

Deuteronomy 14-17 • Different from the world

Deuteronomy chapter 14, is where we're picking it up in this final series of messages by Moses to the nation of Israel before they go into the land. In fact, before they change leadership. This is really Moses finishing out the end of his leadership role and calling in the nation of Israel, before Joshua takes over and takes them into the land.

And one of the things, we've mentioned many times in our study of Deuteronomy, is that this mirrors so beautifully our lives in Christ, our walk with Jesus, our the ministry of the Spirits in our lives taking us into the promises of God.

Just as the nation of Israel was being taken into the Promised Land. This is a picture of the preparation before going into the land of promise. Or, for you and I, the land of walking out the promises of God.

It's not land from a geographical standpoint, but the promises of God. And you know don't you, that Moses could not take them into the land. We've mentioned this before. Moses could not. And yeah, I know there was the reason that he, struck the rock when he should have just spoke to the rock. And the LORD was angry with him. And said, you can't go into the land and dah da-dah-dah-dah. (Number 20:7-12)

But, all those things took place so that God could make a further statement about the law. The reason Moses couldn't take the people of Israel into the Promised Land, is because the law cannot bring us into the promises of God. It takes someone else. It takes something else. It takes grace and power.

But it's so interesting to me that God chose a man by the name of, Yeshua-Joshua, to bring the nation of Israel into the land of promise. The man who had the very same name as His coming Son, Jesus Christ. You know that Jesus is just the Greek pronunciation of Yeshua. It's the same name; the same idea. The law cannot bring us into the promises of God. Jesus has to do that.

In Christ, we're told in the New Testament, that all the promises of God are yes and Amen. (2 Corinthians 1:20) Right? And that tells you and I, that it is through Jesus that we enter into the promises of God. He is the one that we go

through so that we can lay hold of all of the wonderful promises that God has made to us in His Word. Right?

And that's one of the reasons why we look at legalism and we say, it just can't do it for you. Because that's like trying to take Moses and get him to bring you into the promises. He can't do that because he represents the law. An important connection to make there.

We're in the 14th chapter of Deuteronomy and it begins by saying, "*You are the sons of the LORD your God. (In other words, literally, the children of God.) You shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead.*" Notice that, "for the dead." Why? "² *For you are (a holy, or) a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.*" (ESV)

Stop there for just a moment. This idea of cutting themselves, cutting a person, cutting yourself on your arms, or other parts of your body, or shaving off the forehead - making a bald spot on the forehead - for the dead, was a pagan sign of grieving. And God told the nation of Israel, that they were not to express grief in the same way that the pagans expressed grief. They were in fact to be different. They were not to imitate the practices of the pagans around them in any way.

And Moses explains why. He says in verse two, "*For you are a people holy to the LORD...*" You are a people belonging to God. You are a people set apart for God. You've been set apart for God. Wow! I mean, if we just really got a hold of that, you guys, it would just blow our minds. We've been set apart for God. And that means that we don't live like the rest of the people in the world.

And that's what God is saying to the Israelites. In fact, as we go through these chapters that we're going to deal with tonight, you're going to see over, and over, and over again, that God is going to say to His people, "You're different. Now, I want you to act differently." And some of the things that God told the nation of Israel to do that set them apart as different, might seem really strange for you and I.

What we're reading here is a prohibition. But there were other things that He told them to do in order to be different. Or, not to do, to be different from the peoples around them. And we look at those things today and we go, what was that all about? That just seems really nitpicky. Or, I don't know, it just seems like... That seems completely unimportant.

What God was establishing with His people is, you're different. Act differently; be different. God wanted them to know that they were His. They were a people belonging to God. And if they kept that uppermost in their minds He felt that it would cause them to live differently. And He told them to do everything differently from the pagans. We're going to see that in these chapters, even to the point of eating differently from the rest of the people. And these were the laws that God gave Israel.

Now, it's different for you and I. We're not under the law. We have the Spirit of God living in our hearts, who is directing us to live that different life now. That's why we're not living under the law because the Law Giver is living inside of us. It's a different arrangement; a different relationship with God. He says, "*you are a people holy to the LORD.*"

And then as we get into verses three and following, this is where He gets into some of the elements related to their diet and the dietary laws that were once again meant to set them apart.

