

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible- Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St.
Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 8
DEUTERONOMY
CHAPTERS 13 & 14**

INTRODUCTION

Our Lord Jesus Christ warned His disciples that prior to His return *“there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and they shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect”* (Matthew 24:24). We learn here that any person who comes in the name of Christ and can perform miracles and wonders is not necessarily a true preacher and prophet of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many will be deceived. But there is a more sure way of testing the integrity of these preachers and prophets. Moses teaches us in Deuteronomy 13.

As God’s chosen people, the lifestyle of the Israelites must be unique and different from that of the other nations. There were ways of these other nations which were abominable to God. In Deuteronomy 14, Moses pointed out some of these ways were what Israel should not be imitating and practising. God is teaching us in these chapters that we, who are His chosen, peculiar and holy people should think and behave differently from the world. Paul exhorts the same when he wrote to the Romans who lived in

Rome, the chief city of then known world, that the Roman Christians must not conform to the world but be transformed by the renewing of their mind, that they may discern the good and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2). The study of these two chapters should benefit us tremendously in knowing what we should be and how we ought to live differently from others. Moses points out the three sources of enticement to apostasy and some of the painful steps we need to take to be faithful to God. Moses also teaches some of the salient characteristics of our daily living which single us out to be different and special in a corrupt and wicked world.

OUTLINE

A. The Israelites were Warned Against Enticement to Apostasy (13:1-18)

1. Enticed by a prophet or a dreamer (13:1-5).
 - a) The prophet or dreamer showed evidence of spiritual power (1-2).
 - b) Test the prophet or dreamer by God’s Word and commandments (3-5).
2. Enticed by family members (13:6-11).
 - a) Enticement by a family member to go after other gods (6-7).
 - b) Rejection of the allurements to apostasy (8).
 - c) Action against the tempter (9-11).
3. The inhabitants of a city enticed by sons of Belial (probably Israelites) to worship other gods (13:12-18).

- a) The accusation that these sons of Belial had taught the inhabitants of a city to go after other gods (12-13).
- b) Verification of the accusation (14).
- c) Judgement meted out on the inhabitants of the city if proven true (15-18).

B. The Israelites Were Called to Live a Distinctive Lifestyle (14:1-29)

- 1. On mourning the dead (14:1-2).
 - a) Mutilation of the body forbidden (1).
 - b) Reflection of Israel being a holy people unto the LORD (2).
- 2. On consumption of food (14:3-21).
 - a) The commandment restated (3).
 - b) Touching on animals (4-8)
 - Those permitted to be eaten (4-6).
 - Those prohibited from being eaten (7-8).
 - c) Touching on fish (9-10).
 - Those that have fins and scales were permitted to be eaten (9).
 - Those that have no fins and scales were unclean (10).
 - d) Touching on fowls (11-20).
 - All clean birds could be eaten (12, 20).
 - Those that should not be eaten (13-19).
 - e) Touching on a general regulation (21).
 - Eating meat of an animal that died by itself was prohibited (21a).

- Seething of a kid in its mother's milk was prohibited (21b).
- 3. On tithing of first fruits (14:22-29).
 - a) The command rehearsed (22).
 - b) The tithes must be brought and eaten before the LORD at the chosen place of worship (23).
 - c) If the journey be too long, the offerings could be converted to money which in turn would be used to purchase the offerings at the chosen place of worship (24-26).
 - d) The Israelites to care for the Levites (27).
 - e) The triennial tithing should be brought and kept in each home town (28-29).
 - Consideration and care for the Levites, the stranger, fatherless and widows (29).

COMMENTARY

Putting the Evil Away in Our Midst

Moses ended Chapter 12 with these words: "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shall not add thereto, nor diminish from it." He then proceeded to three sources in which the children of Israel could be enticed to go after other gods. The first source was the existence of false prophets or a dreamer of dreams in their midst (13:1-5). A prophet was highly respected in those days, and a dreamer of dreams was a legitimate means of receiving divine revelation. But Moses warned his fellow countrymen of false prophets that will arise from within Israel. Although

the prophets might have the ability to perform signs and wonders, the Israelites must not be swayed by the spectacular. If the prophets perform signs and wonders and even if they come to pass, *but had enticed the Israelites to seek after and serve other gods*, which they had not known, they must not listen to them.

