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BIBLE STUDY

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**“THE CHOSEN PLACE FOR CHOSEN PEOPLE”**

**Deuteronomy 12:1-14**

***Deuteronomy 12:1 "These [are] the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth."***

Moses has already given the ten commandments, again, to these people. The chapter, here, is dedicated to giving the Levitical law again. It is a little different from the earlier one in the book of Leviticus, but basically it is the same. This portion corresponds to 5:6–10 and the concept of worship as it relates to the first two commandments. Involved in this discussion is the intermingling of instructions on correct ways to worship and the prohibition against false worship. There are five main parts in the content of the chapter: (1) the title or preface (v. 1); (2) the destruction of pagan altars (vv. 2, 3); (3) the establishment of the true place for worship (vv. 4–12); (4) the provision for sacrifices in this place (vv. 13–28); and (5) the prohibition against false gods (vv. 29–31). Each of the subsections enlarges on the fact that there is no other God besides the Lord God. The immediate entry to the land of Canaan governs all that follows.

***Deuteronomy 26:1 “And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein;”***

***Deuteronomy 12:2 "Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree:"***

As Israel entered the land God had promised, they would see the various Canaanite worship centers, which were typically erected on the high mountains, on the hills, and under every green tree. The purpose in utterly destroying these places is so the worship of false gods will not spring up among the Israelites. The false gods of the Canaanites, and their places of worship, must be totally done away with. The land must be cleansed from all idolatry so it can be holy to the Lord. This duty is implicit in the first two commandments. Worship at these places (high mountains and hills) was accompanied by depraved rites. The god was thought to live in the mountain or on the hill. By ascending the mountain, the worshiper was in some symbolic sense closer to the deity. Under every green tree indicates certain trees were considered to be sacred and symbolized fertility, a dominant theme in Canaanite religion. Jeremiah warns of this pagan practice.

***Leviticus 11:44-45***

***44 For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.***

***45 For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.***

***Jeremiah 10:1-7***

***1Hear ye the word which the Lord speaketh unto you, O house of Israel:***

***2 Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.***

***3 For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe.***

***4 They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.***

***5 They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.***

***6 Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might.***

***Deuteronomy 12:3 "And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place."***

***Deuteronomy 12:4 "Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God."***

This is a detail of just exactly what was to be done to each of these things. The worship in the high places seemed to be a physical effort on their part, to be nearer their false gods. These sites contained sacred pillars and Asherah poles honoring the Canaanite god and goddess of fertility, Baal and Asherah. This is just another way of saying that the LORD their God was the only One to be worshipped. Moses knew that the people might be intrigued by forms of worship that sought divine favor for fertile crops and livestock. This kind of perverted worship often included sexual symbols and immoral sexual acts. The Israelites had fallen for such debauchery before. But Israel was not to worship the Lord this way.

***Numbers 25:1-9***

***25 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.***

***2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.***

***3 And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.***

***4 And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel.***

***5 And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor.***

***6 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.***

***7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand;***

***8 And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.***

***9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.***

***Deuteronomy 12:5 "But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, [even] unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:"***

The “place” is opposite in meaning to the “places” of verse 2 where the Canaanites worshiped. This legislation does not either prohibit or permit other sanctuaries. Though there was only one tabernacle, it would be moved from place to place. There would be many places over the course of time, but only one place at a time. Gilgal, Bethel, and Shiloh were temporary centers before the temple was built in Jerusalem.

God had led them through the wilderness, and each time they stopped was a campsite He had chosen. The LORD, Himself, will choose the spot for His temple to be built. It is interesting when He does choose, it is at the location where Abraham was to offer Isaac in sacrifice. As there is one God in three manifestations, there is only one body with many members, one baptism with two parts, one church in multiple locations.

