

## MARCH 30

### Deuteronomy 13-15

Look for recurring words, phrases and themes. There are some big themes that God is emphasizing for Israel.

#### Deuteronomy 13

Vs. 1-5 It's interesting that the example mentioned here is where the words of the prophet come true and God allows it to happen. Wouldn't miracles be a case for listening to what he says? Paul ups the ante on this and says in Galatians 1:8, *But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.* I'll bet Paul was thinking of this portion of Deuteronomy.

I really don't think we grasp the consequences of sin and separation from God. Truth is vital and far more important than our experience. That is why the Bible is important. This thing on earth is happening so slowly and invisibly as to put us to sleep. Reality, however, remains unchanged. In spite of what we feel, there is a contest for the souls of men being waged every day. Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:20, *O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge..."*

By the way, this would have been someone like Balaam.

Vs. 6-11 Now this rule was only for Israel as they were a nation under God's rule. This is hard for us to choke down, I know, but the lessons of the wilderness taught them that, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:6, *a little leaven leavens the whole lump.* How much cancer is acceptable? What God is setting up here is a "perfect" society that He knows won't work. It won't work, not because it is a "perfect" society, but because there is something in mankind, inside of each person, that rebels against God. By the end of the book of Judges, everything will have fallen apart. Sin will be shown to be sin.

Vs. 6-7 Notice that the enticement is to worship gods they have never worshiped. If the argument is raised that they were told not to worship the gods of Canaan, then they might say, "I know, those were really bad and awful, but this god is from far, far away and is OK. It is from a place called 'USA.' Now we'll press this button here and watch the idol 'boot up.'" (I'm trying to be funny.)

V. 10 These gods were in contrast to the God they did know, who saved them. Notice how important their salvation was. As long as they treasured what God had done for them, they would be safe.

V. 11 If they did this, it would have a good effect in the entire land.

Vs. 12-18 Moses has gone from addressing the false messenger, to the false loved one, to the false city. This will happen at the end of Judges and the tribe of Benjamin will almost be lost. It is a very sad and conflicted story. But I'm sure this was repeated throughout Israel. In fact, one of those stories at the end of Judges shows the entire tribe of Dan going "idol." I think it is for this reason that the tribe of Dan is not mentioned among the 144,000 in the book of Revelation.

Since Christ, the power of the gospel and the love of God is the only thing that works in a pluralistic, relativistic, lost world. Society today doesn't give a parent or employer many rights on limiting the freedom of the people they are responsible for. As disciples of Christ, the truth we bring is wrapped in spiritual power and in the love of Christ working through us. Sin rebels against law. It is not so powerful when confronted by the love and grace of Christ. Today our work is not to shape people or nations by activism, but by working and witnessing and praying "under the radar" to see people come to Christ.

1 Timothy 2:1 - *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

#### Deuteronomy 14

Vs. 1-2 These verses attest to their great privilege on the earth and launches this chapter on being a distinct people for the Lord on the earth. Here, they are told not to copy this pagan custom of mourning for the dead.

Vs. 3-21 Since God says in the NT that all foods are clean, this was a law showing their "differentness" among the nations. It was the equivalent of them eating with a fork and a knife instead of their fingers or blowing their noses instead of picking them.

V. 21a Again, it showed a sense of propriety and "rightness" to their customs. I definitely wouldn't lament that I couldn't eat road kill or something that just fell over and died.

V. 21b As often as this is mentioned, I wonder if this was just a point of propriety or respect or if it had something to do with Egyptian/pagan ritual or superstition.

Vs. 22-29 This section is about the tithe and in that there is a link between only offering the tithes at the tabernacle and the provision for the Levites. In giving the tithes, there is the underlying value that this is important. But why? Does God need food? No. So do they give because of raw obedience? That only takes you so far. Valuing the presence of God at the tabernacle was faith. Providing for the Levites was also faith, because they scattered around the country and taught the people spiritual values. They were the "Sunday school teachers" of Israel. If the people lost the value of being a spiritual nation, they would stop coming to the tabernacle and they would stop providing for the Levites. These two "rules" showed what the people truly valued in their hearts. And, their tithing showed they understood that God was providing for them.

When the people came to offer the tithe of their crops, they were to celebrate before the Lord. This is kind of interesting because v. 26 suggests a feast and a celebration. Before the Lord, held in check by their love for God, they could buy any food and drink wine or "strong drink." There is the balance between the occasional being "merry of heart" and being a perpetual drunk. Drunkenness means being given to being drunk. There is a positive rendering of being mildly intoxicated that God doesn't seem to judge; for example, Ruth 3:7 - *And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down.*

Vs. 28-29 Here was an exception to going to the tabernacle. On the third year, they brought their tithes into their own towns, invited the Levites who lived in the area and then held a feast for the Levites and all of the poor and needy. More on this in the next chapter.

#### Deuteronomy 15

Vs. 1-6 Now, this would never work today. Apparently, not only was the 50<sup>th</sup> year the year of jubilee, where lands would revert back to the owners and slaves, but also people who had sold themselves to someone, because they were poor, would be set free. This canceling of debts and freedom of servants also came every seven years during the Sabbatical year. Today this would mean the credit card companies would cancel your bill every seven years!