The word "known" does not only refer to an intellectual knowledge of the gods, but includes the concept of acceptance and experience. In other words, it means to have an experiential knowledge or relationship with the gods just as the Israelites had with the LORD their God. The only way to do this is to use the Word of God to evaluate.

Having found out the truth, the response of the Israelites toward the false prophets was not to listen to them. God had permitted these false prophets to do what they did to test whether the Israelites loved Him with all their hearts and souls. This is similar to what James says in James 1:2-4, *"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."* Israel should walk after the LORD, fear Him, keep His commandments, obey Him, serve Him and cleave to Him. Finally, they should treat the prophet or the dreamer of dreams severely by putting him to death for they had tried to lure Israel away from the worship of the One living and true God. This was to purge this evil and terrible sin out of their midst!

The second source of enticement to apostasy was more painful and difficult. The home is a place of protection, peace and joy. But it can also be a source of the most dangerous evil. A beloved relative or

a close friend might entice one to go and serve other gods which Israel had not known. Moses gave a five-fold response to such a loved one or bosom friend: should not willingly accept him, hear him, pity him, spare him, and hide him (13:8). And finally the tempter should be put to death. And the one who brought him to light must be the first one to stone him to death. This instruction for the one who brought him to light to cast the first stone evidenced that the charge was very serious and one must seriously consider it before jumping to any conclusion. No human relationship must be above our love and devotion to God. Luke 14:26, *"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."*

The purpose Moses gave in this case is that Israel might learn and fear the LORD God, and that such sin against God would not be tolerated in the midst of God's people.

A third source of enticement to apostasy might happen in the community. Some sons of Belial (good-for-nothing, worthless), who were among them might entice the people to go after and serve other gods. The Israelites must thoroughly investigate the matter. And if it was found to be true, all those who lived in the city would be put to death, including their livestock. Moreover the booty of the city would be collected together and burned along with the city. The burnt down city would become a heap of rubble and remain a reminder to Israel and her descendants concerning what would happen to a community who forsook the LORD their God to worship idols. We see how important it was for such a charge to be diligently and

thoroughly investigated before executing the capital punishment that was meted to the whole community.

We learn some important principles. Firstly, it is a serious thing to turn away from the living and true God to worship and serve other gods which we have no experiential knowledge of and meaningful relationship with at all. Secondly, the penalty of removing this evil is to kill the tempter. We do not do this today. In the Old Testament (before there was a king), God was their Ruler. It was a theocratic reign. Today in the New Testament, God rules us through His Church, and the appropriate penalty would be expulsion or excommunication from the church if the tempter does not confess and repent. Other "gods" are not necessarily restricted to metal or wooden idols or images. It can be our very own loved ones, or things such as computers, movies, games etc

Thirdly, we should not, in the first place, listen to these people or have any fellowship with them, and should not spare and pity them if they refuse to repent and continue in their deception and apostasy. Fourthly, miracles and wonders are not proofs that a preacher or teacher comes from God. The Word of God is the only source of examining the true colours of the preacher or teacher. The Word of God is the only standard of measurement in determining between truth and error, not miracles. 2 Peter 1:19, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:"

Finally, the best response to these false prophets or dreamers of dreams is to hear the voice of God

through the reading of His infallible Word, and to keep His commandments, and do what is right and pleasing in His sight.

Being Unique & Different

Moses said to all Israel: "Ye are the children of the LORD your God" (14:1). By this declaration, Moses emphasised the fact that the Israelites are a special chosen people of God whom God had brought out of the house of bondage. They are a holy nation, a peculiar people, God's treasured possession. Israel is unique and she must therefore be different from all the other nations (14:2). Moses touches on some of the common but very important aspects of their daily life.

Firstly, the Israelites must not mutilate their bodies. Such a practice was common among the heathen when they mourned the death of someone. Jeremiah the prophet made references to these practices in his days (Jeremiah 16:6; 47:5; 48:37). Even today, it is not uncommon in some cultures to mutilate the body in mourning. In New Guinea, a mourner, especially a woman, will remove a tip of one of her fingers, even up to the first joint, and in some extreme cases, more than one finger joint. Secondly, Israel must have a different attitude toward death. Death is in the hands of the LORD God. And the manner of conduct when an Israelite mourns his dead was significant. Either God was glorified or dishonoured. 1 Thessalonians 4:13, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."

