

DEUTERONOMY 24-27

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Deuteronomy chapter 24 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Keep in mind that Moses is preparing to die, and he is preparing that next generation of the children of Israel to enter into the Promise Land.

And the focus of the opening section of Deuteronomy chapter 24 is divorce and we will see God set some regulations for divorce.

Now, in saying that, is God approving divorce, saying that it is okay since He is setting some rules for divorce?

No, He is not. He did not approve of divorce, and we can look at Malachi 2:16 to see how He feels. We are told, **“For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one’s garment with violence,” Says the Lord of hosts. ‘Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.’”**

This is interesting because I don’t think many people take this too seriously today, as you look at the number of divorces in America. But the Lord is saying that He considers divorce as an act of violence!

In fact, the Hebrew word for ***“divorce”*** implies an amputation as the root word means ***“a hewing off, a cutting apart.”***

Listen carefully to what C. S. Lewis wrote about divorce. He wrote, *“Christians all regard divorce as something like cutting up a living body, as a kind of surgical operation. Some think that the operation is so violent that it cannot be done at all; others admit that it is a desperate remedy in extreme cases. They are all agreed that it is more like having your legs cut off than it is like dissolving a business partnership . . .”*

But man’s heart is hard and thus, God is putting these laws into place to help curb divorce and to promote marriage. Not like today where divorce has become very easy. God’s law made it very difficult to get a divorce!

So with that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in Deuteronomy chapter 24 beginning in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word.

DEUTERONOMY 24

VERSES 1-4

Here it is, the Law for getting a divorce, but on what grounds?

Moses tells us that her husband **“found some uncleanness in her”** and thus, he could then write a certificate of divorce, place this certificate of divorce in her hand and it was a binding, legal document.

Prior to this Law, you could just tell her **“*Goodbye!*”** and that was the end of the marriage. But now God is establishing this Law.

They key to this is the meaning of **“uncleanness.”**

Of course man loves to debate what this means and this debate on the meaning of this word continued in Jesus day. And there were two schools of thought on what this meant.

Rabbi Hillel had a very liberal view. He said that uncleanness meant if she burned his breakfast and even to the extreme of him seeing another woman who was “*cleaner*” than his wife, he could divorce her. Obviously, this was a very popular view among the men!

Then there was the more conservative view from Rabbi Shammai. He felt that this uncleanness meant sexual immorality, that she had committed adultery and because of that he could divorce his wife. Not as popular view here.

Who was right in this matter?

In Matthew 19:3-9 Jesus gives us the answer and it may not be what you think. We are told, **“The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?’ And He answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning “made them male and female,” and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.’ They said to Him, ‘Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?’ He said to them, ‘Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.’”**

The Pharisees thought they had Jesus on this one because of these two schools of thought and whatever side He picked, the other side would be angry with Him. I believe they knew He would be on the conservative side, which was less popular.

But Jesus doesn't take sides, He just tells them the truth, He brings them back to the Word of God and not a teacher.

How does He do that?

He takes them back to the first marriage in the Garden of Eden between Adam and Eve. And what God has brought together man should not separate. The only reason there is divorce is because of the hardness of man's heart and thus, God makes a provision; sexual immorality is the only instance for divorce!

Again, listen to what we are told in Malachi, **“Yet you say, “For what reason?” Because the Lord has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant. But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence,” Says the Lord of hosts. “Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.””** Malachi 2:14-16.

And let me say this, as difficult as it may be. Even with sexual sin, there can be restoration; divorce is not the first option.

Now, let me also say this because some have gone to this other extreme and made divorce the unpardonable sin. It is not! Not only that, but on the other end we have the church make divorce not that big of a deal and we see that the divorce rate in the church is around the same rate as those that don't know the Lord and that should not be.

Now, why wouldn't God allow a husband to remarry his wife after he divorced her?

I believe it was because God wanted them to see the seriousness of divorce, that people don't go and rush into this. You could not go back and forth!

Again, we see marriages today as a contract with another person and when things don't work out that contract is torn up and thrown away!

