

Deuteronomy 12 - Thursday, August 11th, 2011

(1) "These *are* the statutes and judgments which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth. (2) You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. (3) And you shall destroy their altars, break their *sacred* pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place.

- This is one of those places in God's Word where we see how it is that God is serious about that which we allow to take up residence in our lives.
- Like with the Israelites being commanded to utterly destroy all the altars and images of the false gods, so too must we do the same in our lives.
- Actually, the reason for this is really quite simple; if we are unwilling to utterly destroy these things, they will ultimately and utterly destroy us.

- By way of illustration, if I'm unwilling to destroy a rabid dog with rabies that's taken up residence in my neighborhood, it could destroy my family.
- It's been said that if we don't deal mercilessly with sin, sin will deal mercilessly with us. The problem is that we're prone to think it's no big deal.
- This is perhaps one of the most successful campaigns of the Devil, in that he deceives us into underestimating him in his seeking to devour us.

1 Peter 5:8 NKJV Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

(4) You shall not worship the LORD your God *with such things*. (5) "But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go. (6) There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. (7) And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice in all to which you have put your hand, you and your households, in which the LORD your God has blessed you.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is, Moses seemingly gives the Israelites a template for their place of worship.
- He begins by telling them what to do, by first telling them what "not" to do. Notice how they are told not to worship the Lord "with such things."
- God does not want their worship of Him to be in anyway associated with the altars or images of these false gods when in the Promised-Land.

- After telling them this, He now tells them what it is that they are to do instead. He tells them that they "shall seek the place where God chooses."
- Once they have sought out the place that God is calling them to worship, they are to then bring their tithes and offerings to that place of worship.
- This is how it is for us. God calls us to the church that He would have us to worship in and tithe to, however, we do need to seek out the place.

(8) "You shall not at all do as we are doing here today—every man doing whatever *is* right in his own eyes— (9) for as yet you have not come to the rest and the inheritance which the LORD your God is giving you.

- Here again we begin with that which they were "not" to do, namely, every man doing whatever was right in his own eyes, which is what they did.
- In other words, once they entered into their inheritance of the land which the Lord was giving them, they could no longer continue doing this.

- This meant that their worship of God would not be left up to them to decide, which is what they were doing while in the wilderness wanderings.
- If you were with us on Sunday morning, you probably see a connection with our study of Romans chapter three as it relates to man deciding.
- When man does "whatever is right in his own eyes," he become "man-centered" in His worship of God, and in so doing he becomes lukewarm.

(10) But *when* you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety, (11) then there will be the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the LORD.

- This refutes the notion that you don't need to church to go to heaven. While theoretically true if you're going to heaven you want to go to church.
- This is what Moses is telling the Israelites. When you cross over the Jordan and dwell safely in the land, God chooses their place of worship.
- There's an intriguing progression as it relates to this place of worship for the Israelites, and how it parallels our seeking of a church to worship in.

(12) And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who *is* within your gates, since he has no portion nor inheritance with you. (13) Take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see; (14) but in the place which the LORD chooses, in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you.

- We're told that this place of worship will be marked by their rejoicing. It won't be a place where worship is done grudgingly, rather it's joyfully.
- This may explain why it is that some will argue that they can worship God on the golf course just as they would if they were to go to the church.
- The problem with this mindset is that church becomes a duty to keep and not a privilege to enjoy. This speaks more about them than a church.

Charles Spurgeon - "All Christian duties should be done joyfully; but especially the work of praising the Lord. I have been in congregations where the tune was dolorous to the very last degree; where the time was so dreadfully slow that one wondered whether they would ever be able to sing through the 119th Psalm... the spirit of the people has seemed to be so damp, so heavy, so dead, that we might have supposed that they were met to prepare their minds for a hanging rather than for blessing the ever gracious God. ...We ought not to worship God in a half-hearted sort of way; as if it were now our duty to bless God, but we felt it to be a weary business, and we would get it through as quickly as we could, and have done with it; and the sooner the better. No, no; 'All that is within me, bless his holy name.' Come, my heart, wake up, and summon all the powers which wait upon thee! Mechanical worship is easy, but worthless. Come rouse yourself, my brother! Rouse thyself, O my own soul!"

(15) "However, you may slaughter and eat meat within all your gates, whatever your heart desires, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, of the gazelle and the deer alike. (16) Only you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it on the earth like water.

- This paints a prophetic picture of the person of Jesus Christ and the finished work on the cross of Christ as evidenced by the blood on the earth.
- They were not to eat the blood because the life of the flesh is in the blood as they were commanded according to Leviticus chapter 17, verse 11.
- Just as they were to pour the blood of the sacrifice they were offering on the earth, so too was Christ's blood poured out onto the earth as well.

(17) You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or your new wine or your oil, of the firstborn of your herd or your flock, of any of your offerings which you vow, of your freewill offerings, or of the heave offering of your hand. (18) But you must eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God chooses, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, and the Levite who *is* within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all to which you put your hands.

- This passage settles the matter of where we as believers are to tithe, or maybe better said; "our tithes and offerings go to that place of worship."
- The Israelites were not to keep their tithes and offerings within their gates, or within their accounts, if you will, but the place that God chooses.
- While I have no intention to preach a fiery sermon on tithing, we would do well were we to re-examine this aspect of our worshipping the Lord.

