerusalem because of the nation’s sin (Jeremiah 12:7; Ezekiel 10:18). However, in the new covenant God’s glory comes to dwell in His Spirit-filled house, the Church (Ephesians 2:22; II Corinthians 6:16; I Peter 2:5), and so we worship him not in Jerusalem or any other special location but in Spirit and in truth (John 4:20–24).

NO HIGHER LOYALTY. The Lord commands Israel to bring even close family members to justice when they urge abandoning the Lord for other gods (Deuteronomy 13:6–11). The faithful Israelite must cast the first stone even against his loved ones once they are condemned (v. 9). This difficult command reminds us of Abraham, who obeyed God even when commanded to sacrifice Isaac, his beloved son (Genesis 22:1–19). God will brook no rivals in our hearts. We must love Him with all that we are (Deuteronomy 6:5), and when we must choose between God and beloved family, it is a test of whom we actually love the most (13:3). Jesus calls us to nothing less in the new covenant when he says, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26).

Please answer the following questions:

Chapter 12

1. What is this chapter dedicated to? (v. 1)
2. What were the Israelites to destroy when they got into the land? (vv. 2-3)
3. Why should they utterly destroy the places of worship of the false gods? (vv. 2-4)
4. In verse 3, what details of the destruction is given?
5. Who will choose the sight for the worship of God? (v. 5)
6. Where were they to bring their offerings, sacrifices and tithes when they crossed over Jordan? (vv. 5-6, 11)
7. What were they not to eat? (vv. 5-16, 23)
8. What is verse 4 saying?
9. What were all of the people doing, before they received the law? (v. 8)
10. When is this law to come into being? (vv. 10-11)

11. Who was to rejoice before the LORD? (v. 12)

12. What is forbidden to them to eat or drink? (vv. 16-17)

13. In verse 19, they are warned not to neglect who? (v. 19)

14. What is Israel not to inquire of from these people? (vv. 30-31)

15. To what were they not to add to or diminish? (v. 32)

Chapter 13

1. What does a true prophet do? What does a false prophet do? (vv. 1-3)

2. List some of the things you should do in verse 4.

3. Verse 5 says, what should happen to the false prophet?

4. How was the only way to stop the evil among them? (v. 5)

5. Why should this happen? (vv. 5-6)

6. Should we make a difference in the punishment, if it is a near relative? (v. 6-9)
7. How can we tell, if a message is true or false? (v. 14)
8. What should they do to that city? (v. 15)
9. He wants them to gather all the spoil, and do what with it? (v. 16)
10. God will bless you, if you do what? (v. 17)

Chapter 14

1. Why was pork specifically forbidden? (vv. 1-2)
2. Why were they not to cut themselves for the dead? (vv. 1-2)
3. What is the one thing that makes these Israelites like God? (vv. 1-2)
4. What had God chosen Israel to be? v. (2)
5. What beasts were the Israelites not allowed to eat? (vv. 7-8)

6. What fish can be eaten? What fish are forbidden? (vv. 9-10)

7. What birds were they not to eat? (vv. 12-18)

8. Where shall they eat the holy things? (v. 23)

9. What is the exception? (v. 24)

10. How would a person tithe who lived a long way from the place where the Lord chose to set his name? (vv. 24-25)

11. What could the tithe be exchanged for? And for what purpose? (v. 25, 25)

12. What do the Levites live of? (v. 27)

13. What were they to do every third year? (vv. 28)

14. What were they to do with it? (v. 28)

15. What were they to do with the tithe? (v. 29)

Chapter 15

1. The Lord redeemed Israel out of slavery once; he will not allow Israel to lapse into slavery again. Israelites must remember who their neighbors are: they are “brothers”, fellow partakers of God’s rescue from Egypt, unlike the foreigner (v. 3). What measures does God prescribe here to prevent his people from falling again into slavery? (vv. 1-18)
2. What were the Israelites to do at the end of every seventh year? (vv. 1-11)
3. What time is verse 4 speaking of?
4. What was Israel to do to nations in regard to borrowing and lending? (v. 6)
5. How shall they feel about the poor? (vv. 7-8)
6. What do we know about the poor in the land? (v. 10)
7. A person lending must not be what? (v. 8)
8. How often were servants to be release? How long shall they serve? (v. 12)
9. What shall they do for servants, when they release them? What is the release speaking of? (vv. 13-14)
10. How were they to send them away when released? (vv. 13-14)

11. What shall they remember about Egypt? (vv. 14-15)

12. What if the servant does not want to go, does he have to leave? What was to be done to a servant who did not wish to be released?(v. 16-18)

13. Who do all of the firstling males of the flock belong to? (v. 19)

14. What is the one restriction about eating it? (vv. 20-23)

15. What were they not to sacrifice to the Lord? (v. 21)

Chapter 16

1. Where were they to observe the Passover? (vv. 2, 6)

2. Where will the Passover be sacrificed? (vv. 5-6)

3. Why must they not sacrifice the Passover inside the gate? (v. 6)

4. What type of cooking is spoken of in verse 7?

5. On the seventh day of Unleavened Bread, what do they do? (v. 8)

6. What kind of bread is to be eaten with it? (v. 8)
7. How many days is it to be eaten? (v. 8)
8. When were they to keep the Feast of Weeks? (vv. 9-10)
9. What must they do to stay free? (v. 12)
10. How many times a year must all males appear before the LORD God? (v. 16)
11. How much shall each person give? How was every man to give? (v. 17)
12. How must the judges and officers judge? (vv. 18-19)
13. Why weren't judges allowed to take bribes? (v. 19)
14. How does God want His people to live? (v. 20)
15. Why are Asherah Poles forbidden to be near the altar? (vv. 21-22)