

Adult Bible Class

The Book of Deuteronomy - Chapters 13 - 16

Deuteronomy Chapter 13

In Deuteronomy, Moses gives several addresses to the Israelites as they are camped beside the Jordan River, ready to enter the Promised Land. Moses reminds them of their recent history after they left Egypt. He reminds them of the laws that God gave them at Mount Sinai. Moses speaks especially to the generation that was born during the wilderness wanderings. Chapter 13 brings us to yet another warning against idolatry.

Deuteronomy 13:1 (NLT) "Suppose there are prophets among you or those who dream dreams about the future, and they promise you signs or miracles, 2 and the predicted signs or miracles occur. If they then say, 'Come, let us worship other gods'—gods you have not known before— 3 do not listen to them. The Lord your God is testing you to see if you truly love him with all your heart and soul. 4 Serve only the Lord your God and fear him alone. Obey his commands, listen to his voice, and cling to him...

God said in Numbers 12:6, *If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream (NKJV)*. Human beings can be very interested in dreams. Ordinary dreams have no real meaning, but on rare occasions, God will give someone a dream with meaning. We read about meaningful dreams in the story of Joseph when the baker, the butler, and Pharaoh had dreams - all interpreted by Joseph (see Genesis 40 and 41). In Acts 2:17 it was prophesied that in the last days *"your old men will dream dreams."*

However, in the passage above, God warns his people about false prophets who produce signs and wonders, and then speak against the Word of God - in this example, leading God's people to worship idols. The message above is clear - signs and wonders are not the evidence of a true prophet. His message must line up with God's Word. It has been said many times: "Signs follow believers - believers don't follow signs" (see Mark 16:17).

In the above Scripture, God said that his people will be tested by such false prophets (verse 3). Therefore, we should know what the Word of God says so that we will not be deceived.

6 "Suppose someone secretly entices you—even your brother, your son or daughter, your beloved wife, or your closest friend—and says, 'Let us go worship other gods'—gods that neither you nor your ancestors have known. 7 They might suggest that you worship the gods of peoples who live nearby or who come from the ends of the earth. 8 But do not give in or listen. Have no pity, and do not spare or protect them. 9 You must put them to death! Strike the first blow yourself, and then all the people must join in. 10 Stone the guilty ones to death because they have tried to draw you away from the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of slavery. 11 Then all Israel will hear about it and be afraid, and no one will act so wickedly again.

Moses was instructing the new nation of Israel - a special nation where God revealed Himself to them, delivered them from Egypt, led them through the Red

Sea, and cared for them in the wilderness. God was their God, and they were strictly warned to worship none other but Him. It was the law for this nation of Israel that those who enticed others to worship idol gods were to be stoned to death. This command came from God Himself.

God said that they were to have no pity - and we read about casting the first stone (verse 9). God was very severe toward someone who caused another person to sin.

In the New Testament, God's kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. In ancient Israel, the spiritual law and the civil government were combined. Today, Christians follow the laws of the country in which they reside (Romans 13:1-7) - and the kingdom of God is within our hearts (Luke 17:21). That is why Jesus told the crowd who were ready to stone the woman caught in the act of adultery, *"...He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her"* (John 8:7, KJV). Jesus didn't forbid casting the first stone as the law of Moses said to do; rather, he limited it to those who were without adulterous hearts themselves. Their consciences were smitten, and then Jesus said, *"Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more"* (John 8:10b-11). Jesus forced them to look inside their own hearts.

Deuteronomy 13:12 "When you begin living in the towns the Lord your God is giving you, you may hear **13** that scoundrels among you are leading their fellow citizens astray by saying, 'Let us go worship other gods'—gods you have not known before. **14** In such cases, you must examine the facts carefully. If you find that the report is true and such a detestable act (KJV: abomination) has been committed among you, **15** you must attack that town and completely destroy all its inhabitants, as well as all the livestock. **16** Then you must pile all the plunder in the middle of the open square and burn it. Burn the entire town as a burnt offering to the Lord your God. That town must remain a ruin (KJV: heap) forever; it may never be rebuilt. **17** Keep none of the plunder that has been set apart for destruction. Then the Lord will turn from his fierce anger and be merciful to you. He will have compassion on you and make you a large nation, just as he swore to your ancestors.

18 "The Lord your God will be merciful only if you listen to his voice and keep all his commands that I am giving you today, doing what pleases him.

