

DEUTERONOMY 13-16

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Deuteronomy chapter 13 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

We are currently in the second of three sermons that God gave to Moses who then shared them with the children of Israel.

You see, they are now on the boarder of the Promise Land preparing to enter into this land after wandering in the wilderness for forty years! He is preparing them for this venture of faith you might say.

As we concluded last time in Deuteronomy chapter 12, Moses was warning them not to go after the false gods of the nations that they were driving out, that they were destroying. They were to worship the **LORD**.

I like what Sandy Adams shared regarding false prophets in this story. He wrote, [In their school,] a student . . . built a volcano [for a class project]. It was a snow-capped mountain with hot lava bubbling up inside.

Apparently, each science project has to have a theme verse, and Larry asked the lad about his verse.

He answered with Matthew 7:15, "***Beware of false prophets . . .***"

Larry [the teacher] wondered what that verse had to do with a volcano.

The little boy answered, "False prophets are like volcanoes. They look pretty on the outside, but there's trouble brewing on the inside."

What a perceptive young man. False prophets are like volcanoes.

I would have to agree, and we will see that this evening as Moses is going to open up with a warning on these false prophets or apostates and how they are to be destroyed before they infect God's people with their destructive lies!

Before we look at these verses, this chapter deals with ways people can be tempted into idolatry.

Let me share with you how this chapter is broken down.

- ***FALSE PROPHETS – DEUTERONOMY 13:1-5***
- ***A LOVED ONE – DEUTERONOMY 13:6-11***
- ***THE COMMUNITY – DEUTERONOMY 13:12-18***

Thus, as we look at these verses may we heed the warning and not be fooled, may we not be taken captive by smooth talking people that may perform signs and wonders but are leading you away from Jesus!

With that said, let's begin reading in Deuteronomy chapter 13, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word.

DEUTERONOMY 13

VERSES 1-5

Make no mistake about it, there have always been false prophets that are compelling people to follow them and not the Lord.

Why is this such a problem?

Because these false prophets have a dream that comes to pass.

They perform a sign to show you what they can do, pointing you away from God.

They do a wonder that is amazing, but it does not draw you closer to Jesus.

You see, all signs and wonders are not of God!

Does that statement shock you?

Some of you may be shocked but Paul gives us this warning in II Thessalonians 2:9,

“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders.”

What is interesting to me is that Paul uses the same words for **“signs and wonders”** that are used for what Jesus is doing; the only difference here is that these are lying signs and wonders!

In fact, Paul tells us in II Corinthians 11:13-15, **“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.”**

The point that is being made is that we need to take heed and not fall prey to these false teachers, these false prophets!

But what is happening today, just like back then, is that people are running to and fro after signs and wonders!

Jesus’ face is on a tortilla shell over here!

There is a healing ministry going on over there!

Mary is making one of her many appearances in this place!

People are laughing uncontrollably, barking like dogs, running around like warriors over here!

People are having their bad teeth replaced with gold ones over there.

And it truly is amazing to me the lack of discernment in the body of Christ today.

You see, we are not to run after signs and wonders, but, as Jesus said in Mark 16:17-18,

“And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

In other words, signs and wonders will follow those who are serving the Lord, it is a natural outflow of a supernatural working, and they will point people to Jesus!

And God told the children of Israel that He was testing them to see if they would use the discernment that He had given them or be taken in by these false prophets!

I don't know how many of you remember the game show – Hollywood Squares.

They had celebrities in boxes, and you needed to make tic tac toe by figuring out if the questions these celebrities were answering were correct or they were lying! Some answers were true, other answers were false.

I think life is that way, a lot like Hollywood Squares.

We have to differentiate between what is truth and what is a lie or a bluff to fool us.

And as Christians it is so important to know the truth from a lie or a bluff!

And the way we do that is by knowing the Word of God and placing what someone is teaching or what they are saying alongside the Word of God! The truth will set you free! (John 8:32)

The Word of God is our spirit tester. If it is not found in God's Word, if it is drawing you away from Jesus, then it is not of God!

You see, just as God was testing their hearts, He is testing our hearts to see if we really love Him, to show us what is in our heart, to see if we will follow Him or these false prophets!

Before we move on, let me give you some characteristics of cults, because they are all very similar, taking us away from the true and living God.

A cult will distance the Father, that He can't be reached, you have to work harder, do more and that is not true, it was all done by Jesus for us!

A cult will diminish the Son, Jesus will be placed lower than God, He is a god, or a prophet or something other than Almighty God!

A cult will demand allegiance to what they say.

