

December 20, 2020

You Are a Holy People

Deuteronomy 7-8

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Dec 13	1 Thess 1-5	Dec 17	Titus-Philemon
Dec 14	2 Thess 1-3	Dec 18	Hebrews 1-6
Dec 15	1 Timothy 1-6	Dec 19	Hebrews 7-10
Dec 16	2 Timothy 1-4	Dec 20	Hebrews 11-13

Overview of Deuteronomy 7-8

Deuteronomy 7 God call His people to be Holy.

Deuteronomy 8 God reminds His people not to forget Him.

Lesson Idea: We are chosen by God to be His holy people.

Deuteronomy 7:1-5 Driving Out the Enemy

Questions to Ponder:

- V 1-2. Who would be responsible for their victories and how?
- V 3-4. Why were they not to intermarry with them?
- V 5. What were they supposed to do with the places of idol worship and why?

Deuteronomy 7:1-5

1 "When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to take possession of it, and **He drives away many nations from before you**, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, **seven nations greater and mightier than you**, 2 and **when the LORD your God turns them over to you and you defeat them, you shall utterly destroy them. You shall not make a covenant with them nor be gracious to them.** 3 Furthermore, **you shall not intermarry with them:** you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. **4 For they will turn your sons away from following Me, and they will serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you.** 5 But this is what you shall do to them: you shall **tear down their altars**, smash their memorial stones, cut their Asherim to pieces, and burn their carved images in the fire.

NOTES:

Verses 1-2 make it clear that all victories would come because of God's activity and might. He will **drive away** the nations and **turn them over** to be defeated and utterly destroyed. They were not supposed to spare them, intermarry with them, or make covenants with

them, because God knew that they would **turn Israel's people away from following God and cause them to serve other gods**. God warned that if they turned to idolatry and started to worship the false gods of that land that His anger would be **kindled against them and** He would turn His destructive power towards them instead of their enemies (basically because they would then choose to make themselves enemies of the one True God). God instructed His people to destroy every altar and object of idol worship, so that they would not be tempted to worship there nor let any survivors from the nations rekindle its worship.

J. Gordon McConville in the *New Bible Commentary* explains:

Part of the reason for the command to destroy the Canaanites was that they were themselves under God's judgment for their sin. The beginning of their story in the Bible goes back to their ancestor Ham, the son of Noah (Gn. 10:6, 15-18). Canaan, Ham's son, was laid under a curse because of Ham's lack of filial respect for his father (Gn. 9:20-25). When the land of Canaan was promised to Abraham's descendants, it was not given straight away because 'the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure' (Gn. 15:16). According to Deuteronomy, these peoples' wickedness was evidently very great, and therefore it was time for judgment (9:5).

J.A. Thompson in the *Tyndale Commentary on Deuteronomy* also comments about God's command to destroy the inhabitants of the land in these verses:

1. The seven nations listed did not acknowledge the sovereignty of Yahweh. Moreover they occupied the land which he had given to his people. Further, they were devotees of other gods whom Yahweh could not tolerate in his presence. They were, therefore, proper subjects for the Holy War.

2, 3. In the Holy War Yahweh led his people out to battle and the enemy was overwhelmed. After the battle the people surrendered to Yahweh, as the Victor, the fruits of the victory. Sometimes this spoil included men, women, children, cattle and possessions (Josh. 6:17f.; 1 Sam. 15:3). Sometimes these were all destroyed. At other times the women, the children and the beasts were spared. But the obligation was on Israel to surrender everything to Yahweh in recognition of the fact that the victory was his and that he had exclusive rights over the spoil, either to save it or to destroy it. . . . some attempt is made to understand this divinely-ordered genocide as the outcome of God's action to accomplish both his judgment on wicked nations and his purposes of redemption for his people.

4. The danger of compromising alliances is here alluded to. The outcome would be divine judgment because of the broken covenant. . .

Some commentators have suggested that the injunction of verse 2 was an ideal, not always carried into effect, but remaining as a divine command in order to provide a vivid picture of how completely Israel ought to reject all compromise. . . For Israel, separation from those who did not acknowledge Yahweh was a matter of life or death, for her own faith contrasted so greatly with that of her neighbours that any risk of having it watered down in any way was to be avoided. Israel herself was set apart for Yahweh's exclusive use.

In the New Testament, God also commands the followers of Christ to be holy and separate unto Him.

Consider 1 John 2:15-16:

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world— the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life— is not from the Father but from the world.