He says in verse 3, "*You shall not eat any abomination.*" Or as the NIV says, "*any detestable thing.*" And by the way, men, just a quick piece of advice. Don't ever refer to anything your wife ever makes as an "abomination." Not a good thing to say. Or don't even call it a "detestable thing," for that matter. That won't go well.

We covered a lot of this when we went through Leviticus, in chapter 11. All of the food laws were enumerated. And so we're not going to spend a lot of time here in Deuteronomy addressing them.

But we will notice here as we go through here in verse 4, "*These are the animals (they were allowed to) eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, ⁵ the deer, the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex, (which is another form of wild goat) the antelope, and the mountain sheep. ⁶ Every animal that parts the hoof and has the hoof cloven in two and chews the cud, among the animals, you may eat. ⁷ Yet of those that chew the cud or have the hoof cloven you shall not eat these: (these are the ones that are safe) the camel, the hare, (safe from being hunted, I suppose, or eaten) and the rock badger, because they chew the cud but do not part the hoof, are unclean for you. ⁸ And the pig, because it parts the hoof but does not chew the cud, is unclean for you. Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcass you shall not touch.*"

Now, it's really fascinating about this. And he's going to talk a little bit more about birds, and fish, and that sort of thing here in just a moment. But what's

interesting about these food laws is, that the body of Christ has attempted over the years to adopt these things for various reasons. Some will say, well, these were... If they're not legalistic in the sense of being needed to connect with God, at least they're smart health requirements. And, in fact, there may be some element of that, that was connected to it. And there's a lot of people who believe so. And if that's you, then, God bless you.

Personally, I think God was largely setting apart the nation of Israel from the other nations and the things that they ate. And He was establishing in their hearts and their minds the difference. You're different. Be different. The Bible talks about us as a peculiar people. And that word is not meant to describe strange or weird. It's just simply meant to describe difference. You're to be set apart. We're to live differently. And I think that's what was largely behind the food laws.

The question naturally comes up: Is this something that we are still supposed to do? Are we still to keep the food laws? Are we still to follow these things? Well, we know positively, in the Word of God, that there are no longer any unclean animals for the people of God. And you say, well, how do we know that? We know it from, particularly, the Gospel of Mark. Let me put a passage up on the screen for you from Mark chapter 7. Look at this. It says, and this is, by the way, this is Jesus speaking.

Mark 7:18-19 (ESV)

And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.)

And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside (meaning He's talking about eating) cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled? (And then look what it says in parentheses. And this is Mark's commentary.) ("Thus he declared all foods clean.")

There's no question here from a New Testament perspective, the dietary laws have been abolished, from the standpoint of any religious or ritual significance. Notice what I said: a religious or ritualistic sort of significance. Now, if somebody wants to follow specific dietary laws related to health or whatever, that's your business. Right? That's between you and the Lord. You want to keep to certain dietary restrictions, maybe for you that's exactly what the Lord would have you to do.

But here's the point: eating certain foods, or refraining from eating certain foods, do not bring us any closer to God. Or take us any farther away from the Lord. That's the point. All foods have been declared clean.

And that was an important statement that Mark tacked onto that passage. Because this was on the doorstep of the New Covenant being inaugurated, whereby the Spirit comes to indwell. And now the difference, or the fact that we are being led to be set apart from others, is being now moved by the Holy Spirit upon our hearts. It's no longer the result of external regulations, or laws, or guidelines, or that sort of thing. Right? We don't have those in the kingdom of God, from the standpoint of what they were meant to accomplish for the nation of Israel.

And by the way, this idea of all animals being clean was reaffirmed later on then in the Book of Acts. You'll remember when Peter had a vision from the Lord, of a huge sheet being let down from heaven. And it said, it included all kinds of animals that were unclean in it. And the Lord spoke to him and said, get up, Peter. Kill and eat. And you'll remember Peter objected. He said, no Lord, never. I've never eaten anything that was unclean.

And the Lord, repeated this thing for him. (Acts 10:10-15) And we see here, this was a further declaration that all foods have been declared clean. Certainly the Lord would not command someone to do something that was any, further restriction.