In the case of a whole city that was given over to idolatry and leading others to worship idols, the elders were to investigate the situation thoroughly. God called this an *"abomination,"* which is a word that describes something that is totally displeasing to God - something impure, unclean, and totally devoid of holiness - in this case, gross idolatry. In the New Testament, the phrase *"abomination of desolation"* is used to describe the Antichrist when he sets up an idolatrous image in the holy place of the Temple (Matthew 24:15 and 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

If the investigation proved that the Israelite town was given over to idolatry, the town was to be treated as a Canaanite city and utterly destroyed. No one would profit from it (no spoils of war were to be kept). The city was not to be rebuilt but remain a "heap" forever. The word translated "heap" is *tel*, which means a mound. There are many tels in modern Israel that are cities built upon cities.



At left is an example of a *tel* in Israel. This is Beth Shan (or Beit She'an) near where King Saul fought the Philistines and was killed.

A tel is formed when a new city is built upon the ruins or refuse of an old city.

In Chapter 13, God commanded that a city that was set for destruction should be abandoned.

Deuteronomy Chapter 14

Ceremonially Clean and Unclean Animals

Deuteronomy 14:1 (NLT) "Since you are the people of the Lord your God, never cut yourselves or shave the hair above your foreheads in mourning for the dead. **2** You have been set apart as holy to the Lord your God, and he has chosen you from all the nations of the earth to be his own special treasure.

The heathen had certain customs when mourning the dead. They were vocal and demonstrative. A part of it was cutting themselves and shaving the head or tearing the hair. Israel was to be so totally given to God that every part of their life belonged to Him. Their bodies were to be treated in a dignified manner. In the presence of death, God's people were to show self-respect as well as respect for the dead.

Christian burial customs should reflect the examples given to us in the Bible - not rituals of pagans or the ungodly. The reason for this is because God's people are holy - set apart as His treasure.

3 "You must not eat any detestable animals that are ceremonially unclean. **4** These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, **5** the deer, the gazelle, the roe deer, the wild goat, the addax, the antelope, and the mountain sheep.

6 "You may eat any animal that has completely split hooves and chews the cud, **7** but if the animal doesn't have both, it may not be eaten. So you may not eat the camel, the hare, or the hyrax. They chew the cud but do not have split hooves, so they are ceremonially unclean for you. **8** And you may not eat the pig. It has split hooves but does not chew the cud, so it is ceremonially unclean for you. You may not eat the meat of these animals or even touch their carcasses.

The Israelite could eat any animal that chews the cud and has split hooves.

Deuteronomy 14:9 "Of all the marine animals, you may eat whatever has both fins and scales.

10 You may not, however, eat marine animals that do not have both fins and scales. They are ceremonially unclean for you.

Fish must have both fins and scales - so catfish were not allowed to be eaten, nor shellfish.

11 "You may eat any bird that is ceremonially clean. **12** These are the birds you may not eat: the griffon vulture, the bearded vulture, the black vulture, **13** the kite, the falcon, buzzards of all kinds, **14** ravens of all kinds, **15** the eagle owl, the short-eared owl, the seagull, hawks of all kinds, **16** the little owl, the great owl, the barn owl, **17** the desert owl, the Egyptian vulture, the cormorant, **18** the stork, herons of all kinds, the hoopoe, and the bat.

Predatory birds and scavengers were not to be eaten. One reason Israel was given these dietary laws was for good health!

19 "All winged insects that walk along the ground are ceremonially unclean for you and may not be eaten. **20** But you may eat any winged bird or insect that is ceremonially clean.

21 "You must not eat anything that has died a natural death. You may give it to a foreigner living in your town, or you may sell it to a stranger. But do not eat it yourselves, for you are set apart as holy to the Lord your God.

An Israelite was not to eat blood. Therefore, an animal that died of itself was not to be eaten since it had not been bled properly.

"You must not cook a young goat in its mother's milk.

Bible scholars think that this was a practice among idol worshipers (a fertility rite) and therefore Israel was not to copy the heathen.

The Giving of Tithes

22 "You must set aside a tithe of your crops—one-tenth of all the crops you harvest each year.

23 Bring this tithe to the designated place of worship—the place the Lord your God chooses for his name to be honored—and eat it there in his presence. This applies to your tithes of grain, new wine, olive oil, and the firstborn males of your flocks and herds. Doing this will teach you always to fear the Lord your God.

24 "Now when the Lord your God blesses you with a good harvest, the place of worship he chooses for his name to be honored might be too far for you to bring the tithe. **25** If so, you may sell the tithe portion of your crops and herds, put the money in a pouch, and go to the place the Lord your God has chosen. **26** When you arrive, you may use the money to buy any kind of food you want—cattle, sheep, goats, wine, or other alcoholic drink. Then feast there in the presence of the Lord your God and celebrate with your household. **27** And do not neglect the Levites in your town, for they will receive no allotment of land among you.