Consider also Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

James 4:4

You adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever chooses to be a friend of the world renders himself an enemy of God.

God deserves our complete loyalty and devotion. We should not just give lip service to saying: "Jesus is Lord." The authority of Christ as our Master should extend over every area of our lives. We should obey His Spirit in putting to death all of the enemies of Christ which seek to enslave us (see Romans 6).

Deuteronomy 7:6-11 A Chosen People

Questions to Ponder:

- **V 5. What does it mean to be a holy people to the LORD?**
- **V 7-8. Why did God choose Israel to be His people?**
- **V 9-10. What were they supposed to know about God? How would that affect future generations?**
- **V 10-11. How does God treat those who reject Him?**

Deuteronomy 7:6-11

6 For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His

personal possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

7 "The LORD did not make you His beloved nor choose you because you were greater in number than any of the peoples, since you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His faithfulness to a thousand generations for those who love Him and keep His commandments; 10 but He repays those who hate Him to their faces, to eliminate them; He will not hesitate toward him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face. 11 Therefore, you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I am commanding you today, to do them.

NOTES:

The basic idea of "holiness" is separation—separation both **from** what is evil but also from what is just common, so that God's people could be separated **to** Him and only Him. God chose His people to be a **personal possession** for Himself. Verses 7-8 seeks to make sure that they would not become arrogant or proud of being selected by God. Israel was not chosen because of some special attributes they possessed; they were chosen because God **loved them and kept the oath He swore to their forefathers.**

The New Testament teaches this same humility to believers. The Apostle Peter applies this same type of divine calling to the followers of Christ in 1 Peter 2:9-10:

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

The Apostle Paul also emphasizes that believers share this aspect of being chosen by God in Ephesians 1:4-6:

4 For He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in His presence. In love 5 He predestined us for adoption as His sons through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the Beloved One....

Thompson shares the same sentiment:

It is worthy of comment that something of this thinking is carried over into the New Testament. The Christian believer is also chosen by God (John 15:16) as a sheer act of grace on his part. God, in Christ, came to men who were in the bondage of sin and liberated them from the

power of darkness and transferred them into the kingdom of his beloved Son (Col. 1:13, 14).

McConville points out that God's choice of Israel brought certain obligations:

God had made a covenant because of his love, and he would show his faithfulness in it, but he expected in return a love which was willing to be obedient (9). God's undertaking to expel the Canaanites was quickly followed by a stern warning to Israel not to take their own relationship with him for granted. The sign that that relationship was true would not be the name of 'Israel', nor any outward mark, but only a willingness to do the commandments of God (10-11). This is the other side of 'holiness'. The same warning still echoes in the NT (e.g. Rom. 9:30-32), and comes today not only to Jews but also to Christians.

...the choice of Israel, and rejection of the Canaanites, was not for Israel's sake alone. Though it is not evident in Deuteronomy, the long-term purpose of the choice of Israel must not be forgotten, namely to bring blessing to all the peoples of the earth (Gn. 12:3). When God brought Israel into her land, it was a step on the way to that end. Israel in covenant with God could show the world what God is like—if she could be faithful.

Verse 9 describes the nature of God as faithful and loving. But verse 10 also reminds Israel that He can be full of wrath against His enemies. Thompson explains:

When men are in a relationship of love with Yahweh, they discover that Yahweh is faithful to his covenant relationship and loyal to his promises. The wonderful fact about him is that, although by reason of Israel's neglect and breach of covenant he might have been released from his obligations to Israel, yet he continued faithful. Conversely, where there is no relationship of love, but rather one of hate in which men reject Yahweh and become so disloyal to him as to disregard him and defy him, then for their breach of covenant and for their base ingratitude they taste the judgments that attend the man who breaks his covenant. Yahweh is a jealous God who will tolerate no challenge to his sovereignty (6:10–15).

Deuteronomy 7:12-26 The Blessings of God

Questions to Ponder:

- V 12-15. What other promises does God make to His people if they would keep His covenant?
- V 16. What reason did God give for them not to spare the people that lived in the land?
- V 17-21. Why did God tell them not to fear the nations of the land?

- V 22-26. Why would God not drive out all the threats to Israel at once?