Verse 9. Now he's going to go on to speak of things that live in the water. *“Of all that are in the waters you may eat these: whatever has fins and scales you may eat. 10 And whatever does not have fins and scales you shall not eat; it is unclean for you.*

11 You may eat all clean birds. 12 But these are the ones that you shall not eat: the eagle, the bearded vulture, the black vulture, (Those don't sound good anyway.) 13 the kite, the falcon of any kind; 14 every raven of (every) kind; 15 the ostrich, (You couldn't catch it anyway.) the nighthawk, the seagull, the hawk of any kind; 16 the little owl... the short-eared owl, the barn owl (I'm not sure why he just didn't say owl of any kind.) 17 and the tawny owl, the carrion vulture and the cormorant, 18 the stork, the heron of any kind; the hoopoe and the bat. 19 And all winged insects are unclean for you; they shall not be eaten. (He says, yet) 20 All clean winged things you may eat.”

There's your list. Oh, and by the way, verse 21. *“You shall not eat anything that has died naturally. You may give it to the sojourner (or the traveler, that is) who*

is within your towns, that he may eat (of) it, ...” Because he's not under the same restrictions. The sojourner is a foreigner who's passing through. He's not under the Mosaic Law. He's not called to live this set apart life of being different from others. So he says, he can eat it if he wants to. In fact, “you can even sell it to him. *“For you are a people holy to the LORD your God.”*”

And then he ends with this statement, *“You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.”* And I've explained before, this last prohibition actually appears like 3 times throughout the Old Testament. And it's never explained specifically. Although it sounds really gross anyway. But it always appears in the midst of prohibitions against, or concerning pagan religious practices and festivals. Always. Therefore, Bible teachers, and scholars, and smart people have assumed from this, that this reference to boiling a young goat in its mother's milk had a pagan connection. Some sort of a thing involved in pagan ritual, for what we do not know. That has been lost in the annals of time. There we go.

Now, as we move on, the LORD is going to cover tithing. It says in verse 22, *“You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year.* (And what that means is, the Jews were required to give the Lord 10% of everything that their crops yielded in the course of a given year. And the reason we know it was 10%, is because the word tithe means 10%.

He goes on in verse 23 to say, *“And before the LORD your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock,* (Which, by the way, was also offered to the Lord) *that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.”*

And this is where we get our idea of tithing. Again, the word tithe means 10%. This is where the people were told to take 10% of their grain, also the firstborn of their flocks and herds, and they were to go to the place that the Lord determined. And that of course, later on, was Jerusalem. And there they were to literally, dine with the Lord.

And it wouldn't be possible for a farmer to bring in a tenth of his grain and eat it all. And it says in there, eat it before the Lord. It doesn't mean all of it. They were to eat... They were to have dinner, literally, to dine with the Lord. These were like fellowship offerings and so forth. Where they would literally, fellowship, with God. Break bread with God, if you will. But they were to take what was left over, and there would be a lot, and they were to then give it to the priests. That was their support. Remember, the priests didn't receive any land.

And they were to be supported by the people through the tithe offerings of their crops, and the firstborn of their herds, and their flocks.

It says in verse 24... Now, it needed to make a little concession here for those who lived a long way, away. He says, *“²⁴ And if the way is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, when the LORD your God blesses you, because the place is too far from you, which the LORD your God chooses, to set his name there, ²⁵ then you shall turn it into money (In other words, sell your crop or that tithe portion. Sell it) and bind up the money in your hand and go to the place that the LORD your God chooses ²⁶ and (then) spend (that) money for whatever you desire - oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves. And you shall eat there before the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household.”*

This is really a neat picture when you think about this. When you think about someone actually doing this. He puts this concession there saying that, I'm going to bless you in the land. That's my intent. There are, believe me, there's going to be some of you who are going to live so far, bringing a tenth of your grain and your flock is just too big. You won't be able to do it. What are you going to do? You can't travel that far with all that stuff. Just sell it where you live, take the money and come... Again to Jerusalem, is what that place would be later on. And then buy there what you need and fellowship with the Lord. Literally, eat it there before the Lord.

And, notice what it says at the end of verse 26. It says, *“eat there before the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household.”* Do you understand that this was meant to be a time of rejoicing. Just as harvest was considered a very joyful time because the crop was coming in. The blessing of the Lord was being taken. This was also to be a time of rejoicing, giving, spending time with God. Lord, look what you've blessed me with. I want to give some back to you, and I'm going to share it with you. This was this idea of sharing.

And please understand in the Middle East, sharing a meal was an expression of great intimacy. Great importance connected with sitting down and sharing a meal with anyone. This was huge. This spoke very much to the people of Israel about how they were to connect with God.