***Ephesians 4:4-6***

***4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;***

***5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,***

***6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.***

***1 Corinthians 12:12 “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.”***

***1 Timothy 3:16 “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”***

***Deuteronomy 12:6 "And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:"***

***Deuteronomy 12:7 "And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee."***

Their offerings to God could not be made at a place of their choosing. Their offerings to God had to be made at a place He had chosen for that purpose. The place where the offerings were to be made had to be holy in the sight of God. Burnt offerings and sacrifices were brought to the altar. The priests and the person offering, both, ate of the offering here. These were offered in conjunction with the meat offerings and the drink offerings. The meat offering was the makings for bread. The tithe was one tenth of whatever they are tithing. The heave offerings were lifted and offered to God. Then, they belonged to the priesthood. This and the freewill offerings were not requirements. They were given in loving appreciation. The bloody sacrifices were for sins and were brought to the temple to sacrifice. Israel was to worship at the place God would choose to put his name for his dwelling. Rather than permitting worship on any high place or under any green tree, God intended to centralize Israel’s worship. The ultimate fulfillment of this would be at the temple in Jerusalem. Until that was built, the divinely ordained place for worship was the tabernacle. This was the place where Israel would bring burnt offerings and sacrifices and rejoice in God’s presence.

***Deuteronomy 12:8 "Ye shall not do after all [the things] that we do here this day, every man whatsoever [is] right in his own eyes."***

God has given instructions and laws on how they are to live. They had been living as the rest of the world, doing what was right in their own sight, until now. God wants Moses to inform them, they are to begin this new life in the promised land with the law of God as their law. They will be governed by God's law. In the wilderness, it would have been difficult to establish these laws. Now that they are to enter their promised land, they must establish them and keep them. What they were not to do was what they were doing everyone [was] doing whatever [seemed] right in his own sight. Previously God had commanded the people to “do what [was] right in [God’s] sight” (Exodus 15:26). This highlights a great divide. Will we follow the destructive path that looks good to our faulty eyes? Or will we follow the path of life that God sees and reveals to us?

***Deuteronomy 12:9 "For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you."***

***Deuteronomy 12:10 "But [when] ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and [when] he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety;"***

When Moses is speaking to them, they have not yet crossed over Jordan. This is to be established when they do go over. God will keep His promise to take them into the land of promise first. God will cause their enemies to live at peace with them. It is the presence of God which brings the perfect peace mentioned here.

***Deuteronomy 12:11 "Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD:"***

When the Israelites entered the land, they were to worship only in the place where the Lord chose to have his name dwell. These offerings are not to be made, until God establishes a place to make them. The vows made to God are not of obligation, but dedication. The burnt offerings, sacrifices, tithes, and heave offerings are dealt with in detail in Leviticus.

***Deuteronomy 12:12 "And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that [is] within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you."***

We know that the Levites were not counted among the twelve tribes which inherited land in the promised land. They received cities with boundaries to raise their families. The Levites belonged to God in service. They were not herdsmen, or vineyard keepers. Notice, that all were to worship God. The women, as well as the men, were expected to join in this worship. To rejoice before the LORD was the obligation of the twelve tribes and the Levitical tribe. We must be thankful for the blessings God bestows upon us.

***Deuteronomy 12:13 "Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest:"***

***Deuteronomy 12:14 "But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee."***

We see a warning again, about offering places, other than the place God has chosen. Offerings there would not be acceptable to God. The place of offering had to be a place where no earthly activity took place. It must be a place that has been set aside and sanctified for this specific purpose by God. That location would be the only appropriate place to offer worship and sacrifice in contrast to all the sacred places. In other words, God’s people must not worship at the “sacred places” where the Canaanites worshiped their false deities. The Canaanites thought that by worshiping in all the “right” places throughout the land, they could compel or convince the gods to act on their behalf. But Israel didn’t need to guess or discover the right hilltop on which to worship the Lord. He would reveal it. Unfortunately, Israel’s sad history demonstrates their willful disobedience.

***1 Kings 14:22-23***

***22 And Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done.***

***23 For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree.***

**QUESTIONS**

1. What is this chapter dedicated to?
2. Where are the law and commandments listed the first time?
3. Why should they utterly destroy the places of worship of the false gods?
4. In verse 3, what details of the destruction is given?
5. Why did they worship in high places?
6. What is verse 4 saying?
7. Where had they camped on their wilderness journey?
8. Who will choose the sight for the worship of God?
9. Where were they to bring their burnt offerings and sacrifices?
10. What were all of the people doing, before they received the law?
11. This new life in the promised land is to be governed by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ law.
12. When is this law to come into being?
13. The vows are not of obligation, but of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
14. Who was to rejoice before the LORD?
15. Why did the Levites not inherit land?
16. What was given to the Levites?
17. Where were they to make their offerings?