But marriage is not a contract, it is a covenant before God that you both have made and thus, we all need to remember that!

VERSE 5

Look at how God honors the marriage relationship here.

The husband was to stay at home for a year after he was married, he was not to go to war so that he could please his wife, not himself!

Then, after a year at home she is probably ready to get him out of the house! Just kidding, but how do you make a marriage strong?

You strengthen it! And that is what we see here in this verse.

Before we move on, let me say this regarding the key to a blessed marriage – it is

JESUS!

Paul, in Ephesians 5:18-21 tells us, “**And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.**”

You see, filled with the Spirit, the love of God flowing from your life, and as you submit your life to God, you will submit yourself to your spouse – unconditionally!

That is the key. You don't need the latest book or seminar. You need to surrender!

VERSE 6

The idea here is not to take one's livelihood, like a millstone, which was used to grind the grain for their food.

VERSE 7

Why was this a problem?

Because these children and people who were kidnapped were then sold into slavery, they could make a profit off of them.

But God says if someone does that then that person should be put to death. It cuts down on kidnapping with a law like that!

I wish we would use this one today that if you kidnapped someone, a child, sold them into slavery, mistreated them, you would be put to death!

And when I speak of slavery I am speaking of sex-trafficking! If we did that, maybe all the sex-trafficking we see going on today would be eliminated or reduced at least. You see, a law like this would deter kidnapping and what these people do to these children.

I can't imagine how they will try to explain what they did to these children to God when they stand before Him!

VERSES 8-9

We have studied this back in Leviticus chapters 13 and 14 and the reason for these laws was to protect the spread of this dreaded disease!

Moses also speaks of the rebellion of Miriam, and we are told in Numbers chapter 12 how she got Aaron to side with her against Moses. And God struck Miriam with leprosy and yet, God answered the prayer of Moses and He healed her, but she was kept out of the camp for seven days.

And thus, if someone like Miriam was quarantined because of this, everyone else who has this disease should also be quarantined!

VERSES 10-13

If you loaned someone some money and they were to give you a pledge until they could pay you back, you were not to humiliate them.

If it was a garment or blanket that they gave you, you were to return it by evening so they could keep warm.

We see Israel rebuked for not doing this in Amos 2:8.

VERSES 14-15

You were not to treat those who worked for you unfairly; you were to have a safe working environment.

Also, you were to pay them at the end of the day and not hold back their wages that they worked for because God is watching what you are doing.

Let's face it, not all work environments are good, but I like the one spoken of in Ruth 2:4, where we are told, **“Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, ‘The Lord be with you!’ And they answered him, ‘The Lord bless you!’”**

At your workplace those are probably not the words that are used, but it should not stop us from blessing others!

VERSE 16

Isn't it interesting today that we love to blame others for our sin. But God is saying that you are responsible for your own sin. You can't blame your parents or friends, you made the choice and thus, you are responsible for the consequences you are facing!

VERSES 17-18

Why does God want them to remember all He did for them?

Because as they looked back and remembered all that God did for them it would make them more compassionate towards others.

It is out of that we see the Lord speak of caring for those in need. And this was not a handout, they worked for their food by going into the fields after they were harvested and taking what was left.

Now let's apply this to our own lives. Look at all God has done for us, and we truly don't deserve it and yet, He tells us to go out and do the same to others, bless them!

VERSES 19-22

This was God's welfare program you might say.

And the poor, the fatherless, the widow and so on would benefit from this.

How was this administrated, you might say?

As you went through your fields you could go through once and the rest was left for them to go in and gather. And if you, as the owner of the field, left a sheaf in the field, you could not go and get it, but you left it for the poor. What a blessing that would be for them! What we see here is the generosity of the farmer as well as we see that the poor worked for their food, they were productive, and they could provide for their family's needs with dignity!

DEUTERONOMY 25

VERSES 1-3

What we see here is that the judge not only set the number of blows in proportion to the crime, but he oversaw the punishment to make sure it didn't exceed the sentence.