I think about how we give today. And I wonder if we've lost something of the rejoicing. I mean, I just have to ask myself the question. We've gotten pretty convenient in our world today, in terms of giving of our finances. In fact, it can happen without us even thinking about it. We can automate it. Make it happen at the push of a button. And the, in fact, we've gotten to a place where we can

just push the button once. And it'll keep going month, after month, or whatever the thing and it just... And we don't really even notice until we go back to take a look at all of our expense, oh, yeah, that's right. We've been giving here. I forgot all about that.

Have we lost the ability to rejoice in what God has given us, by taking a portion of it saying, Lord, I give this back to you. I'll be honest with you and say, I think I've lost some of that rejoicing. I see here what God intended. It wasn't this heavy handed sort of a, you need to give. Give until it hurts sort of a thing. It was an expression of thanksgiving. Lord, look at everything you've given me. This is crazy. And I'm giving back just as an expression of saying, thank you, Lord. And, and then rejoicing together. Spending time in intimacy and connectedness with the Lord, and rejoicing.

I think we need to get back to rejoicing in what the Lord has given. And in how we give. And Paul in the New Testament tells us, "God loves a cheerful giver." Supposed to be a heart of cheer. It's not to be given... We're never to give, begrudgingly, I got to give.

You've heard me say how many times over the years, I hate that term - paying your tithes. You pay your power bill. You pay your water bill. You don't pay God. You give joyously to the Lord. Right? You give joyfully, you give cheerfully. You probably don't give cheerfully to Idaho Power, I'm guessing, I'm just guessing. You probably don't give cheerfully, your property taxes or something like that. Probably, and I was like, you write it out. There you go, (Pastor Paul grumbling) sort of a thing. You're bleeding me dry here. But we just don't want to have that attitude toward the Lord. That's never to be the attitude toward God.

Oh, and by the way, the big question that always comes up whenever we talk about tithing is: Is tithing a New Testament principle? And the answer is no, it's not. It's an Old Testament principle. People were commanded, under God's law to give 10%. That was the Old Testament. People say, well, what should we give today? Well, in the New Testament we're told to give according to what you're being led of the Lord to give. It says in the Scriptures, that each man should give as he is led - what is in his heart to give. That means you're to be led by the Holy Spirit.

Do you understand guys? We're not under the law We're not under rules and regulations. And yet we still want rules. We want... Pastor, tell me how much I'm supposed to give. No! That's not my job, to tell you that you're to be led by the Lord. Well, what if the Lord doesn't tell you? Keep asking.

We want to go through the drive up window of God's answers and so forth. And if we don't get the answer when we think we should, it's like, well, God didn't answer me. Then keep asking. Keep knocking until you get an answer. Now, if it's like, well, what should I do in the meantime? Well, hey, 10% isn't a bad place. The tithe; it's not a bad place to start. But that there's nothing legalistic to say that you have to start there. Start wherever you feel most comfortable.

The important part is do it as an act of cheerful gratitude to the Lord for His goodness in your life. Or here's my advice, don't do it at all. If you can't give with the right attitude, just don't give. Because it's really not doing you any good anyway. Because it's like, God wants you to give cheerfully. Right? If you can't do it cheerfully, then you need to come to the Lord, and say, Lord, I guess I need you to change my heart. Because I am not giving cheerfully.” Rejoice in the Lord, you and your household.

Verse 27, *“And you shall not neglect the Levite who is within your towns, for he has no portion or inheritance with you.”* And again, the tithe was meant to support them.

Verse 28, *“At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns. (In other words, they've been laying it aside) ²⁹ And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.”*

Every three years this tithe that had been laid up, is brought out and used to support the Levites, to support and care for the homeless, and also the orphans and the widows. And that is where we get into chapter 15. God outlines further, His program for dealing with poverty and the poor.

It begins this way, *“At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release.”*

Now stop there please, and let me explain what that means. The people would have understood. We don't normally get it. But you understand that when people became indebted - became poor for whatever reason. And they became indebted to someone - their neighbor. Maybe they went for a loan or whatever the thing might be. They would then have to work off that debt by working for the person to whom they owed the money.

However, God established a rule in Israel that regardless of the debt, they could only work to pay off that debt for six years. And then on the seventh year, they

must be set free from their indebtedness. In other words, the debt is canceled on the seventh year. And by the way, we call it the sabbatical year. Alright, it is the time of cancelling debts. Now you can imagine there's a lot of interesting implications about this. Well, the Lord will address some of those.

