

Deuteronomy 14-15

Good morning and thank you for joining us. Would you please turn in your bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 14?

Wherever you travel today and no matter who you talk too, there are 2 topics at the tip of everyone's tongue nowadays. The first being Covid, and the 2nd being the economic situation here in America. Inflation is rising at an alarming rate, 5.4% to be exact.

BTW, it's not too bad considering Venezuela's inflation rate this year is 5,500%

Gods' instructions to the nation of Israel weren't only for matters related to worship, or how to solve moral conundrums. No God's wisdom is all encompassing, and we'll see this morning God laid out instructions for how Israel's economy was to operate as well.

We're going to study both chapters 14 and 15 this morning, and the title of this morning's message is GOD'S ECONOMICS

Would you please stand as we read verses 1-2 together?

1 "You *are* the children of the LORD your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave the front of your head for the dead. 2 For you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who *are* on the face of the earth.

Let's pray

Throughout the Bible we see God's laws and instructions for the Israelites ultimately serve a singular purpose, to be a people separated unto Him. And Chapter 15 begins with God's instruction for the Israelites on how to properly mourn when a loved one dies-let's read verses 1-2 again.

1 “You are the children of the LORD your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave the front of your head for the dead.

2 For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

The cutting of the body and the shaving of the head were common practices among their pagan neighbors when mourning their dead.

And notice in verse 2 God tells them WHY they aren't to do those things-they are a holy people.

The word holy here means "separate." The people of Israel were a people separate unto the LORD.

And in Jesus, we also are a holy people!

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

And

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Because Israel was called to be holy, or separate, that means they needed to follow God's strict commands, including God's instructions on dietary laws.

3 “You shall not eat any detestable thing.

Ok lets pause for a moment.

We studied the kosher and unkosher dietary laws in depth last year in Leviticus chapter 11, and the next several verses are a reminder of what God ordained.

Before we read these dietary laws, its important to ask the question-as Christians, do we need to follow these food restrictions? As Christians, is it a violation of God's word to eat bacon and shrimp?

So to fully answer these questions, we need to take a slight detour, so would you now please turn in your bibles to Acts chapter 10.

Throughout the Bible we see that God does NEW things

The Scriptures tell us that God promised Israel a new covenant.

The Bible tells us God places a new song in our mouth, and pours out the new wine of His Spirit.

Jesus gave His disciples a new commandment - to love one another.

When we embrace Christ, we're told that old things have passed away and behold all things become new.

Speaking of new, one day God will even create a new heaven and a new earth... In fact, the 2nd to last chapter in the Bible has this declaration, **Revelation 21:5, "Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold I make all things new.'"**

The words "God" and "new" go together.

This all sounds exciting! We like to talk about new ventures and dream of new territory. But most of us are creatures of habit. Just think about the last time you sat in a different section here at church!

And in Acts 10, God does something radically new. Lets read verses 9-16

9 The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. 10 Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance 11 and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. 12 In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. 13 And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." 14 But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean." 15 And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." 16 This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

Jewish dietary laws-think the book of Leviticus, were part of a bigger picture. God had commanded His people, the Israelites to be set apart. All of life was to be separated as clean and unclean. Holy and not holy. Pure and un-pure. Acceptable to God and unacceptable to God.

This distinction was the measuring stick applied to every part of Jewish life. The Mosaic law provided a means for differentiating good and bad.

Every religion provides criteria that divides people into holy, and unholy. And no other religion did this as rigorously as Judaism.

Kosher Jews were reminded at every meal time of right and wrong. Good guys ate the clean, kosher food. Bad guys, the gentiles, ate the forbidden, non-kosher food.

The law of Moses worked exactly as God designed it to. The law did such a thorough job of identifying good from bad that by the time you subjected your ENTIRE life to the ENTIRE mosaic law, you had to conclude that there is no one who is righteous, no not one.

An honest OT Jew was forced into an uncomfortable conclusion. No one could fulfill the righteousness that God's law requires. All are sinners. All fall short of God standards. This was the conclusion you arrived at while being under the OT law.

And Christianity picks up where the law leaves off. And that's precisely why Christianity is not a religion.

Religion chooses sides. Religion picks the good guys, it assigns merit badges for accumulating filthy rags.

But that's not Christianity. The gospel declares we're all bad people. **Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**

Religion wants to define and label and categorize each of us. Whether you're a Buckeye fan or a Michigan fan. Steelers or Bengal's, Republican or Democrat. Vaccine or no vaccine.

