

Into the Promised Land - Joshua's Story

Lesson #30 - "All About Worship"

•HANDOUT•

► This Lesson will cover Chapters 12 thru 14. As we did previously, the narrative in "green ink" reflects summaries of scripture passages, while "blue ink" passages are verbatim scriptures.

This lesson initiates a new subject: How God's Covenant people are to worship the Lord. This will address the most spiritually crucial elements for both the Nation of Israel as well as instructions for the individual Israelite. Worshiping encompasses more than singing and praying; it involves every aspect of one's life.

**God declared Israel is to separate themselves from the pagan nations surrounding them.
They are to live under His Law, in the Land the LORD God was providing them.
First order of business: Utterly destroy all the Canaanite places of worship.**

Q: Why did the LORD say it was necessary for Israel to destroy all of the Canaanite places of worship?

**Just as God has been doing since He brought Moses to the top of Mt. Sinai
He gives minute details, leaving nothing to whim or choice:
Here is how Israel is to Worship the LORD God ...**

Deuteronomy 12:4-9 • You must not worship the LORD your God in their way. But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose, from among all your tribes, to put His Name there for His dwelling.

To that place you must go; there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks.

There, in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the LORD your God has blessed you.

You are not to do as we do here today, everyone doing as he sees fit, since you have not yet reached the resting place and the inheritance the LORD your God is giving you.

Q: What is God preparing Israel to understand when Moses says: "God will choose from among all your tribes to put His Name there for His dwelling?"

► There are 2 ways scholars interpret this: [Ref: Joel 3:17 • Psalm 132:13 • Acts 1:9-12 • Zechariah 14:4-5]

- 1.
- 2.

Q: What does this passage say about the attributes of the place of worship which the Lord chooses?

1. It is the place we are to:
2. It is the place of: _____
3. It is the place of: _____
4. It is the place of: _____ and with others of like mind.
5. It is the place where: _____

Q: How are we to understand this statement regarding worship: "You are not to do as we do here today, everyone doing as he sees fit?"

► For the next ten verse, Moses continues with his admonishments. He promised Israel that once they were settled in the Land, the Lord would give them “*rest from all your enemies and you will live in safety.*” He also told them God wanted them to seek and praise God together as a family, rather than in just individual worship. This included every adult, all sons and daughters, menservants and maidservants, and the Levites from every town.

Q: Was the Lord's promise of rest and living in safety ever realized by God's people?

For the next 14 verses Moses continues his lecture on the proper Worship of God. But, this is not about the act of worship; it's about the butchering and eating animals.

► Instead of every animal that was killed being considered as set apart as a sacrifice to the LORD, they could eat the animals they killed. Whenever they desired meat, they could kill and eat as much as they wanted. This included both the ceremonially unclean as well as the clean. The one prohibition: They must not consume any of the blood. It must be poured out on the ground as though it was water. This freedom to kill and eat did not include any of the sacrificial animals that were to be killed at the appointed place of sacrifice [the tabernacle compound]. All must be done in the presence of the Lord.

Moses cautions them: “*Be careful not to neglect the Levites as long as you live in your land.*”

Q: Why does God make such an issue about the people not consuming any of the blood?

Moses concludes this part of his lecture with a warning ...

Deuteronomy 12:31-32 · You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshipping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods. See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.

Q: What is the name of the god this passage references as the god to whom babies were sacrificed?

Q: Surely, Israel kept this one command! Can we be assured that Israel did not follow Molech?

Chapter 13 opens with Moses giving a warning about the deceiver who comes with miraculous signs.

► Moses begins by setting up the warning with a list of “ifs.” If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams gives signs of wonder and they come true, if what they say goes against what God has already revealed, do not listen to their words. The words of Lord God are the only words worthy of ones attention.

The only One God's people must walk after is the Lord Himself. Therefore, Godly discernment will always carefully examine the message of the false prophet rather than the signs of wonder surrounding him. [Jesus put it this way, as recorded in Mark 16:17, *Signs are to follow believers instead of believers following signs.*]

► Moses then outlines the penalty for the deceiver who comes miraculous signs. If what the prophet or dreamer of dreams says ends up turning the people away from the LORD your God, that person must be put to death. This includes relatives, if they are one of the deceivers, even if they do it secretly to entice.

The bottom line: Israel, as a nation, must be protected against those who would lead them into idolatry. This includes the city that protects or sets up provisions for idolatry. Since God sees idolatry as an abominable thing, the city and all its property must be utterly destroyed. Once destroyed it must not be re-built and/or re-inhabited.