Look at verse 2, *“And this is the manner of the release: every creditor shall release (his debt) what he has lent to his neighbor. He shall not exact it (or get it back from) his neighbor, his brother, because the LORD’s release hasn’t been proclaimed. 3 Of a foreigner you may exact it, but whatever of yours is with your brother your hand shall release.”*

What is God doing? Boy, He's teaching grace, isn't He? He's teaching that favor that is completely undeserved, “You owe me money, but I'm releasing you. Because it's the Lord’s year of release.” Wow.

Look what verse four says, *“4 But there will be no poor among you; for the LORD will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess- 5 if only you will strictly obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all this commandment that I command you today.”*

God told them there would be no poor among them. But it was contingent upon their obedience. By the way, they always had poor among them.

“For the LORD your God (verse 6) will bless you, as he promised you, and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow, and you shall rule over many nations, but they shall not rule over you.

7 If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, (in any kind of, or excuse me,) in any of (the) towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, 8 but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. 9 Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, (Ah, but) “The seventh year, the year of release is near, and your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and (then) he cry to the LORD against you, and you be guilty of sin.”

Imagine your brother comes to you, and you see he has a need. And he wants you to loan him some money. And you know there's no way he can pay you back that money before the year of release comes. Maybe there's only one year left before the year of release. And you're sitting there looking at your brother going, I'm going to give him this money, but I'm not getting it back. He's going

to work for me for one year, and then the year of release is going to come, and I am going to lose the rest of that money.

Now, He confronts that attitude here and says, take care And notice, He calls it an unworthy thought. Isn't that interesting? lest an unworthy thought enter into your heart thinking, no way am I going to give him money when I'm just going to have to let the whole thing go in a year.”

Notice that the very end of verse 9, God calls it what it is through Moses. It's a sin. It's a sin because what is that? It's greed. Right? Is God not able to bless you back for what you gave to your brother. And how you responded in obedience to His Word? The fact of the matter is God is able to bless you back for that obedience and He will.

Verse 10, *“You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. 11 For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land.’”*

Now we come to another element of this whole idea of people working for you when they become indebted. He says, ¹² *“If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you.”* And we just read why.

“13 And when you let him go free from you, you shall not let him go empty-handed. 14 You shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, (and) out of your threshing floor, and out of your winepress. As the LORD your God has blessed you, you shall give to him. 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 today.”

What's He saying? Be generous. When you're... When that worker leaves, on the year of release, don't grumble under your breath, well, that's three years, I didn't get payment out of them. But bless them when they walk out the door. Give them a blessing. Pour it into their lap.

What happens if a servant wants to stay? Verse 16, *“But if he says to you, ‘I will not go out from you, because he loves you and your household, since he is well-off with you, 17 then you shall take an awl, and put it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your slave forever. And to your female slave you shall do the same.”* This was called a bond slave. And this was someone who chose,

willingly, to work for their master for life. And they basically waived the right of the sabbatical year, and said, I don't ever want to be released because I have a good master. He treats me well. I love him. Takes good care of me. I want to stay. They could become a bond slave. And again, they would have their ear pierced. And that would be a sign that they'd been a bond slave.

What's interesting about this is that Paul, the Apostle, referred to himself as a bond slave of Jesus Christ. He says, He is my master. I am His willing servant for life. I'm His. That same picture is used in the New Testament.

Verse 18, *"It shall not seem hard (for) you when you let him go free from you, for (look at this) at half the cost of a hired worker he has served you six years. So the LORD your God will bless you in all that you do."*

This gives us an insight into how they did slavery in Israel, where someone was enslaved because of a debt. They would basically pay them a half wage and they would keep the other half wage to pay off the debt that was owed. They were basically getting a half-price worker for the period of time that this person was serving them. And the Lord is saying through Moses, hey, don't grumble when you have to let this person go. Instead, give thanks and just say, hey, however long it was, at least during that time, I had a worker that worked for me for half-price. And that's a good thing. Right? It's all how you decide to look at it, and how you decide to respond.

I was reading just last night, I was reading a bunch of quotes from Elizabeth Elliott. And one of the things she said about complaining was, she said, "Don't allow yourself to complain about anything. Don't complain. Don't allow those words to come out of your mouth. Even about the weather or... I started off the service that way. But just don't complain. Don't be a complainer. And I... Wow!