For instance, the cult of Jehovah Witnesses, they will not read any other material except that which is theirs. That is a big red flag!

A cult will deny the Holy Spirit, they deny what the Holy Spirit is saying and now it is just a burning in your heart that tells you what is right or whatever!

A cult will divide the body by telling you that they alone are right and everyone else is wrong.

Now that is true to a point. Only those that follow Jesus are right, but that is not to say that we alone have that truth. There are many churches in town and throughout this world that believe in Jesus, believe in the Gospel message but we may differ in some non-essential doctrines.

Pretty straight forward and if a leader is exalted, beware! Only God is to be exalted!

Now the penalty for these false prophets, these deceivers was death, it was a capital crime!

Why was God so strict?

Because this is a deadly poison that can destroy people's souls, condemning them to an eternity apart from Christ!

Tragically today these false prophets are in the church teaching their false doctrine and we allow them to come right in. There is no discernment, there is no absolute truth and thus, anything and everything goes!

That is not of God! It is time for us to wake up and walk in the Lord and not after men!

So that was looking at - ***FALSE PROPHETS!***

As we read on, we will be looking at how others can deceive us or – ***A LOVED ONE!***

VERSES 6-11

Now Moses warns them that if a loved one, a close friend entices you to go after other gods, don't listen, don't go with them, and in the end, they need to be put to death.

As you read this it seems pretty harsh. This was a capital crime!

Not only that but the one being enticed would cast the first stone!

Why is this such a big deal?

To find out just read the book of Judges and you will see what Israel did not do in the book of Joshua, they paid for it in the end. They went after other god's because they did not listen to the Lord.

And yes, there are many who are against capital punishment saying it is not a deterrent to crime, but God says it is and He is right!

How do we handle this now?

Paul, in I Timothy 5:20 tells us, **“Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.”**

In other words, sin affects more than just the person who is involved in it, and it needs to be dealt with.

Remember the sin of Achan in Joshua chapter 7 and how the entire nation was affected by his sin, and they were defeated by the city of Ai, a small city compared to Jericho, which they previously defeated.

If someone is pulling you away from the Lord, rebuke them and remove yourself from them before you succumb to their enticing!

And lastly, we are going to look at this in view of - ***THE COMMUNITY!***

VERSES 12-18

This last section deals with someone that is in a community or a community itself who is leading people away from the Lord.

And here you would not only be destroying them, but the entire city, the animals' and-so-on. Also, you were not to take any plunder.

Now, before you destroy this city you would have to investigate the situation and make sure that the accusations were true.

And the reason they were not to take any spoil from this attack is because that way you would not be enticed to destroy a city for your gain.

Why was God so serious about this, about idolatry in Israel?

Because the survival of the nation was dependent upon them being a separate people, separated unto the Lord and apart from these false gods!

Tragically they did not fully obey the Lord and both the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah went into captivity because of idolatry!

How does this apply to us today?

Let's say some Mormon or Jehovah Witnesses come to your door, are you to stone them?

Of course not! But we are to kill their influence upon our lives by not allowing them to propagate their false doctrines.

You can share the truth of God with them. You can show them the Scriptures and then, that really is the end of the story.

If they reject Jesus as God, as the Savior, even though the Scriptures testify to this truth, there is not much more you can say to them!

Now, as we have seen what God has said, think about what this chapter is asking you.

What will it take for you to be drawn away from the Lord?

Maybe signs and wonders will do that?

Maybe your boyfriend or girlfriend, your spouse or a close friend will do that?

Maybe it is a cultural or social influence that will draw you away from the Lord?

Folks, we must decide for ourselves who are we going to believe?

It is as this song goes:

*I have decided, to follow Jesus
I have decided, to follow Jesus
I have decided, to follow Jesus*

*No turning back
No turning back*

*The world behind me, the cross before me
The world behind me, the cross before me
The world behind me, the cross before me*

*Though none go with me, still I will follow
Though none go with me, still I will follow
Though none go with me, still I will follow*

Will you decide now, to follow Jesus?

May we follow the Lord, no matter what anyone else may do or say. No matter what signs or wonders we may see. No matter how society tries to influence us. May we hold everything up to the light of God's Word, use the discernment that He has given to us and walk with Him instead of the false gods that are out there!

It is our decision and may we decide to follow Jesus with our entire being!

DEUTERONOMY 14

VERSES 1-2

Moses is telling them that they are not to mourn for their dead as the pagans do.

Why is that?

Because they were God's people, they are to be separated unto Him. They were not to cut themselves or shave the front part of their head for mourning like the pagans were doing.

And the idea here is that the death of their loved ones is far different than the death of a pagan, someone who does not know God because they have hope!