Thirdly, the mutilation of the body somewhat marred the body which God had created. Israel must not only be holy, spiritually perfect, but

they must maintain a wholesome body. In this way, Israel must show herself to be unique and different from the other peoples.

The principle we learn is simple and clear. The death of our loved one, who is a believer, is in fact a matter of joy because he or she has gone to be with the Lord, promoted to glory. He or she is enjoying the blessed presence of the Lord Jesus Christ and all the other saints who have gone to heaven before him. And he might meet some of his believing friends there! He is neither suffering nor in an intermediate state of unconsciousness before the return of the Lord. No, he is very much alive. D. L. Moody, the great evangelist in the 19th century, said to a friend, "One day you'll see in the paper: 'Moody is dead!' Don't you believe it! I'll be more alive than ever." That being the truth, a Christian should not mourn like the heathen as if there is no hope. Do we not sing when we conduct remembrance services, and some people think us strange that we should be singing songs of joy and hope instead of crying and wailing? Christians are different and unique.

The next outward sign of Israel's uniqueness and difference from the other peoples of the world was her dietary laws. Moses discussed three classes of food, namely, those living on land; those living in water and those living in the air. For those living on land, that is, animals, the Israelites were permitted to eat the ox, the sheep and the goat, and any animal that parts its hoof and chews the cud (14:4-5). For those living in water, that is, fishes, the Israelites were allowed to eat all that have fins and scales (14:9). For those living in the air, that is, birds and fowls, the Israelites might eat the clean ones, which Moses did not list because

they were known to the Israelites (Leviticus 11). And lastly, the Israelites must not eat of the meat of any animal which died of itself.

Festivities which were connected with their harvest and tithes must be eaten before the LORD God (14:22-23). The Israelites were forbidden to eat this fellowship meal anywhere, but at the central place of worship chosen by the LORD God. If they lived too far, they could exchange their offerings for money and then when they had made the trip, they could use the money to convert it back to the offerings and perform their spiritual duties and obligations before the LORD. This was unique because the Canaanites celebrated their religious festivities everywhere and anywhere. Israel was different. Moreover, every three years they must bring the tithes of their harvest to their own city and be kept there to meet the needs of the fatherless, the widows and the stranger. They must not forget the Levites too for they have no land inheritance; the LORD was their inheritance. These laws made Israel unique and different for they were a holy nation.

God's intention is to teach us that, like the Israelites who are a special people, holy unto Him, we too as His blood-bought sons and daughters should be unique and different from the world. Although the dietary laws have been abolished since the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, the point is not just a matter of whether we can eat or not eat this or that, but that in all our eating and drinking we must do it to glorify God. If by eating and drinking we stumble a brother, we must consider his conscience and not do it for the sake of his spiritual life. Clean and unclean foodstuffs have already been abolished by the Lord when He

visited the Apostle Peter in a vision (Acts 10:9-16):

On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

As Christians, we must remember that we are unique and different from the other people in the world.
AMEN

DAILY READING & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Deuteronomy 13:1-5; Acts 20:28-31; Matthew 24:24

TUESDAY: Deuteronomy 13:6-11; Acts 5:1-11

WEDNESDAY: Deuteronomy 13:12-18; Matthew 18:8-9

THURSDAY: Deuteronomy 14:1-21; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 2 Corinthians 7:1

FRIDAY: Deuteronomy 14:22-29; 2 Corinthians 9:7-9

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can we judge a preacher who claims to perform miracles, dream dreams, and see visions, if he is true or false?

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2. What is the prescribed penalty for those who encourage the worship of other gods?

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3. What action should Christians take in confronting a false preacher and teacher?

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4. What agony of choice is put upon the Christian? What is the right choice?

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5. What kind of response should we give to a relative or friend who entices us to worship other gods?

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6. Why do you think God requires the accuser to be the first person to carry out the penalty of death?

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7. What is the purpose of punishing the guilty party? (vv. 5, 11).

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10. In your own words, what would you say is God's intent behind these dietary laws? What are the most important things He wanted these laws to accomplish?

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8. Do we as a church practise the stoning to death of one who entices us to worship other gods? How do we apply this penalty today?

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11. How do we as Christians today demonstrate our unique position as God's chosen people?

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9. What are the three sources of enticement to idolatry given by Moses in chapter 13?

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12. Which aspects of God's nature and character are emphasised in these two chapters?

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