

BIBLE BRIEFING

“Worship & Word”

DEUTERONOMY 12 - 13

Introduction

We build our services upon a simple model: **Worship** of God and the **Word** of God. Everything is subordinate to these two objectives.

The next two chapters of Deuteronomy instructed Israel about their worship (Chapter Twelve) and God’s Word (Chapter Thirteen). As always, there are things unique to Israel; but also principles timeless and true for us.

Worship – Chapter Twelve

“Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose – and all of this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable and there fore the chief remedy for that self-centeredness which is our original sin and the source of all actual sin”
(William Temple).

The Jews had been Egyptian slaves for some four centuries. Then they had wandered in the wilderness for some forty years. They had the Tabernacle, and a system of worship with its priesthood and sacrifices. Now they were poised to enter the Promised Land. They should establish their worship. To do so, any false worship must end and be forsaken, so that true worship can begin and occur.

Deuteronomy 12:1 “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.

Moses begins a new section, a new line of thought. Specific *statutes and judgments* will begin to dominate his sermons. They would apply as long as they were *in the land*.

It is instructive and insightful that the statutes and judgments begin with worship.

The place Moses began is a little odd (to us); he began with false worship.

Deuteronomy 12:2 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.

Deuteronomy 12:3 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.

Deuteronomy 12:4 You shall not worship the Lord your God *with such things*.

False worship must be completely destroyed before true could occur. There could be no compromise, no borrowing, no bargaining. **All altars did not lead to God!**

Specific steps were given in verse two and, in each case, there was a complete demolition. You could not worship the right God in the wrong way!

When you got saved, you turned to God and from idols. Often you had things in your life that you actually, physically, destroyed. With us, it was dope; then booze; then music, in the form of 8-tracks and albums.

Turning his attention to true worship: Israel was instructed that true worship could only occur at a certain place:

Deuteronomy 12:5 "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.

Deuteronomy 12:6 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.

The moveable Tabernacle was the place of worship; it would become localized. Eventually, it would be at Jerusalem, and it would become the Temple under the reign of David's son, Solomon.

Burnt offerings were animals offered entirely in flame; **sacrifices** refer to fellowship offerings, where the meat was shared.

Verse six gives a summary of the kinds of things that were part of worship; but verse seven puts it into perspective, comparing worship to a meal:

Deuteronomy 12:7 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.

With the exception of the Day of Atonement, Israel's festivals generally included food. Many of the sacrifices involved killing an animal, a portion of which was offered in fire to God. Another portion was given to the officiating priest, and the rest was given to the worshipper to be enjoyed by him and his family as a meal before the Lord.

In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, the central act of redemption is memorialized by a meal:

1. In the Old Testament, it is the Passover.
2. In the New Testament, it is the Lord's Supper.

Salvation is illustrated as the Lord's desire to come in to you and dine with you. Thus, worship is a close, intimate, personal sharing of yourself with the Lord, and He with you.

Deuteronomy 12:8 "You shall not at all do as we are doing here today - every man doing whatever *is* right in his own eyes -

Deuteronomy 12:9 for as yet you have not come to the rest and the inheritance which the Lord your God is giving you.

This looks forward to the prescribed times of worship on their annual calendar.

It hints at the fact that worship is orderly. God is an orderly God; just look at the universe, both large and small.

Deuteronomy 12:10 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,
Deuteronomy 12:11 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.

Little did they know that it would be centuries, until the time of David, before they would be dwelling in safety.

Deuteronomy 12:12 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.

Joy is central to worship. We should be rejoicing; and we should enjoy worship. This isn't speaking to style, but to substance.

Let me discuss styles. Worship styles are varied; if you ask ten people what they prefer, *you get eleven opinions!* For many years, there has been a discussion between sincere believers regarding hymns and worship choruses.

It is expanding as we are now a full generation into the Jesus Movement, between those who sing the more traditional worship choruses and the younger, edgier sound the Lord is giving the next generation.

We should have joy, rejoice, and have joy regardless the style. Some object, saying that the newer styles lack substance. Well, even old hymns can lack substance! Many sing of Canaan as if it were heaven. Many modern choruses are Scripture.

What you should look for is not substance so much as it is the Savior.

Deuteronomy 12:13 Take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see;
Deuteronomy 12:14 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.

Local altars had been used by the patriarchs, but now a localized

place would be established. It was a time in God's dealing with His people when it was necessary that they come to Him corporately.

Corporate worship is still so important! Though our bodies are God's temple, so is our corporate body. We must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

When you discuss worship, sooner or later someone gets really spiritual, and says, "Worship is a lifestyle." True; but not everything is treated as if it were an act of worship. For Israel, there would be clear distinctions between things that were secular, and things that were sacred. For example: Meat sacrificed was sacred, and they must follow certain rules about eating it. But meat not sacred had no such restrictions placed upon it, except one:

Deuteronomy 12:15 "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.

Deuteronomy 12:16 Only you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it on the earth like water.

This marks the first mention of the Atkins diet. The **clean and the unclean** here refers to the ceremonial condition of a person. The only restriction was that they not eat the **blood**.

Agricultural products other than meat followed these rules to distinguish sacred from secular:

Deuteronomy 12:17 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.

Deuteronomy 12:18 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.

Deuteronomy 12:19 Take heed to yourself that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land.

Once consecrated to God, these secular things became sacred. It

wasn't a magical change in their molecules; it was a change in how they were seen and handled because of having been presented to God.