Maybe you heard the story of the teenage delivery boy that dropped off the first order of flowers and then proceeded to drop off the second order.

It was the grand opening of a new store where the second order of flowers went to.

The owner of the store looked at the flowers and then opened the card that read, "***Our deepest sympathy on this most sad day.***"

"***Oh, no!***" said the delivery boy. "***I gave you the wrong bouquet!***"

The store owner kindly replied back, "***That's okay. These flowers will do fine.***"

“No, you don’t understand,” replied the delivery boy. *“The problem is that I sent your flowers to a funeral with a card that read: Congratulations on your new location!”*

Folks, that truly is the reality for us. It’s a moving day for our spirit and soul as we move out of these temporary dwelling places, these tents and move into a new body, an eternal body that the Lord is preparing for us.

Paul makes this point in I Thessalonians 4:13, **“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.”**

You see, that is our hope and yes, when a loved one dies, we will miss them, but we will see them again one day if they had come to saving faith in the Lord.

I do not fear death because I know where I am going. What I do fear is the death process. I am not into pain! But my hope is in the Lord and to be absent from this body means that I will be present with the Lord!

So our mourning is different than those that don’t know the Lord, at least it should be!

VERSES 3-21

We have covered this in previous studies, but Moses is going over what they could and couldn’t eat, what was clean and what was unclean. (Leviticus)

And what we see here is that they are divided up in three different ways.

There are the animals, those that live in the sea and those that fly in the sky.

Why did God do this?

It protected them from the many diseases that some of these creatures carried. Like in pork you can get trichinosis.

Thus, pigs were unclean and there is great detail given in what is clean and what is unclean.

Also, I think God was separating His people from the rest of the people in the land, to be separated from those around them.

How does this even relate to us today?

What are you allowing into your life, into your home? Is it clean or is it unclean?

The things you watch on television, at the movies, the things you are reading, is it edifying, or will it bring you down?

How do you know what is clean and what is unclean?

I don't think I really need to tell you that, you know!

Folks, some are obvious, some you bring before the Lord and allow His Spirit and His Word to speak to your heart and He will!

VERSES 22-23

Once again Moses is telling them that they need to tithe to the Lord or literally give 10% to the Lord, but why?

Look at how the Living Bible puts the last part of verse 23, "**The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives.**"

Did you see that? God is to be first even in our tithing.

Today, some will argue that you have to give 10% as a tithe to the Lord.

If you feel that way great but the real issue is your heart.

You can give 10%, 2%, even 20% or more but if you don't give out of the right heart, the right motives, if you give grudgingly or complaining, then God will not accept it no matter how much you give.

Paul put it like this in his letter to the Corinthian church as he wrote, **“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”** II Corinthians 9:6-7.

God loves a hilarious giver and that is how we are to give to the Lord, joyfully knowing we are just giving back to Him what He has given to us to be used for His Kingdom!

VERSES 24-26

I guess you can call this long distance giving and what you are to do.

At this point the children of Israel are all together but once they enter the land, as they drive out the enemy, the various tribes will be spread out.

And ultimately the Temple will be in Jerusalem.

So if someone was far away, they might find it difficult to transport the grain and livestock the tithe required.

Because of that, if you had a long journey, you could sell what you were going to give to the Lord and when you arrived in Jerusalem you could buy a sheep, a goat, or even grain or whatever you purposed to give to the Lord, what was required for you to give to Him.

VERSES 27-29

Every third year they were to take care of the Levites and the poor, the unfortunate.

This seems like it was a second tithe, but we are not sure.

But here is the thing, God looks out for the less fortunate and He uses us many times to reach out to them!

DEUTERONOMY 15VERSES 1-6

Every seventh year you were to release those who owed you a debt.

I thought that took place in the year of Jubilee every 50 years.

It does and thus, some feel that in the seventh year, since the land was to rest and they could not work it and make a profit from it, that they were free that year and would begin to repay again in the next year. Again, this was a debt that you owed and were paying back.

Also, this was for your brother or fellow Jews. If there was a foreigner, you were not obliged to release him from his debt in that seventh year, even though you still could.

VERSES 7-11

God wants them to be generous even if it is in the sixth year and you won't get paid in the seventh year. Help those in need or as Paul said, "**Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.**" Galatians 6:10.

Back in verse 4 we see Moses speaks of there being, "**no poor among you.**" And here in verse 11 we are told, "**For the poor will never cease from the land.**"

It sounds like a contradiction, but it isn't!

I think in verse 4 the idea is if you release the poor from their debt in that seventh year you have put them on an equal plain with you, their debt was forgiven, at least during that seventh year.