In other words, the punishment is needed to fit the crime. And the courts were to issue judgment and here it was forty blows, not more.

Thus, the Jews would give 39 so as not to overstep this law and to show some mercy.

Paul, in Romans 13:1-5 reminds us, **“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.”**

VERSE 4

You were not only to treat people humanely but also the animals. You were not to abuse them.

VERSES 5-10

This practice was known as the levirate marriage, and it was to help continue the name of the dead brother or relative if he had no sons to pass on his name.

We see this played out in the book of Ruth as Boaz acts as the kinsmen redeemer and takes Ruth as his wife.

Now, if he refuses to do this, the living brother or the nearest relative, then they had this ceremony or ritual you might say that they went through. She would take off his shoe, spit in his face and basically call him a name!

It was a public humiliation for not doing what you were supposed to do.

VERSES 11-12

There is not much to add to that. The penalty was severe if a woman did that, and we will just move on.

Now let me also say this. If someone is attacking you ladies, you can hit them below the belt! We are saved by grace and not the Law and God does not forbid you to protect yourself!

VERSES 13-16

This should just make sense to us. God wants His people to have integrity, to be honest in their dealings with others.

VERSES 17-19

Back in Exodus chapter 17 we see this battle with Amalek as Joshua fought against them and Moses was praying on the mountain and God gave them the victory.

And God wants the Amalekites wiped out completely and some 400 years down the road God will instruct King Saul to do this and he does not completely obey the Lord, and, in the end, it cost him his life!

Why was this such a big deal?

Yes, the Amalekites attacked the rear ranks as the children of Israel were traveling and in the back were the old, the weak, the sick. So God is holding them accountable for attacking them!

But not only that. The Amalekites are a type of the flesh, and the flesh is not to be dressed up, pampered, nurtured, but it is to be crucified!

Paul put it like this in Galatians 5:16-18, **“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”**

There is a battle going on between the flesh and the Spirit and if you open the door to the flesh, it will consume your life!

One more point here.

I don't care how old you are, how many years you have walked with the Lord, what position you have in the church, if you start to relax, if you become a straggler, the enemy will take advantage of you, he will attack you.

Look at King David, a man after God's own heart! He was Israel's commander and when it was time to go to war, at the age of 50, David had enough, and he sat this one out.

And in all that free time he lusted after another woman, had sexual relations with her, got her pregnant and then had her husband killed in battle, one of his own mighty men, to try and cover his sin!

Be wise, you are not better than David and look what happened to him. This battle will continue on until we go home to be with the Lord. It is the only time that the flesh will be completely done away with!

DEUTERONOMY 26

VERSES 1-4

They will enter the land and when they do, the first fruits of the land were to be given to the Lord!

VERSES 5-10

Looking back over all that God had done for them, how He made them His people, delivered them, and they were just thanking God for all His provisions as they looked back!

And as we give, we should do the same. Thank Him for all that He has given to us and praise Him that we can give back to Him!

VERSE 11

How often do you rejoice in the Lord?

How often do you thank Him and praise Him for all that He has provided for you?

You see, it is easy to forget, to become complacent and thus, remember all He has done, is doing and will do in your life, which should cause you to rejoice in the Lord always!

VERSES 12-15

Every third year the tithe was not only given to support the Levites, but also those who were in need and we saw this in Numbers 18:21-24.

What I want to look at here is how their giving was done.

It was done out of a right heart, not forced, not giving grudgingly.

Look at how they gave:

- Right giving is done according to God's Word. How often do people give for the wrong reasons. God's Word is our guide in how we are to give, and we are to do so with a hilarious heart, a joyous heart and if you can't give that way, then don't give: **According to all Your commandments which you have commanded me.**
- Right giving is done within the context of a whole life of obedience, not just because you want to receive something: **I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten them.**
- **I have not eaten any of it . . . nor have I removed any of it:** Right giving genuinely sets aside what is to be given unto the **LORD**. You don't keep it for yourself, you don't give the leftovers to the Lord.
- **Nor given any of it for the dead:** Right giving is not done superstitiously; "Putting food in a grave with a dead body was a common Egyptian and Canaanite practice, which is most likely what the Israelites were not to emulate." (Kalland)
- **Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people:** Right giving is done with the expectation of blessing. You don't give to the Lord to be blessed, but you know that as you give to the Lord He will bless, and it is not always monetary.

