

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

DEUTERONOMY 12:1-14:29

Up until now, in our study of *Deuteronomy*, we have seen Moses exhort the people to obedience. Moses has reviewed the events of the past 40 years and he has told the people repeatedly that God expects them to live according to His commandments and states and laws and ordinances.

And we saw last week that Moses told the children of Israel that obedience would bring God's blessing upon them and disobedience would bring God's cursings upon them.

Today we will begin to see specific statutes and judgments and laws and ordinances that they are to obey.

See, God doesn't just say to His children, "Now, obey Me. Do My will" and then hide His will away so no one will find it. No! God says, "Obey Me. Do My will and let Me tell you what My will is and exactly how it is to be followed!"

What we've seen in the past weeks is a very strong foundation being laid for the people of Israel.

First, in *Deuteronomy 1-5*, Moses reviewed the past and helped this new generation see all that God had done for them.

Secondly, in *chapters 6-11*, Moses told the people how they should respond to the goodness of God and why they should obey God.

And in doing these two things Moses was establishing before them what kind of God they belonged to...the God who was able to meet all their needs...and Moses was helping his people develop hearts of love for the Lord.

Moses knew if they loved God, they would obey God.

More than anything, Moses wanted the Israelites to mature in their faith and love so that they could enter the land... conquer the enemy... and enjoy their inheritance to the glory of God!

In *Deuteronomy 12-26* Moses builds on this strong foundation and gives them in detail the responsibilities they must fulfill if they are to live like God's chosen people and be faithful residents of the land of Israel and enjoy all the blessing God had for them.

So, let's look at the very first thing Moses told these folks they were to do when they entered the land:

Deuteronomy 12:1-3...

They were to purge the land...

The religions of the Canaanite peoples were both false and filthy. These folks worshiped a multitude of gods and goddesses...chiefly Baal and Asherah.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

The wooden "Asherah poles" that Moses commanded them to destroy in **verse 3** were actually carved sex symbols. Temple prostitutes were used in their worship. And their places of worship were on the mountains and hills so they could feel closer to their gods!

Warren Wiersbe said, "Their immoral religious practices were actually a form of magic with which they helped to please their gods and influence the powers of nature to give them bountiful crops."

And Moses was pointing out that these places must be destroyed! WHY? I mean, if there is no such thing as a god named Baal and there is no such thing as a goddess named Asherah...why not just leave those high places and altars and wooden symbols standing?

Well, one reason is that this land belonged to God and He had every right to purge it. His first commandment is "***Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.***" God will never ever share Himself with another god even if that god is a product of man's imagination and creativity and workmanship.

See, God knows the heart of man much better than man knows his heart. It doesn't make any difference if these gods didn't really exist. They existed in the minds of the Canaanites and God knew His children could easily be led astray.

And He demands us to do the very same thing today. God wants us to purge ourselves of any and every other god that we've allowed into our lives.

And you know...I believe every once in awhile it's a very good idea for all of us to examine our lives and see if we've erected any altars that shouldn't be there...

Have we allowed any idols to be set up?

God says, "I am a jealous God!" And He will not tolerate His children going after any other god.

Not only were they to purge the land, they were to worship the Lord. And this is what I want us to see today...that God demanded their worship and **how** He demanded their worship...

By the way, what is your definition of worship?

AMERICAN COLLEGE DICTIONARY: "Reverent honor paid to God or to any object regarded as sacred."

STRONG'S: "bow down, fall down flat, prostrate..."

Verse 4...

1) They were to worship God distinctively...

God had called these folks out to be His peculiar people...not peculiar in the sense of odd or weird...but peculiar in the sense of distinct and different from everybody else.

Verse 4 is a simple statement that carries a very powerful message...

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

NAS: *“You shall not act like this toward the Lord your God.”*

KJV: *“Ye shall do so unto the Lord your God.”*

But the **NIV** says it best...

“You must not worship the Lord your God in their way.”

God is simply yet powerfully saying that we must worship the Lord the way He commands and not imitate the religious practices of others.

The Jewish faith and the Christian faith came by revelation of God not by man’s inventions or Satan’s instructions.

Have you ever thought about that? Old Testament Judaism and New Testament Christianity are the only two faiths ordained and established by Almighty God! All other religions or faiths are the products of man’s imagination.

And Moses says here... **“God will not be worshiped the way pagans worship their gods. God will be worshiped one way...His way!**

Today our world has abandoned absolutes and has embraced compromise.

Don’t tell the world about sin...

Don’t speak to the world about righteousness and holiness...

Just tell the world **“I’m ok, you’re ok. If it feels good, do it. Just be politically correct and everything will be alright!”**

And that’s sad...but I’ll tell you something much sadder...and that is many churches are saying the very same thing...