But there will always be poor in the land, in this world, Jesus even tells us that.

Let's face it, there will be poverty because of the heart of man. And we see that there are those that are lazy; many people have no initiative to work.

Also, it is not a normal act to help those in need.

And thus, the Lord commands us by saying, “**. . . You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.**” Deuteronomy 15:11.

VERSES 12-15

In regard to the Hebrew slaves, in the seventh year it does seem like he was to go free, but you needed to give him “**liberally**” so he would not start off in poverty and be in the same place he started from.

VERSES 16-18

In that seventh year, if you loved your master and wanted to freely serve him, you could do that, but it was a lifelong commitment. You could not change your mind.

And to show that you were a bondsman they would pierce your ear with an awl and put a gold ring in it.

Now as a slave owner, you could release this person from their duty and what a blessing this person was to you. But usually if they wanted to stay, they remained.

Now the New Testament writers picked up on this and they called themselves bondslaves of Jesus Christ. They freely gave their lives to serve their master, Jesus. They were not forced to do this but willingly did this.

And so should we. We should give our all, our entire being to Him as His bonds slave!

This is also a beautiful picture of Jesus Christ.

Paul tells us in Philippians 2:7-8, **“but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”**

He freely gave His life, became a bonds slave for us!

Not only that but the Psalmist said in Psalm 40:6, **“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.”**

He gave his ear to be pierced as a bonds slave!

That is how much He loved us, and He wants us to follow His example, to become bondslaves of Jesus not out of compulsion but out of love!

VERSE 19

They were to give their firstborn, their best to the Lord and God would honor their faithfulness to Him!

Now the Lord is speaking of their animals or their harvest, the firstborn male child was redeemed.

VERSES 20-23

When they brought this sacrifice to the Lord, a portion was given to the Lord and there was a portion for them to partake of before the Lord.

Now here's the thing. God does not want the broken, the lame, the defective things. He wants the best and He deserves no less from us since He is Almighty God!

Would you give the President something that is broken down? Of course you wouldn't!

Some feel that they can give the Lord their seconds, or thirds or whatever and that is just not right. God rebuked the children of Israel for doing this and the same is true for us.

In Malachi chapter 1 we are told, **“You offer defiled food on My altar, But say, “In what way have we defiled You?” By saying, “The table of the Lord is contemptible.” And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?’ Says the Lord of hosts. . . . ‘For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, And a pure offering; For My name shall be great among the nations,’ Says the Lord of hosts. ‘But you profane it, In that you say, “The table of the Lord is defiled; And its fruit, its food, is contemptible.” You also say, “Oh, what a weariness!” And you sneer at it,’ Says the Lord of hosts. ‘And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; Thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?’ Says the Lord. ‘But cursed be the deceiver Who has in his flock a male, And takes a vow, But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished - For I am a great King,’ Says the Lord of hosts, ‘And My name is to be feared among the nations.’”** Malachi 1:7-8, 11-14.

We need to think about that and folks, this is not just with our money, but our time, our ministry, all we do for Him because we are a living sacrifice unto Him!

As we move into Deuteronomy chapter 16, we are going to recap the Feasts of Israel, the three main Feasts. The Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread are considered one Feast many times in the Scriptures. Thus, since we have covered this already in previous studies, we will move through this a little faster.

Now, regarding these three Feasts, D. L. Moody wrote,

The holy feasts were (in general) appointed for these ends and uses: -

- To distinguish the people of God from other nations.
- To keep afoot the remembrance of the benefits already received.
- To be a type and figure of benefits yet further to be conferred upon them by Christ.
- To unite God's people in holy worship.
- To preserve purity in holy worship prescribed by God.

- D. L. Moody, Notes from My Bible, pp. 44-45

So let's take another look at these feasts as we move into Deuteronomy chapter 16 this evening.

DEUTERONOMY 16

VERSES 1-2

The first Passover, in Exodus chapter 12, was celebrated in Egypt as the blood of the lamb was to be placed upon the door of their homes and the angel of death passed over their homes sparing the firstborn.

But in the Egyptian homes, in all the homes that did not have the blood of the lamb applied to the door, their firstborn died in this judgment.

Now Moses tells them that this feast will be celebrated in the place that God will put His name. And that place will ultimately be in Jerusalem!

For us, the Feast of Passover is a picture of Jesus Christ, our sacrificial lamb as Paul tells us in I Corinthians 5:7, **“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”**

Thus, as His blood is applied to our lives, the wrath of God passes over us because we have been cleansed by the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world!