But no matter what we're labeled, we all need Jesus.

Today the line in the sand for the entire human race isn't the food we put in our mouths, or obedience to the Mosaic law, but the faith we put in Christ.

But here's what's happening to Peter in his vision in Acts 10. Peter sees that God has put an end to keeping of dietary laws. God has replaced keeping the OT law with salvation by grace through faith in Jesus!

So back to our study in Deuteronomy 14, verses 4-21 remind the nation of their dietary laws. Remember that "kosher" means

proper. These kosher laws differentiated between clean and unclean meats.

4 These are the animals which you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, 5 the deer, the gazelle, the roe deer, the wild goat, the mountain goat,[fn] the antelope, and the mountain sheep. 6 And you may eat every animal with cloven hooves, having the hoof split into two parts, and that chews the cud, among the animals. 7 Nevertheless, of those that chew the cud or have cloven hooves, you shall not eat, such as these: the camel, the hare, and the rock hyrax; for they chew the cud but do not have cloven hooves; they are unclean for you. 8 Also the swine is unclean for you, because it has cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud; you shall not eat their flesh or touch their dead carcasses.

9 “These you may eat of all that are in the waters: you may eat all that have fins and scales. 10 And whatever does not have fins and scales you shall not eat; it is unclean for you.

11 “All clean birds you may eat. 12 But these you shall not eat: the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard, 13 the red kite, the falcon, and the kite after their kinds; 14 every raven after its kind; 15 the ostrich, the short-eared owl, the sea gull, and the hawk after their kinds; 16 the little owl, the screech owl, the white owl, 17 the jackdaw, the carrion vulture, the fisher owl, 18 the stork, the heron after its kind, and the hoopoe and the bat.

19 “Also every creeping thing that flies is unclean for you; they shall not be eaten.

20 “You may eat all clean birds.

21 “You shall not eat anything that dies of itself; you may give it to the alien who is within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you are a holy people to the LORD your God.

“You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.

These laws also protected the Israelites medically and nutritionally. In the 14th century the bubonic plague killed 25 million people in Europe, nearly 40% of the entire population died!

But the Jews were largely unaffected by the plague as a result of their kosher lifestyle. This is why the Gentiles accused the Jews of poisoning their rivers and streams, and the Jews suffered intense persecution during the 14th century as a result.

Now verses 22-23 describe tithing principles

22 “You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year.

23 And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.

Notice the purpose of tithing... **“that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.”** This fear in the Hebrew, ya’re, means to stand in awe, to reverence and honor. Tithing is to bring us into a deeper reverence for the Lord.

24-26

24 But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you, 25 then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. 26 And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD

your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household. If distance prevented the easy transport of the animals, they could exchange their tithe of the animals for money, and then use the money to tithe with when they came to the tabernacle.

Commands like this show us that God is practical. God doesn't place unreasonable, burdensome demands on His people. He made a way for them to conveniently tithe.

Verses 27-29 explain how every third year the tithe went to support the priests, the poor, the orphans and the widows

27 You shall not forsake the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you.

28 "At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. 29 And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.

Now as we discuss tithing, just as we did with the dietary restrictions, we have to ask. Are Christians obligated to tithe? The answer is no.

2 Corinthians 9:6 6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

The Greek word translated "cheerful" is *hilaros*—from which we get the word "hilarious." God wants a person who gives to give cheerfully and gladly.

It's a mistake to feel obligated to give. It should be counted a privilege to be able to say, "Lord, I'm honoring You in the way You've blessed me."

If tithing is not a privilege for you as an act of worshipping God, don't do it. If you're writing a tithe check and grimacing while you're doing it, keep your money. God doesn't want bitter tithes and neither do we.

We don't make an emphasis on tithing here at Calvary Chapel because we trust that the Lord will provide for all of our needs as a fellowship. And we've never missed a payment one time. He's faithful.

Chapter 15 begins with the rule regarding debts which we studied in Leviticus 25.

1 "At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts. 2 And this is the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbor shall release it; he shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother, because it is called the LORD's release. Earlier in scripture we discovered that God's design was for every seventh year to be a sabbatical year. The land was to rest. No crops were to be planted or harvested. And the debts were to be released every seventh year.

3-6

3 Of a foreigner you may require it; but you shall give up your claim to what is owed by your brother, 4 except when there may be no poor among you; for the LORD will greatly bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance— 5 only if you carefully obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe with care all these commandments which I command you today. "

6 For the LORD your God will bless you just as He promised you; you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you. This verse was partially fulfilled. Hebrews can lend to Gentiles, but not borrow from them. And the Jewish people did indeed become the great financiers of the world economy when, during the Middle Ages, a papal edict forbade Christians from lending money. This resulted in the Jews becoming the bankers of Europe.