28 "At the end of every third year, bring the entire tithe of that year's harvest and store it in the nearest town. **29** Give it to the Levites, who will receive no allotment of land among you, as well as to the foreigners living among you, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, so they can eat and be satisfied. Then the Lord your God will bless you in all your work.

The Israelite was to bring ten percent (a tithe) of his crops to God's place of worship each year. A portion of the tithe was eaten there, and a portion was given to the priests. Every three years the tithe was given to the Levites with a portion given to the needy. Verse 14 says that the purpose of tithing is to *"teach you always to fear the Lord your God."*

Deuteronomy Chapter 15

Release for Debtors

Deuteronomy 15:1 (NLT) "At the end of every seventh year you must cancel the debts of everyone who owes you money. 2 This is how it must be done. Everyone must cancel the loans they have made to their fellow Israelites. They must not demand payment from their neighbors or relatives, for the Lord's time of release has arrived. 3 This release from debt, however, applies only to your fellow Israelites—not to the foreigners living among you.

God limited the time that a person would be in debt - no more than seven years. This gave the debtor the opportunity to start anew with hope for the future.

4 "There should be no poor among you, for the Lord your God will greatly bless you in the land he is giving you as a special possession. **5** You will receive this blessing if you are careful to obey all the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today. **6** The Lord your God will bless you as he has promised. You will lend money to many nations but will never need to borrow. You will rule many nations, but they will not rule over you.

Blessings in Israel were tied to obedience.

7 "But if there are any poor Israelites in your towns when you arrive in the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tightfisted toward them. **8** Instead, be generous and lend them whatever they need. **9** Do not be mean-spirited and refuse someone a loan because the year for canceling debts is close at hand. If you refuse to make the loan and the needy person cries out to the Lord, you will be considered guilty of sin. **10** Give generously to the poor, not grudgingly, for the Lord your God will bless you in everything you do. **11** There will always be some in the land who are poor. That is why I am commanding you to share freely with the poor and with other Israelites in need.

God knew that because of disobedience there would always be the poor in Israel. He commanded that the people of Israel bless the poor and give to them. They were to be generous in their giving.

In the New Testament, Jesus said, "The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me" (Matthew 26:11, NIV).

Release for Hebrew Slaves

12 "If a fellow Hebrew sells himself or herself to be your servant and serves you for six years, in the seventh year you must set that servant free.

Not only were debts to be canceled every seven years, but slaves were to be set free every seven years as well. Slavery in Israel was often the result of debt. When a person found himself owing debts that he could not pay, he could sell himself into slavery to pay off the debt.

Deuteronomy 15:13 "When you release a male servant, do not send him away empty-handed.

14 Give him a generous farewell gift from your flock, your threshing floor, and your winepress. Share with him some of the bounty with which the Lord your God has blessed you. **15** Remember that you were once slaves in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you! That is why I am giving you this command.

After six years of faithful service, in the seventh year the slave was to be set free and given gifts to help him start a new life.

16 "But suppose your servant says, 'I will not leave you,' because he loves you and your family, and he has done well with you. **17** In that case, take an awl and push it through his earlobe into the door. After that, he will be your servant for life. And do the same for your female servants.

If the slave was satisfied with his life, he could stay with his master permanently. Paul wrote about being a willing slave for the Lord Jesus Christ.

18 "You must not consider it a hardship when you release your servants. Remember that for six years they have given you services worth double the wages of hired workers, and the Lord your God will bless you in all you do.

Sacrificing Firstborn Male Animals

19 "You must set aside for the Lord your God all the firstborn males from your flocks and herds. Do not use the firstborn of your herds to work your fields, and do not shear the firstborn of your flocks.

20 Instead, you and your family must eat these animals in the presence of the Lord your God each year at the place he chooses. **21** But if this firstborn animal has any defect, such as lameness or blindness, or if anything else is wrong with it, you must not sacrifice it to the Lord your God.

22 Instead, use it for food for your family in your hometown. Anyone, whether ceremonially clean or unclean, may eat it, just as anyone may eat a gazelle or deer. **23** But you must not consume the blood. You must pour it out on the ground like water.

The firstborn of the flocks and herds was to be set apart to God. God said that Israel was His firstborn son (Exodus 4:22): therefore, the firstborn of the clean animals (which was considered the best) was always given to God as a reminder of God's deliverance of his "firstborn."

Deuteronomy Chapter 16

There are seven feasts of Jehovah that we have studied in past lessons. In this chapter, the seven feasts are consolidated into three main festival times. The first festival is the combination of the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which occur back to back. During this time, the Feast of Firstfruits also occurs. So, often these three feasts together are simply called, The Passover or the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread

Deuteronomy 16:1 (NLT) "In honor of the Lord your God, celebrate the Passover each year in the early spring, in the month of Abib, for that was the month in which the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night. **2** Your Passover sacrifice may be from either the flock or the herd, and it must be sacrificed to the Lord your God at the designated place of worship—the place he chooses for his name to be honored.