Today is “sanctity of life” Sunday in our denomination, but many churches don’t sanctify life. They’re going right along with the world. If it’s inconvenient, kill it. If it’s imperfect, get rid of it.

But, even in the area of worship...many churches are compromising.

They’re becoming seeker-friendly. They’re becoming entertainment centers.

They’re saying, **“Come as you are! Wear whatever you like! Come hear the rock band play contemporary Christian rock music! You don’t have to respect or reverence God...You don’t have to be distinct or different from the world. Just come and do your own thing!”**

OR

They’re saying, **“Come have an experience! Come be slain in the spirit! Come take part in a laughing revival or a barking revival! Come and be a part of the show!”**

But, you know what? I read here that God’s Word says we must not worship God this way.

See, the first of the Ten Commandments is what?

“You shall have no other gods before Me.”

God says in that commandment... **“I’m it, folks! I’m the only One! I and I alone am to be worshiped!”**

And the second commandment is a guard or a hedge around the first commandments:

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth [*that just about covers it all, wouldn't you say?*]...you shall not worship or serve any idol or likeness.”

See, that's how the heathens worshiped **their** gods. They would fashion a god out of a tree or a stone and then they would fashion their worship of that god. They would commit sexual acts...or they would make sacrifices... or they would burn incense...or they would burn children...

But, God told these folks...and He's telling you and me, “I alone am God. I demand your worship and I command it to be My way!”

And although we, as Christians, are not given a long list of “do's” and “don't's” as the Old Testament Jews were, we are given the principle for distinctive worship...worship that is set apart and different from other “religions.”

Everything in the **Old Testament** was written for our instruction and I believe we can learn much from **Deuteronomy** about worship.

I believe that worship is the most important thing we do as a body of believers. Our service, our giving, our prayer life, our ministry, our evangelism...all flow out of worship and if it **doesn't** flow out of worship, it is wood, hay and stubble.

Deuteronomy 12:5-11...

2) They were to worship corporately.

“Worship in the place where God shall choose.”

This same instruction is given four times in this one chapter! Where was the place? The Tabernacle and later the Temple. Many chapters in **Exodus** and **Leviticus** deal with the Tabernacle. The place of worship is God-ordained! God wanted His people to see that all of life was to be centered around communion with Him.

Now, I've heard it said many times, “Well, I can worship God just as well on a lake or in the woods or on a golf course. And maybe you could if there weren't any churches at all anywhere around. **But God has told us that we are to forsake not the assembling of ourselves together...and in meeting together we are to encourage each other.**”

God wants His people to meet together for corporate worship.

God wants His people to study His word together.

Does this mean we cannot worship alone? NO! But, it does mean we are not to worship alone all the time. There are set times and set places we are to worship together corporately.

And the reason for this is that **WE DRAW STRENGTH FROM EACH OTHER!!!**

I want each of you to know that I draw strength from you. Each one of you is important to me. You are all unique, and as I look around from one to another, I recall the trials God **has** brought each of you through and the trials He **is** bringing each of you through...and that ministers to me and that strengthens me!

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

We're a family and God desires for us to join together and worship Him and fellowship with each other.

Verse 12...

3) They were to worship joyfully.

These folks had something to rejoice over. The LORD had delivered them from bondage...had led them through the wilderness...had provided for their every need...and had brought them to a land flowing with milk and honey and had promised to defeat all their enemies. And they were to rejoice in the LORD their God.

Folks, we have something to rejoice over. The joy of the Lord is our strength! God has delivered us from the bondage of sin...He has led us through all our wildernesses and He has given to us an abundant Christian life to live and one day, we will reign with the Savior! Our worship should always be joyous!!!

Aren't you glad we come to worship in a church where there is so much joy? And also where there is the freedom to express that joy?

- **through song**
- **through laughter**
- **through tears**
- **hearty "amens" and "praise the Lords"**

I wouldn't want to attend a church where there is a lot of ritual and ceremony and pomp and circumstance...I want to **rejoice** in the Lord!

Deuteronomy 13:1-5...

4) They were to worship God reverently.

Here Moses speaks of the danger of following after folks who would come along and entice or counsel them to go after other gods.

Our worship of Almighty God should be such a part of our everyday lives that we would be able to spot a false prophet a mile away no matter how smooth and persuasive he or she is.

Verse 4 tells us we are to fear (revere) God.

Do you remember what God told Moses at the burning bush?

God told Moses, **"Do not come near; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."**

I believe God welcomes believers today into His presence.

I believe He longs for us to come and bow before Him and pour out our hearts to Him.

I believe He is pleased with our joy as we gather together for corporate worship.

But, I also believe we need to remember who God is!