Even today on Wall Street, many large brokerage firms are founded by or led by people of Jewish origin. Goldman Sachs, Lehman brothers, Salomon brothers, and many others for example all have Hebrew roots.

7-8

7 “If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother,⁸ but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. The attitude of the Israelites toward the poor in their community was to be one of warmth and generosity. The poor were given what was necessary to meet their needs, even with the realization that such giving would never have to be paid back.

So, let's review God's economics for Israel. What were the basic ingredients for this economic prosperity?

By being generous, by being merciful, and by giving with a rejoicing heart.

Yet Israel has never fully achieved this economic prosperity that God promised them. And why didn't they? It was a lack of faith.

To be generous with their money, and merciful, and giving with a rejoicing heart didn't make sense to them. After all, there were bills to pay, and budgets to keep.

What was true thousands of years ago is still true today. If you want to know the depths of a person's faith, follow their checkbook. These aren't my words, rather Jesus' **Matthew 6:19** "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Regarding money, Jesus told a parable in **Luke 12 13** Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

14 But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" 15 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." ' 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Creation will never satisfy the longing the creator has put in our hearts.

9-11

9 Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,' and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the LORD against you, and it become sin among you. 10 You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand. 11 For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.' Why did God say the poor would never cease from their land? Because He knew the people weren't going to fully obey the commandments He gave. As Jesus would say later, "For you have the poor with you always."

12-14

12 "If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. 13 And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed; 14 you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. From what the LORD your God has blessed you with, you shall give to him. The horrors of slavery in American history cannot be overlooked, yet it also cannot be compared to the word slaves in the OT. The slaves here are those who have had to sell themselves into servitude because of their debt.

So after serving for 6 years, in the 7th year the slave was to be set free. And not only free, but they were to be sent away with full hands.

God demanded the Israelites treat slaves properly, and here's why...

15 You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this thing today. The Hebrews were once slaves, and they needed to remember that as they dealt with their slaves.

16 And if it happens that he (the slave) says to you, 'I will not go away from you,' because he loves you and your house, since he prospers with you, 17 then you shall take an awl and thrust it through his ear to the door, and he shall be your servant forever. Also to your female servant you shall do likewise. ”

If the slave wanted to stay, he had his ear pierced with an awl. And these words and actions of the willing servant paint a beautiful prophetic picture of Jesus: **Isaiah 50:5-7 The Lord GOD has opened My ear;**

And I was not rebellious,

Nor did I turn away.

6 I gave My back to those who struck Me,

And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard;

I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.

This demonstration of the willing slave is also found throughout the NT, and it's what is called a bondservant. This was what Paul called himself. **Galatians 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.**

Paul was a slave to Jesus, willingly, out of love. Paul realized he was better off a slave of Jesus than a free man on his own.

And it brings up a great question for us this morning? Are our ears pinned to Jesus' door? Have we given Him our all... not because we have to, but because we want to?

Let me ask it a little differently today-was the attitude of your heart this morning 'I have to go to church', or I get to go to church'?

'I have to serve in this area, or I get to serve in this area'

I have to go read my bible and pray, or I get to go read my bible and pray'?

We'll finish the chapter...

18 It shall not seem hard to you when you send him away free from you; for he has been worth a double hired servant in serving you six years. Then the LORD your God will bless you in all that you do. 19 "All the firstborn males that come from your herd and your flock you shall sanctify to the LORD your God; you shall do no work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock. 20 You and your household shall eat it before the LORD your God year by year in the place which the LORD chooses. 21 But if there is a defect in it, if it is lame or blind or has any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God.

22 You may eat it within your gates; the unclean and the clean person alike may eat it, as if it were a gazelle or a deer. 23 Only you shall not eat its blood; you shall pour it on the ground like water. When the firstborn animal was brought to the tabernacle (or later, the temple) and given to the priests for sacrifice unto the LORD, a portion of the sacrifice went to the family that brought the animal. It was given so that they could eat a joyful ceremonial

meal before the LORD. Again we see the kindness of God dripping throughout these commands.

Yet these verses are also very clear: the Lord doesn't want our leftovers. He always desires our very best!

It's not burdensome for me to talk to my kids-I love them

Same with my wife

I want to spend time with them, because I love them!

Can we say the same about God?