VERSES 3-4

Right after Passover, starting on the 15th of Nisan and lasting for seven days is the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Once again this was first celebrated, you might say, in Egypt as they fled Egypt in haste, not having enough time for the dough to rise in the bread.

Leaven, in the Scriptures is a type of sin.

Now this also gives to us a picture of Christ as the perfect sacrifice, without spot or blemish.

For us, it is only as the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ has cleansed us from our sins that we can walk in purity before the Lord!

VERSES 5-8

Here are some of the regulations for Passover and Unleavened Bread.

Many times, in the Scriptures, these two feasts are spoken of as one since they flow right into each other, as I have said.

VERSES 9-10

Now, fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits, during the wheat harvest, came the Feast of Weeks or the Feast of Pentecost.

It is on this day, we are told, that Moses received the Law on Mount Sinai.

This feast was celebrated by bringing a new grain offering to the Lord and waving two loaves of leavened bread to the Lord.

What is interesting here is that we see leaven mentioned in this feast, which should catch our attention.

Prophetically speaking the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost points to the birth of the church, where both Jew and Gentile, sinners, were brought together in Christ. Thus, the leavened bread!

VERSES 11-12

Notice this was to be a joyful time as they were thankful for the harvest that God had given them.

Folks, we too should rejoice in the work that God is doing, the harvest of souls He has brought in and is bringing in!

VERSES 13-15

The last of these three feasts that the children of Israel were required to attend if they were able was the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths, Succoth.

It was a fall feast that began on the 15th day of the 7th month or Tishri (September/October) and lasted for seven days. This feast celebrated how God provided for the children of Israel during their wilderness wanderings as they lived in tents or booths you might say.

And then, how God brought them into the Promise Land fulfilling His promise to them.

What they would do is they would set these up these booths or lean-tos a Sabbath day's journey from the Temple or about ½ mile if they were from out of town.

Even today in Israel many Jews will construct these little lean-tos or booths, but now they will set them up on the roofs of their homes.

And these families will live in these booths for the week, looking up at night through the holes in the roof and remembering all that God has done for them and is doing for them! The fathers would tell their children how God sustained them in the wilderness those forty years and how He brought them into the Promise Land. They are remembering their history and passing it on to their children. It is a beautiful picture of peace and rest in the Lord.

VERSES 16-17

Once again, every male Jew who was able to make this pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate these feasts was to come, they were not to ignore them.

In these verses we only see three (four, actually, counting the Feast of Unleavened Bread as a separate feast) of the seven Feasts of Israel.

Not mentioned in this chapter are the Feasts of Trumpets, of Firstfruits, and of the Day of Atonement.

But these three called for mandatory attendance at the Tabernacle. And we see that Jesus was obedient to this command; He made the trip from Galilee to Jerusalem to be at these feasts. (Luke 2:41, John 7:2, 10)

One more point I want to bring out here and that is what we read here in Deuteronomy 16:16, that they were not to come empty handed before the Lord.

What does that mean to us?

We cannot come before the Lord without the sacrifice for sin. In other words, we can't appear before God the Father without Jesus, for if we do, we will be naked and ashamed as we stand in our own righteousness. We must come before the Father in the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed into our lives by faith. (II Corinthians 5:21)

I plan to appear before God with Jesus by my side, how about you?

So Jesus is the sacrifice, but what is your offering?

Your tithe, praise, service, gratitude.

Notice the rule for an offering - "**give as [you] are able.**"

VERSES 18-20

You needed righteous, trustworthy judges to help keep the nation on the right track, to put forth justice fairly. And they were located at the gates of the city.

And please understand that these courts were not there for mercy, but to institute judgment, justice!

But when the court system is wicked, the nation is in trouble, and we are seeing that today in our nation and in this world.

VERSES 21-22

They were not to put up these pagan images next to the Lord; they were not to put them up anywhere.

Interestingly enough, in today's seeker friendly, purpose driven, emerging church mentality that is exactly what they are doing.

Things are being added and taken out of the service to make people, the unsaved comfortable and the saved stagnant. What they are doing is they are going in the wrong direction.

We need to be ***GOD SENSITIVE, SPIRIT LEAD, and CHRIST EMERGING*** in our lives!

And understand that God hates the false worship of Him! He does not condone it!

Remember, our salvation is not found in this program or that program, this book or that book, this seminar or that seminar, not even in this church or that church, but in the person and work of ***JESUS CHRIST!***

May we not forget that.

Let me leave you with these words found in II Peter 3:17-18, **“You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.”**

May we continue to grow in Him and not apart from Him! May we worship Him in Spirit and in truth! (John 4:24)