Q: How are we to understand an “abominable thing” – especially in Old Testament scripture?

Q: This passage of scripture subtly asks an important question which is at the foundation of what it means to be a follower of the Lord: What would it take for you to be deceived and end up being led away from God? Would seeing signs and wonders do it? Would the majority opinion do it?

Chapter 14 addresses how God's people should live, how they should conduct themselves, and what they should avoid ...

► Because Israel has been called to separate themselves from the pagan world, Moses reminds them that they are a holy people set aside, unto the Lord, to be God's special treasure. Therefore, if God regarded Israel as special among the nations, then they should conduct themselves as special among the nations. Moses begins by giving detail warnings regarding what Israel is to avoid.

His first command in this arena is about pagan burial customs. They are not to cut themselves, nor shave the front of their head on behalf of the dead.

Q: What was the cultural understanding regarding the pagan burial customs referred to here?

Next, Moses gives more restrictions regarding their animal food sources ...

They may eat every animal with cloven or split hooves, and chews the cud. He then lists the animals on the permitted list: ox, sheep, goat, deer, gazelle, and antelope. Not permitted, even though they chewed the cud or had cloven hooves – but not both: camel, hare, rock hyrax, swine. From the water it was permitted to eat only what has scales and fins.

From the bird family only certain birds were allowed. Basically a bird was unclean if it was a predator, because it ate both the flesh and the blood of animals; scavengers were unclean because they were carriers of disease and came in contact with dead bodies. Moses listed the birds that were not permitted, so, basically if a bird wasn't on the “no-no” list, one could eat it.

In general, they could not eat anything that had died rather than being killed. The issue here was the issue of not bleeding the animal and consuming the blood was absolutely not permitted.

Moses ended this portion of food prohibitions with the statement: You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

Q: What is significant about not boiling a young goat in its mother's milk?

Moses ends this portion of scripture with the Command to Tithe ...

► He begins this subject by saying: *"You shall truly tithe ..."* It is important to note that using the word "truly" becomes a reminder that the tithe is to be a real 10%. They were to tithe the increase of their grain, of their new wine and oil, of the firstborn of their herds and flocks. And when they brought the tithe to the tabernacle, a portion the tithe was to be enjoyed in a ceremonial meal before or "with" the Lord.

Then Moses reveals the purpose of the tithe: *"So that you may learn to fear the LORD your God, always."* A paraphrase from the Living Bible puts it plainly: *"The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives."*

The tithe of grain and livestock was to be brought into the House of the Lord; for some, that might be too far of a journey with the livestock, so special provisions were made. They could exchange the livestock for money and use the money to tithe with when they came to the tabernacle. Then they could have a meal in the presence of the Lord and rejoice. One of the things to remember: *"Don't forget the Levites, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own."*

Q: What does this special provision regarding the tithe tell us about God?

The Third-Year Tithe ...

► The tithe at the end of every three years was to be handled differently. Instead of bringing it to the place where the tabernacle was located, they were to keep the tithe in their hometown and make it available to the poor, the strangers, the orphans and widows, not just to the Levites.

Q: Was this considered as an additional tithe over and above the regular tithe?

► Moses closes this discussion with these words: *"That the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do."*

Q: How should the N.T. church view tithing? There are those who believe tithing is part of the O.T. Law and the N.T. does not require tithing. Others say that there is nothing in the N.T. that releases the believer from tithing, thus the requirement to tithe is still in place. How can we resolve this issue?

► Look at these 4 statements:

1. It is true there is nothing in the N.T. that specifically _____ tithing.

What the N.T. does speak quite loudly to is the _____ one has toward giving.

Look at Luke 11:42 • [Jesus said:] "Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.

2. Tithing did not come into being because _____; tithing was practiced and honored by God _____ the law of Moses.

The first account of tithing is found in Genesis 14:

Genesis 14:17-20 • After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). Then Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

3. Tithing carries with it a _____ and the _____ from the Lord.

Though this promise comes from an O.T. prophet, no where in the NT _____

Malachi 3:10-11 • Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty.

4. Above all else, the most important thing with giving is: _____

▶ The next three chapters [15--16--17] focuses on the various Laws which reflect God's mercy and care for the poor, the way God desires the justice system to function, and the observance of the three major feasts that were to be part of Israel's culture.



Next Time • Lesson #31
“Law & Justice & Celebration”
[Chapters 15 thru 17 of Deuteronomy]