Deuteronomy 7:12-26

12 *"Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep His covenant with you and His faithfulness which He swore to your forefathers. 13 And He will love you, bless you, and make you numerous; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain, your new wine, and your oil, the newborn of your cattle and the offspring of your flock, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you. 14 You shall be blessed above all peoples; there will be no sterile male or infertile female among you or among your cattle. 15 And the LORD will remove from you all sickness; and He will not inflict upon you any of the harmful diseases of Egypt which you have known, but He will give them to all who hate you. 16 You shall consume all the peoples whom the LORD your God will turn over to you; your eye shall not pity them, nor shall you serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you. 17 "If you say in your heart, 'These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?' 18 you are not to be afraid of them; you shall remember well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: 19 the great trials which your eyes saw and the signs and the wonders, and the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the LORD your God brought you out. The LORD your God will do the same to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. 20 Indeed, the LORD your God will send the hornet against them, until those who are left and hide themselves from you perish. 21 You are not to be terrified of them, because the LORD your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God. 22 And the LORD your God will drive away these nations from you little by little; you will not be able to put an end to them quickly, otherwise the wild animals would become too numerous for you. 23 But the LORD your God will turn them over to you, and will throw them into great confusion until they are destroyed. 24 And He will hand over their kings to you, so that you will eliminate their name from under heaven; no one will be able to stand against you until you have destroyed them. 25 The carved images of their gods you are to burn with fire; you shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, or you will be trapped by it; for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. 26 And you shall not bring an abomination into your house and become designated for destruction, like it; you are to utterly detest it, and you are to utterly loathe it, for it is something designated for destruction.*

NOTES:

God restates some of the promises that He has consistently made since bringing Israel out of Egypt. If His people would be obedient to His covenant demands, then **He would keep His covenant with them and His faithfulness which He swore to their forefathers. And He would love them, bless them, and make them numerous** (v12-13). God promises to bring blessings to every area of their lives from their crops to their livestock to their children. He includes a promise to bless even their health against diseases (v 15). This power of God is especially important to us during this year of the pandemic of 2020. God never promises to rid His people of all illness, but the Word of God emphasizes His power to heal and protect. For instance, Psalm 91:5-6 has wonderful promises for those who dwell in the shelter of the Most High God:

*5 You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,*

*6 nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.*

Verse 16 reminds them again why they cannot mix with the nations of the land—because **that would be a snare to you**. God is a jealous God, but His jealousy extends to His people because He loves them and is concerned for their well-being. His commands are given not to demonstrate His preferences, but to protect His people. Everything God commands in His Word is for His glory but also for our good.

In verses 17-21 God tells His people not to be afraid of the people in the land. He warns them because fear derailed their father's generation from entering the land, and because they should have enough faith in His power to deliver them. He reminds them of His victory over Egypt and promises to **do the same to all the peoples of whom you are afraid** (19).

Verse 22 says that the victory would come slowly, because that would actually be better for them. The inhabitants of the land, even though they were evil and deserved wrath, served a purpose in the land. They kept the wild animals from overwhelming the land until Israel could settle there. God's timetable sometimes seems slow to us, but God has purposes in all that He does and all that He does not do. Although Deuteronomy 8 is not a part of our lesson today, it is worth reading in this context. Israel is warned not to forget what God had done for them over the past 40 years in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy 8 Don't Forget the Lord

1 "All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, so that you may live and increase,

and go in and take possession of the land which the LORD swore to give to your forefathers. 2 And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, in order to humble you, putting you to the test, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. 3 And He humbled you and let you go hungry, and fed you with the manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, in order to make you understand that man shall not live on bread alone, but man shall live on everything that comes out of the mouth of the LORD. 4 Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. 5 So you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. 6 Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. 7 For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of streams of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in valleys and hills; 8 a land of wheat and barley, of vines, fig trees, and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; 9 a land where you will eat food without shortage, in which you will not lack anything; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. 10 When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you. 11 "Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God by failing to keep His commandments, His ordinances, and His statutes which I am commanding you today; 12 otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, and you build good houses and live in them, 13 and when your herds and your flocks increase, and your silver and gold increase, and everything that you have increases, 14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; 15 He who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions, and its thirsty ground where there was no water; He who brought water for you out of the rock of flint. 16 In the wilderness it was He who fed you manna which your fathers did not know, in order to humble you and in order to put you to the test, to do good for you in the end. 17 Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.' 18 But you are to remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, in order to confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. 19 And it shall come about, if you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and serve and worship them, I testify against you today that you will certainly perish. 20 Like the nations that the LORD eliminates from you, so you shall perish, because you would not listen to the voice of the LORD your God.