VERSE 16

As Moses begins to wrap up his second sermon to the children of Israel, he tells them to not only hear all that God requires of them, but to keep what God requires of them. (James 1:22)

In other words, to be doers of the Word and not just hearers of the Word!

VERSE 17

What did Israel proclaim?

That the *LORD, YAHWEH* was their God and that they would obey His commands to them, they would walk accordingly!

VERSES 18-19

We are also God's special people, not Israel, but we are His people, a holy people, a royal priesthood and thus, we too need to walk accordingly.

That is what Peter tells us in I Peter chapter 2 as he wrote these words, **“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.”** I Peter 2:9-12.

May we not only understand the Words of the Lord but walk in them!

And thus, Moses concludes his second sermon to the children of Israel.

As we move into Deuteronomy chapter 27, we will begin the third and really final sermon or lecture that Moses gave to the children of Israel as they prepared to enter the Promise Land under the leadership of Joshua.

This covers the sections from Deuteronomy chapter 27 really through the end of the book, chapter 34.

Although, if you want to be technical about it, the rest of the book can really be broken down as follows.

We see in chapter 31 Moses usher Joshua as the new leader in Israel.

Chapter 32 is the song of Moses.

Chapter 33 is the final blessings of Moses.

And in chapter 34 we see the death of Moses.

But a loose outline for us will be Moses final address to the people, from Deuteronomy chapter 27 through chapter 34.

DEUTERONOMY 27

VERSES 1-8

During this one-month period of time Moses has been instructing them on what the Lord requires of them as they enter the Promise Land.

But it is not just hearing these things, as I have said. But Moses wants them to do them, that is what is important and that is what Moses is admonishing them to do. To apply these truths to their lives and God desires that of us.

It is as James 1:22 tells us, “**But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**”

When they enter the Promise Land, they are to take some large stones and whitewash them and then write the words of the Law on them.

Now some say it is speaking of a summation of all that Moses said here in Deuteronomy, others say it is all of Deuteronomy, but I tend to think it is the Ten Commandments.

Why was this so important?

By writing God’s Word on whitewashed stones, it made them easy to read.

Folks, as we share God’s Word, we should do the same and not decorate it with so much other stuff that people can’t see what God is saying or we destroy the integrity of God’s Word by mixing it up with other things!

Also, on Mount Ebal they were to set up an altar.

Mount Ebal is about 35 miles north of Jerusalem, in the middle part of the land. This is the area known as Shechem and that is interesting to me because the Lord appeared to Abraham at Shechem according to Genesis 12:6-7.

Now God wants the children of Israel to gather here, when they go into the Land, and write His Words on these large stones and set up an altar for sacrifice.

And thus, God is also meeting with the children of Israel here as they are ratifying the covenant, this next generation.

Today, this area of Shechem including Jericho is known as the West Bank and has been given over to the Palestinians.

Now what is interesting to me about this altar is that it was not to be ornate, but just whole stones and upon the altar sacrifices would be made.

Why is that?

Because God does not want the children of Israel to focus on the altar or even the one who built the altar. He wants them to focus upon the sacrifice.

Today, once again we see ornate churches where you tend to focus on the beauty of the altar you might say or the picturesque view instead of the sacrifice, instead of Jesus Christ!

At this altar there was the burnt offering, spoken of in Leviticus chapter 1, which speaks of dedication.

There was the peace offering, spoken of in Leviticus chapter 3, which spoke of peace, of celebration.

Think about this.

They are at Mount Ebal where the cursings were spoken. It is here the altar is at, the sacrifice made, the shedding of the blood.