You've probably heard a lot about how God wants you to be a vegetarian... Well, listen up:

Deuteronomy 12:20 "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.

Deuteronomy 12:21 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.

Deuteronomy 12:22 Just as the gazelle and the deer are eaten, so you may eat them; the unclean and the clean alike may eat them.

Deuteronomy 12:23 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.

Deuteronomy 12:24 You shall not eat it; you shall pour it on the earth like water.

Deuteronomy 12:25 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.

Even in the Old Testament, but especially now in the New, diet is just *not* a consideration.

Deuteronomy 12:26 Only the holy things which you have, and your vowed offerings, you shall take and go to the place which the Lord chooses.

Deuteronomy 12:27 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.

Deuteronomy 12:28 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.

Eat all the meat you want; but once it's offered to God, it's sacred.

You can offer secular things to the Lord. Your time, or talents, or treasures, when offered as a living sacrifice, take on the character of a sacred offering to God.

Moses returned to talking about the problems they would encounter in the Land. Different cultures spur our curiosity. We get curious

about their worship, too. Today we might call it Comparative Religions; but God called it cultic!

Deuteronomy 12:29 “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,

Deuteronomy 12:30 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.’

Deuteronomy 12:31 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.

Deuteronomy 12:32 “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.

One fact was that these pagan religions did detestable things. But even if they did delightful things, you should reject them.

Why? Because Christianity is the true, **cross**-cultural religion; it is the first and foundational belief system; everything else is false – regardless what culture it is prevalent in.

Religious truth is not wrong for being narrow, any more than science or mathematics is wrong for the same reason.

This is a great lead-in to the next chapter.

The Word – Chapter Thirteen

God’s Word is truth. At a time when there was little of the written Word of God, when God was speaking more through prophets, how could you discern truth from error? *Moses is gonna tell you!* The first five verses provide the test for the one claiming to speak forth God’s Word.

Deuteronomy 13:1 “If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder,

Deuteronomy 13:2 and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’ - which you have not known - ‘and let us serve them,’

We heard a lot about 'core values' in the election. What does the person – in this case, the prophet – stand for at his or her core? The ability to perform supernatural signs and wonders is itself not the most critical test. At the core, there must be loyalty to God as He has already been revealed in His previous and recorded Word.

Deuteronomy 13:3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Deuteronomy 13:4 You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.

You may think you have the deepest possible commitment to God. If so, it can survive testing! Never even listen to that which is false. Certainly, do not follow after it.

Deuteronomy 13:5 But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn *you* away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.

This is the passage where we joke around that, if you say or prophesy something untrue, you should be stoned. The real problem was in turning folks away from God. Every teacher, or preacher, will say wrong things at times; no one is 100% accurate.

Those who seek to lead you away from God were worthy of the death penalty. Today, you can barely disagree with those teaching falsely!

Moses brought this home – literally – by describing a family member who was guilty of falsehood.

Deuteronomy 13:6 "If your brother, the son of your mother, your son or your daughter, the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, secretly entices you, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers,

Deuteronomy 13:7 of the gods of the people which *are* all around you, near to you or far off from you, from *one* end of the earth to the *other* end of the earth,

Deuteronomy 13:8 you shall not consent to him or listen to him, nor shall you eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him;

Deuteronomy 13:9 but you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people.

Deuteronomy 13:10 And you shall stone him with stones until he dies, because he sought to entice you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

Let me make application of this for us. No matter your family ties, your relationship with God is primary, and it carries responsibilities. I've too often encountered folks who give their family members, and even close friends, a 'pass' when they are walking in disobedience to God. One excuse they give is that they don't want to lose the relationship. Error is wrong, no matter who is promoting it.

What if a whole bunch of people are all false and in error?

Deuteronomy 13:12 "If you hear someone in one of your cities, which the Lord your God gives you to dwell in, saying,

Deuteronomy 13:13 'Corrupt men have gone out from among you and enticed the inhabitants of their city, saying, "Let us go and serve other gods"' - which you have not known -

Deuteronomy 13:14 then you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently. And *if it is* indeed true *and* certain *that* such an abomination was committed among you, Deuteronomy 13:15 you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it, all that is in it and its livestock - with the edge of the sword.

Deuteronomy 13:16 And you shall gather all its plunder into the middle of the street, and completely burn with fire the city and all its plunder, for the Lord your God. It shall be a heap forever; it shall not be built again.

Deuteronomy 13:17 So none of the accursed things shall remain in your hand, that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of His anger and show you mercy, have compassion on you and multiply you, just as He swore to your fathers,

Deuteronomy 13:18 because you have listened to the voice of the Lord your God, to keep all His commandments which I command you today, to do *what is* right in the eyes of the Lord your God.

This is describing a whole community that has fallen to the influence of false teaching. They should first be sure it was true... Then kill everyone and destroy everything.

Rather than get off track talking about whether this was harsh or not... Think of it this way. God took false teaching extremely seriously. **He still does!** There is a lot of correction and confrontation of false teaching in the New Testament.

Christians are constantly asked to be tolerant. Tolerance means recognizing and respecting the beliefs and practices of others. But it does not mean accepting their beliefs and practices as valid, or true. Tolerance is not as important as truth.

Conclusion

We've looked at worship & the Word – not exactly the way we might have approached it, but the way God presented it.

Calvary Chapel...