Deuteronomy 16:3 Eat it with bread made without yeast. For seven days the bread you eat must be made without yeast, as when you escaped from Egypt in such a hurry. Eat this bread—the bread of suffering—so that as long as you live you will remember the day you departed from Egypt. **4** Let no yeast be found in any house throughout your land for those seven days. And when you sacrifice the Passover lamb on the evening of the first day, do not let any of the meat remain until the next morning.

5 “You may not sacrifice the Passover in just any of the towns that the Lord your God is giving you.

6 You must offer it only at the designated place of worship—the place the Lord your God chooses for his name to be honored. Sacrifice it there in the evening as the sun goes down on the anniversary of your exodus from Egypt. **7** Roast the lamb and eat it in the place the Lord your God chooses. Then you may go back to your tents the next morning. **8** For the next six days you may not eat any bread made with yeast. On the seventh day proclaim another holy day in honor of the Lord your God, and no work may be done on that day.

The first Passover was eaten in the homes. After Israel conquered the Promised Land, they were to go to the Tabernacle (and later the Temple) to eat the Passover.

The Passover pictures Jesus’ death on the cross (1 Corinthians 5:7) as well as our repentance. The Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures Jesus’ burial and our baptism in water (buried with Christ). The Feast of Firstfruits pictures the resurrection of Jesus.

Fifty days after the Passover is the next Feast - Pentecost, or the Festival of Harvest - which is a picture to us of the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

The Festival of Harvest

9 “Count off seven weeks from when you first begin to cut the grain at the time of harvest. **10** Then celebrate the Festival of Harvest to honor the Lord your God. Bring him a voluntary offering in proportion to the blessings you have received from him. **11** This is a time to celebrate before the Lord your God at the designated place of worship he will choose for his name to be honored. Celebrate with your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, the Levites from your towns, and the foreigners, orphans, and widows who live among you. **12** Remember that you were once slaves in Egypt, so be careful to obey all these decrees.

There are three autumn feasts: the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. All of these festivals occur one after another. In the following passage, only the Feast of Tabernacles (or Shelters) is mentioned.

These three feasts are a picture of the rapture of the church, the return of Jesus Christ to this earth, and the reign of Jesus for 1000 years.

The Festival of Shelters

13 “You must observe the Festival of Shelters for seven days at the end of the harvest season, after the grain has been threshed and the grapes have been pressed. **14** This festival will be a happy time of celebrating with your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows from your towns. **15** For seven days you must celebrate this festival to honor the Lord your God at the place he chooses, for it is he who blesses you with bountiful harvests and gives you success in all your work. This festival will be a time of great joy for all.

16 “Each year every man in Israel must celebrate these three festivals: the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Harvest, and the Festival of Shelters. On each of these occasions, all men must appear before the Lord your God at the place he chooses, but they must not appear before the Lord without a gift for him. **17** All must give as they are able, according to the blessings given to them by the Lord your God.

It was required of Israelite men to celebrate these three feasts. Every man who was able to travel to the place appointed by God was to celebrate these three annual feasts.

Jesus was faithful to attend the feasts in Jerusalem:

Luke 2:41 Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Passover festival.

John 7:1 (NKJV) After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him. **2** Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. . . . **10** But when His brothers had gone up, then He also went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

Not only did Jesus attend these festivals, but they were all about Him!

Matthew 26:1 (NKJV) Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, *that* He said to His disciples, **2** "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

Justice for the People

Deuteronomy 16:18 "Appoint judges and officials for yourselves from each of your tribes in all the towns the Lord your God is giving you. They must judge the people fairly. **19** You must never twist justice or show partiality. Never accept a bribe, for bribes blind the eyes of the wise and corrupt the decisions of the godly. **20** Let true justice prevail, so you may live and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

21 "You must never set up a wooden Asherah pole beside the altar you build for the Lord your God. **22** And never set up sacred pillars for worship, for the Lord your God hates them.

God ordained that the people appoint judges to judge fairly in legal matters. The laws of the Jews were given to them from heaven, from the Lord Himself. The administration of the perfect law was entrusted to imperfect men. God required that men be a part of His administration. In the Old Testament the priests, Levites, prophets, and elders were responsible for overseeing the worship of God and the administering of justice. In this New Testament age, God has given the five fold ministry (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers - Ephesians 4:11). In nations, God has ordained the powers that be to handle law and order (Romans 13:1-7).