(19) Take heed to yourself that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land. (20) "When the LORD your God enlarges your border as He has promised you, and you say, 'Let me eat meat,' because you long to eat meat, you may eat as much meat as your heart desires. (21) If the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, then you may slaughter from your herd and from your flock which the LORD has given you, just as I have commanded you, and you may eat within your gates as much as your heart desires. (22) Just as the gazelle and the deer are eaten, so you may eat them; the unclean and the clean alike may eat them. (23) Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood *is* the life; you may not eat the life with the meat. (24) You shall not eat it; you shall pour it on the earth like water. (25) You shall not eat it, that it may go well with you and your children after you, when you do *what is* right in the sight of the LORD. (26) Only the holy things which you have, and your vowed offerings, you shall take and go to the place which the LORD chooses. (27) And you shall offer your burnt offerings, the meat and the blood, on the altar of the LORD your God; and the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the LORD your God, and you shall eat the meat.

- This seems to indicate that if the place of worship that God chose was not in close proximity to them, that they could eat within their own gates.
- In this case, they were to follow all that God had commanded them to do related to the blood, in order that it may go well with all of their families.

(28) Observe and obey all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you and your children after you forever, when you do *what is* good and right in the sight of the LORD your God. (29) "When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, (30) take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' (31) You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. (32) "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.

- Here, Moses is reiterating the warning to not be ensnared by the other gods out of a curiosity in wanting to experiment with the pagan practices.
- He specifically refers to a Canaanite practice of sacrificing children to the god of Molech, by burning them alive on a hot iron statue of his image.
- Sadly, this is eventually what the Israelites would do. Even today, we have the modern day god of Molech in which children are still sacrificed.

- I want to close a little differently than what we usually do by virtue of what is woven into the fabric of this chapter, related to the church today.
- Here's what I'm thinking; there's a template of sorts here, and it's one from which we can see characterizes a church that God would call one to.
- Though not exhaustive, what follows are a number of these characteristics, all of which can be seen in the chapter that we have just studied.

- 1. It won't be worldly.** This is because this church has not given a place to worldly altars, or allowed worldly images to take up residence in it.
- 2. God will lead you to it.** This is a church that God will choose for you, lead you to, and call you to. You don't need to go out "church shopping."

A commentator by the name of Arthur Boers said it best when he wrote; "I often visit newcomers in town and find them to be church shopping. They want to know what they can get out of church. Churches are one more consumer commodity. Worship services are not a place for us to serve God and neighbor but a place where people expect to purchase the best: inspiring worship, good music, moving sermons, quality child care. As if we buy God and not vice versa."

- 3. It will be a giving church.** A healthy church is a tithing church. It's been said that the financial health is a barometer of the spiritual health.

Never go to your church or meetings held there, If you do go, be late, it's no one's affair.
If the weather is bad, either too hot or snowing, Just stay home and rest, for there'll be others going.
But should you attend, be sure and remember, To find fault with the work, the pastor and member.
Be sure to hold back on your offerings and tithes, The bills will be paid by the rest of the guys.
And never take office if offered the post, But eagerly criticize the pastor the most.
If not on a committee you're placed, be sore! If you find that you are, don't attend any more.
When asked your opinion on this thing or that, Have nothing to say, just turn 'em down flat.
Then after the message, shine out like the sun, By telling the folks how it should have been done.
Don't do any more than you possibly can, Leave the work for some other woman or man.
And when you see faithful ones work themselves sick, Then stand up and holler, "It's run by a clique!"

4. It will be a place of rejoicing. This church will be marked by how joyful of a place it is, in that it will be full of joy, and not full of turmoil.

One cleverly quipped how that, "some families make church their home. Others find other uses for the church. Take the notorious Tate family, for example. Perhaps you've met some of them. The chief of the clan is old Dic Tate, who insists on running everything in church. His brother Ro Tate wants to change everything. Aunt Agi Tate has a knack for stirring up trouble; and her husband, Irri Tate, always lends a hand. The next generation of Tates has its own characteristics. Hesi Tate and his wife, Vege Tate, would just as soon wait until next year whenever a new project is suggested. Aunt Imi Tate would love for the church to be like the church down the street. Devas Tate announces constantly that the church is doomed, while her husband Poten Tate promises he can lead the church out of trouble."

5. It will be a place of fellowship. This church will be a place where God's people assemble themselves together not forsaking the fellowship.

[Hebrews 10:23-25 NKJV](#) Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful. (24) And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, (25) not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

6. The Word will be taught. The gospel will be preached, and the word will be taught in this church, because of the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

[Acts 2:42 NIV](#) They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

7. Pagan practices aren't tolerated. This church will be characterized by an unwillingness to flirt with the curiosity of the practices of occultism.

I think that I shall never see,
A Church that's all it ought to be
A Church that has no empty pews,
Whose Pastor never has the blues
A Church whose Deacons always Deke,
And none is proud but all are meek
Where gossips never peddle lies,
Or make complaints or criticize
Where all are always sweet and kind,
And all to other's faults are blind
Such perfect churches there may be,
But none of them are known to me
But still we'll work, and pray and plan,
To make our Church the best we can!