We need to remember He is the sustaining One and there is none other beside Him. We need to remember He is the sovereign One and He does what He will among the hosts of the

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

heavens and the inhabitants of the earth and no one can ask of Him, "What hast Thou done?" We need to remember He is holy, and altogether righteous and good!!

And I believe we should never be casual in our worship...we should never treat worship as mundane or routine. I believe each time we worship God we need to remember we're on holy ground. Even though the temple veil has been torn down and we're allowed into the holy of holies, when we worship our Heavenly Father...we are still on holy ground!

5) They were to worship God whole-heartedly.

Verse 4 also tells us we are to follow **God** and keep **God's** commandments and listen to **God's** voice and serve **God** and cling to **God!**

I want to ask you this morning if there is anything you're holding onto that keeps you from whole-hearted worship of God. Is there a sin in your life that hinders your worship?

Is there a habit in your life that hinders your worship?

Is there a place you go, or an activity you participate in, or even someone you associate with that hinders your worship?

These folks were commanded by God to purge the land from idols and altars and images...

And the reason was that if these idols and altars and images were allowed to remain, then they would become tools in the hands of Satan to tempt Israel to **NOT** follow God and to **NOT** keep God's commandments and to **NOT** listen to God's voice and to **NOT** serve God and to **NOT** cling to God!

Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:27...

"Don't give the devil any place or opportunity in your life."

And when we hang onto something we should have long ago destroyed, we provide Satan with a foothold in our lives. And pretty soon, he will whisper in your ear, *"Oh, you don't need to spend time worshiping God...you need to sleep in this Sunday...you need to do some things around the house...look how behind you are..."*

EXAMPLE: ACTS 19:17

And before we leave this...let me just say this...

The world says, "Hey, as long as your religion **fits** you...
as long as your religion makes you **feel good**...
as long as it **helps** you...**then one religion is as good as another!**"

The world says, "There are many ways to God! There's the Shinto way, and the Buddha way, and the Islam way, and the Mormon way, and the Unitarian way, and the Jehovah's Witnesses way and the humanism way and the New Age way..."

But, God says our worship is to be exclusive and whole-heartedly devoted to Him! God says, "There's only one way to Me and that's through the blood of My dear Son!"

6) They were to worship God obediently

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

Chapter 14 tells us how God laid down certain dietary laws for His people. These laws don't apply to us today. In **Acts 10** God told Peter He had declared the unclean animals clean. See, it wasn't the eating of these animals that defiled the people as much as it was disobeying God. Disobedience defiles you and me and it defiles our worship!

Well, one last thing and we'll be through...

7) We are to worship God spiritually.

We've looked at worship that is to be **distinctive, corporate, joyful, reverent, whole-hearted, obedient** and I believe with all my heart that all this applies to us as Christians...but in closing I want us to think about this one point that the Lord Jesus Christ made in the New Testament about how we are to worship.

Remember when Jesus encountered the woman at the well in **John 4**? This Samaritan woman was not accepted by the Jews for a couple of major reasons...

- 1) She was of mixed heritage...she was only part Jew.
- 2) She was a harlot.

After Jesus told the woman all that she had done and was presently doing...after Jesus offered this woman at the well living water and told her if she accepted this water she would never thirst again...that this water would quench her spiritual thirst...

Then, this woman at the well made an interesting statement. She said,
"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain but you
Jews claim that the place where we must worship
is Jerusalem."

And do you remember what Jesus said to her?

"...an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers."

True worship is done "in spirit and in truth." This "spirit" here doesn't refer to the Holy Spirit, although the dear Holy Spirit certainly must be involved in our worship.

Jesus is referring to the human spirit and is saying that true worship can never be accomplished in what is merely outward.

And may I say here that Jesus isn't merely saying that this would be a good idea...He is saying we "shall" do this...we "must" do this.

True worship means being involved at the deepest level of our inner being.

When we come to worship, other people may see whether we are in our usual place, whether we appear to have a reverent demeanor, whether we appear to be joyously singing the hymns of praise...**but only God knows whether our *spirit* is involved and whether we are *really* worshipping or merely going through the motions.**

In our worship, we must always keep in mind the truth that we cannot deceive God. We can deceive the person sitting next to us and we can even deceive ourselves...but God always knows whether our worship is "in spirit and truth" or whether it is just a sham.

Worship is a great privilege that God has given to us. And it might come as a surprise to most of us today that **we** are not to be in control of our worship! It is not the worshiper who determines what shall be done and how it shall be done.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

Worship must always be such as to agree with the kind of God being worshiped. Our God is worthy of our worship...worship in spirit and in truth!

May God help us to worship Him in the way that pleases Him and brings glory and honor to His dear Son!!