I looked at that I was like, what if we did that? What if we just said, no complaining. None. Not going to complain,"" Doesn't the Bible actually say in the New Testament, "Do everything without arguing or complaining."? (Philippians 2:14) I think it does. Wow! I think it's interesting how the Lord says this. Hey, don't complain. Just look at it as a glass half full..., sort of a situation.

Verse 19, *"All the firstborn males that are born of your herd and flock you shall dedicate 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 shall eat it, you and your household, before the LORD your God year by year at the place that the LORD will choose. (restating that.) 21 But if it has any blemish, if it is lame or blind or has any serious blemish whatever, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God.” We'll see this more in chapter 17.

“22 You shall eat it within your towns. The unclean and the clean alike may eat it, as though it were a gazelle or a deer.” In other words, you don't have to be ceremonially clean to eat your own animals.

“23 Only you shall not eat its blood, (And this is a repeated prohibition) ...pour it out on the ground like water.” Because the blood is set apart for sacrifice.

Chapter 16. *“Observe the month of Abib and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night.”*

The nation of Israel was to observe every single year, the event of the Lord, supernaturally bringing them out of Egypt by allowing the destroying angel to pass through the country. But the Israelites, as you know, were told to shelter within their homes. Blood from the sacrificial lamb painted upon their doorposts. Eating that lamb quickly, ready for travel. And that was Passover. They were then to remember this every single year. To remember the Lord's deliverance.

And he says, *“ 2 And you shall offer the Passover sacrifice to the LORD your God, from the flock or the herd, at the place that the LORD will choose, to make his name dwell there. 3 You shall eat no leavened bread with it. (Because leaven was a picture of sin.) Seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread, the bread of affliction—for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste—that all the days of your life you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt.”* And remember, coming out of the land of Egypt is a picture of being released from sin - the slavery of sin.

Do you ever think about the day that you got saved? Do you ever remember when God brought you out of slavery? You think about that time? They were told to think about it, all the time.

Verse 4 says, *“No leaven shall be seen with you (or yeast that is) in all your territory for seven days, nor shall any of the flesh that you sacrifice on the evening of the first day remain all night until morning. (And they were told elsewhere, whatever had not been eaten was to be burned up) 5 You may not offer the Passover sacrifice within any of your towns that the LORD your God is*

giving you, ⁶ but at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell in it, there you shall offer the Passover sacrifice, in the evening at sunset, at the time you came out of Egypt.” And by the way, that's why later on the people of Israel would gather in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.

“⁷ And you shall cook it and eat it at the place that the LORD your God will choose. And in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents. ⁸ For six days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a solemn assembly to the LORD your God. You shall do no work on it.” And that's the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It goes on right on the heels of Passover.

Then, ⁹ “You shall count seven weeks. Begin to count the seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain. ¹⁰ Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks (also called the Feast of Harvest) to the LORD your God with the tribute of a free will offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you.

And by the way, the Greek name for this is called Pentecost. And it was during that time of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit fell upon the Church in power. And there was a gathering of people. Literally, a harvest of souls which then went on from there.

“¹¹ And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you, at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there.

¹² You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt; and you shall be careful to observe these statutes.” I love that reminder.

“You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt.” In other words, in a New Testament way, “You shall remember that you were a slave to sin.” You shall never forget. That you were in slavery to your own flesh, to the bidding of the evil one, at whatever prompting the world laid before you. Don't ever forget that.

And then the next festival, verse 13, “You shall keep the Feast of Booths seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your winepress.” This is the next harvest that they would experience. Again, called the Feast of Booths. Also the Feast of Ingathering or the Feast of Tabernacles.

“¹⁴ You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns. ¹⁵ For seven days you shall keep the feast to the LORD your God at the place that the LORD will choose, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.”

And then notice, here's the summary. ¹⁶ *“Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, (That's Passover) at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths. They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. ¹⁷ Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you.”* People did not give the same amount. They gave as they were able.

Finally, this chapter ends with some laws related to justice. ¹⁸ *“You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. ¹⁹ You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. ²⁰ Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”* This last prohibition connected to pagan religious practices.

He says, ²¹ *“You shall not plant any tree as an Asherah beside the altar of the LORD your God that you shall make.”* In other words, no mixing religious interests with the worship of Yahweh. ²² *“And you shall not set up a pillar, which the LORD your God hates.”* And again those were elements of pagan worship.