For us, as we apply the blood of Christ to our lives by faith, we then dedicate our lives to Him and out of this we have peace with God, there is great joy, a great celebration, at least there should be!

As the children of Israel enter the land, we see Joshua fulfill these words that Moses spoke of here in Deuteronomy.

In Joshua 8:30-35 we are told, **“Now Joshua built an altar to the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses: ‘an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron tool.’ And they offered on it burnt offerings to the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings. And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. Then all Israel, with their elders and officers and judges, stood on either side of the ark before the priests, the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the stranger as well as he who was born among them. Half of them were in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them.”**

We will deal with the blessings and the cursings as we move on, but again, Joshua fulfilled what Moses told them to do!

VERSES 9-10

This is not saying that prior to this they were not the people of God. It was more of re-commitment of their lives to the Lord as they prepare to enter into the Promise Land.

God, through Moses told them what He expected of them, and they were willing to submit to what God had said.

And here's the thing. If God is our King, if our lives are submitted to Him, then we need to obey His Words to us.

I think we are all in agreement on that until we don't like what God is telling us. Here's the thing. If He is Lord, and He is, then we need to listen and obey, even if we don't like it or agree with it!

VERSES 11-13

After their defeat at Ai in Joshua chapter 7, they repented of their sin, and as we have read in Joshua chapter 8, they fulfilled the words of Moses.

Now keep in mind that it was some 25 miles from Ai to this area by Shechem and it was not easy for a few million people to travel that distance, but they obeyed the Lord no matter how difficult it would be.

Mount Gerizim was lush, it was fertile, it had springs and was filled with life, with color. This is where the blessings flowed for obedience.

On the other side was Mount Ebal, which was barren, rocky, no life on it. This is where the cursings flowed for disobedience.

These two mountains, if you can call them mountains, rose only some 3,000 feet in the air. And right between them was this valley, and this is where the Levites, the priests were located as six of the twelve tribes were stationed by Mount Gerizim and six by Mount Ebal.

The Tribe of Levi was located on Mount Gerizim, but again, the priests were in the middle.

VERSE 14

Remember, the priests, with the Ark of the Covenant stood in the middle and would call out the blessings towards Mount Gerizim and the cursings toward Mount Ebal.

That is what Joshua 8:33 tells us, **“Then all Israel, with their elders and officers and judges, stood on either side of the ark before the priests, the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the stranger as well as he who was born among them. Half of them were in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel.”**

VERSES 15-26

Here we see the curses being spoken of and the people were in agreement with what God tells them as they say, **“Amen.”** Or literally, ***“So be it.”***

Look at what the Lord is saying will bring a curse upon them:

- Curse upon idolaters – Deuteronomy 27:15.
- Curse upon those who disobey their parents – Deuteronomy 27:16.
- Curse upon those who steal – Deuteronomy 27:17.
- Curse upon those who are cruel to others – Deuteronomy 27:18.
- Curse upon the person who perverts justice – Deuteronomy 27:19.
- Curse upon the sexually immoral – Deuteronomy 27:20.
- Curse upon the sexually perverted – Deuteronomy 27:21.
- Curse upon incest – Deuteronomy 27:22-23.
- Curse upon the violent – Deuteronomy 27:24.
- Curse upon those who cheat the courts – Deuteronomy 27:25.

And Moses ends with a summation you might say in Deuteronomy 27:26.

Now let's think about this. If you think you have done good, forget about it! You have to keep all the Words of the Law, everyone perfectly and no one could do that. It is as Paul said in Romans 3:23, **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”**

Thus, on Mont Ebal where there were the cursings, there is the blood sacrifice; the shedding of blood and out of that there is forgiveness of sin, as I have said.

Jesus is our sacrifice and His shed blood has cleansed us as white as snow.

Now we can dedicate our lives to Him and rejoice that we have peace with God through Jesus Christ!

On Mount Gerizim, where the blessings were called out to, there was no need for an altar or sacrifices, but there was on Mount Ebal and that is where we all came from folks!