Note that v. 6 gives the reasoning for this. If the people obeyed, God would so super-bless Israel that they would have so much that they would be sinning to hold back and not give freely. They were not to try to get rich, but to be openly generous with what God gave them. This sounds like some of the things Jesus said to His disciples.

Notice also that in v. 4, it says they would not have poor people, but in v. 11 it says they would always have poor people. So what does that mean? I believe it means that God would work things out so that there would always be people who needed help from others. This would be to test the hearts and generosity of the people. Personally, I would rather have been on the giving end of that process than on the end where God pulled the rug out from under me to put me on the receiving end to test the hearts of others. But it is obvious that God was going to do this. I think this goes for today too and extends to health care costs and to the protection of the helpless. Lots of wisdom is needed in all of this, but the point seems obvious; God keeps some people in a state of need to see if the surrounding society is humble and willing to care and share.

The contradiction in vs. 4 and 11 is dissolved in that God would bring people to the place of being poor, but Israel would meet their needs so that they would no longer be poor. That would be pretty cool.

Vs. 7-11 Again, remember that this wasn't true, genuine slavery. People were free after six years. Imagine today if someone was out of work and destitute. Mercedes comes along and says, "We'll give you a job, food and a place to live if you'll sign a 6-year contract." Isn't that nuts! Who would say no?

Vs. 12-18 In fact, if the situation were really good, at the end of six years, the "slave" could say he wanted to stay on permanently and could retire from there. The nations back then were largely farming communities. Help was always needed. The people were to be generous and actively help people by signing them on to work. God said He would bless them for that. For the provision of six years of food, clothing and shelter, a poor person worked. Not a bad set up for the poor. No local government was involved and no taxes were levied on the people to give aid to the needy.

Vs. 19-23 are again that test of heart and security in God's provision. Animals were valuable, yet as the animals gave birth, the first of those animals suitable for sacrifice had to be given back to the Lord. Sacrifice and gratitude were built into every day of everyone's lives. Those men and women of faith who realized they were set free and now blessed because of the promise to Abraham would love much and give back to God out of joy and thanks. To everyone else, sacrifice would be a religious duty. When we get to Malachi the people were not giving God the best, because they were pressed by hard times. It's hard to give when it hurts, but it really is hard to give if we don't believe or trust God.

I am so impressed in all of this, that God kept telling the people to remember they had been slaves and were now free. They were free because of God's amazing grace and His desire to bless. Do we work in the harvest following Christ for any other reason? He loved us. How do we know? He set us free, dying for us while we were still enemies. As disciples making disciples in the harvest, we need to love the Lord and we need to remember that we were lost, but saved and found by His grace. A good song to listen to in this connection is "Remember Your Chains" by Steven Curtis Chapman.

### **Luke 8:40-9:6**

Luke 8:40-56

V. 41 This was back in Capernaum. Jesus was popular there and remember that Jesus just healed the servant of the centurion who built this synagogue. For Jairus to come to Jesus was one thing, but to fall at His feet meant that Jairus was desperate and believed Jesus could help.

Vs. 42-48 This was a God-planned fiasco. I'm sure when it happened Jesus smiled, knowing His Father was designing a situation in which many hearts would be revealed. I need to smile more.

This is the first time I've ever noticed that the woman was sick as long as Jairus' daughter had been alive. They were both 12, in a manner of speaking.

Unlike us, Jesus was not upset, anxious about the delay, or embarrassed by Peter's remark. I need to learn to abide in the Lord.

Vs. 49-50 This was Jairus' test of faith and by allowing Jesus to come to his house he was showing faith.

Vs. 51-56 Reading Mark's account, I have a feeling this went very quickly once Jesus got the mourners outside. He didn't want to draw attention to the event. I'll bet it was only seconds after entering the room that Jesus had her on her feet.

Luke 9:1-6

And now we have another twelve. This is just coincidence....I think.

To understand the chronology here a little better, read Matthew 9:27-34, then Mark 6:1-6 and finally Matthew 9:35-38.

It seems to me that the dramatic nature of these healings and the second rejection in Nazareth somehow added to the decision to send the Twelve out. Their confidence would have been high.

To read a more complete version of this, look at Matthew 10. Matthew was one of those disciples.

### **Psalm 71**

This psalm and the next four are pretty long, and it's easy to get lost in the alternating thoughts of crying out and confidence and desiring justice and praising God. I'd suggest you choose something(s) to underline; for example, the pleas (*rescue me, be not far from me, etc...*) or the praises.

This looks like it could have been written by David later in life and just before the fight with Absalom's army.

Vs. 1-3 This is vintage David. God was his refuge.

Vs. 4-11 Here you have the cry for rescue. David asks God to hold him now in his old age and failing strength as He did when David was young. Once again, David's enemies thought God would not save him. They forgot that God's grace was upon David.

Vs. 12-24 Notice how often David says he will testify to the Lord and notice how many ways he says he will do this.

I find v. 20 interesting, *You who have made me see many troubles....will revive me again.* Even David realized that God led him into troubles, to show him that he could depend on God and that God would revive him again. That is a good lesson for a disciple to learn. He leads us to bring praise from our mouths. So let's do it.

### **Proverbs 12:5-7**

I don't know. I guess I'd rather hang with the righteous dudes. So what does real biblical righteousness look like? Just, fearless, compassionate, and enduring. Jesus put it like this in Luke 6:47, *Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like...*