Very quickly, Deuteronomy 17. He says, here is where we get to this thing about offering a sacrifice with a blemish. *“You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep in which is a blemish, any defect whatever, for that is an abomination to the LORD your God.”*

And the abomination, of course, was because the offering - the animal - was a foreshadowing of Christ, who came sinlessly, without spot or blemish, without any kind of wrong. And therefore, offering a blemished animal to the Lord was an abomination because it ruined the whole picture.

But it also revealed something very interesting about the heart of the giver. And what it reveals is, it's really hard to give God our best. I mean, when you get

something that's really good, you're like, wow, I want to keep that. Because it's really good! And usually giving God what's our best is also expensive. It's always going to be a temptation to give the Lord something less than our best. And that's going to reveal something about our own heart.

There's a fascinating passage in the Book of Malachi. Let me show you this on the screen from Malachi chapter 1. Look what God says. He says, listen,

Malachi 1:8 (ESV)

When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts."

When you offer blind animals in sacrifice," He says, *"is that not evil?"* He says, *"And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil?"* He says, hey, just try presenting *"that to your governor."* See what he thinks. That's what he says there. *"will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts."*

That's a good question, isn't it? Try offering that to your governor, hey, gov, here's an animal from my flock. All kinds of problems and stuff like that. Yeah. I don't mind the running sores and the broken leg and the one eye in the middle of the foreheads. Okay. It's a good..." What's your governor going to think? And we think about that as it relates to how we give to the Lord, our time, our energy, our abilities, our talents. Do we give the Lord the best of what we've received from Him?

Verse 2, *"If there is found among you, within any of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, a man or a woman who does what is evil (Alright, now we're going to talk about what happens when idolatry and apostasy take place. Evil) in the sight of the LORD your God, in transgressing his covenant, ³ and has gone (to serve) other gods... worship them... sun or the moon... host of the heavens, which I have forbidden, ⁴ and it is told you and you hear of it, then you shall inquire diligently, (Notice that there's supposed to be an investigation that takes place; inquire diligently.) and if it is true and certain (That means it has to be proven) that such an abomination has been done in Israel, ⁵ then you shall bring out to your gates the man or the woman who has done this evil thing, and you shall stone (the) man or woman to death with stones. ⁶ On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; (the) person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. (And furthermore,) ⁷ The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and (then) afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst."*

Interesting sort of things that the Lord put into place to make sure that justice was served. No one was ever to be put to death if there was just evidence from one person. Had to be two or three. And they had to be entirely trustworthy. And then an investigation had to be made by the leaders and it had to be proven. And then the witnesses had to be so certain, that they had to initiate the beginning of the execution. Those people... That makes you think twice about coming up to testify if you're not really sure. You got to throw the first rock, you witnesses.

Now, when capital punishment was called for, you'll notice that it was all about purging this thing from the land. And because sin has a way of spreading quickly, the Lord said, it must be purged.

Verse 8, *"If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another, any case within your towns that is too difficult for you, then you shall arise and go to the place that the LORD your God will choose. 9 And you shall come to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the decision."*

God was establishing a kind of Supreme Court, if you will. Later, this would be the king. But for now, it was the high priest/judge.

"10 Then you shall do according to what they declare to you from (the) place that the LORD will choose. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they direct you. 11 According to the instructions that they give you, and according to the decision which they pronounce to you, you shall do. You shall not turn aside from the verdict that they declare to you, either to the right hand or to the left. (And) 12 The man who acts presumptuously by not obeying the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, or the judge, that man shall die. (Even disobedience was a capital offense.) So you shall purge the evil from Israel. 13 And all the people shall hear and fear and not act presumptuously again."

14 When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, 'I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,' 15 you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as a king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. 16 Only, (look at this) he must not acquire many horses for himself (Solomon did that) or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to (get the) horses, (Solomon did that) since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never return that

way again.’ 17 And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, (Solomon did that.) lest he turn his heart away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.” Solomon did that too. All those things.

“18 And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of (the) law, approved by the Levitical priests. 19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of (the) law and these statutes, and doing them, 20 that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in (the) kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.”

Interesting, isn't it? This last command was such, God wanted the leaders of His people to be constantly in the Word. To the point where He told them to take the law and write it - to rewrite it. It's like a teacher would say, I want you to take this page and I want you to rewrite this. Well, God is telling the leaders of Israel, I want them to rewrite the law. And I want him to have it with him all the time, bathing his heart in the Word. Stop there.