

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 9**

DEUTERONOMY

CHAPTERS 15 & 16

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter (14) ends with the LORD'S injunction to His people to be concerned for the Levites, and to be generous and kind to the stranger, the fatherless and the widow. God promised that if His people obeyed His commandments, He would bless them in all the work which they did. This theme continues in the following chapter. Our study of these two chapters in this lesson brings out a very important principle, that is, God's concern for the individual and his needs.

We have learned and continue to learn in these chapters that God wants the best for His people. In clear and simple terms, God expressed His concern and care for the landless, the fatherless, the widow and all those who are poor and needy. God has a blessed plan for His people and for all those who will heed Him and obey His commandments.

OUTLINE

**A. The Humanitarian Aspect Of
The Lord's Release (15:1-6)**

1. The release was made effective at the end of seven years (1).
2. The manner of releasing the loans (2-4)
 - a) Loans to a neighbour must be cancelled (2).
 - b) Loans to a foreigner could be exacted (3).
 - c) Loans to a fellow Israelite must be cancelled (4a).
3. The basis for the release (4b-6).
 - a) The LORD would bless the people in the land (4b).
 - b) The people must obey the LORD'S commandments (5).
 - c) The LORD would keep His promise and Israel would lend others and reign over them (6).

**B. The Caring Of The Poor And
Needy (15:7-11)**

1. The awareness of the poor and needy in the community (7a).
2. The way of meeting the needs of the poor (7b-10).
 - a) Be not tight-fisted but open-handed (7b-8).
 - b) Harbour no evil thoughts against the poor brother (9).
 - c) Grudge not in helping the poor (10).
3. There would always be poor people in the land (11).

**C. The Releasing of a Fellow
Israelite Servant (15:12-18)**

1. The servant served six years and released in the seventh year (12).
2. The manner of releasing the servant (13-15).
 - a) He should not be sent away empty (13).
 - b) He should be generously and adequately provided (14).
 - c) The master must remember that he was once a slave in Egypt (15).
3. The servant desired to stay on with the master (16-18).
 - a) The servant willed to remain and did not want to leave (16).
 - b) A permanent mark on the ear would be made to indicate the servant's choice (17).
 - c) The servant now was worth double to the master (18).

D. The Bringing of the Sacrificial Offering (15:19-23)

1. All the firstborn male of the flock must be consecrated to the LORD (19, 21).
 - a) It had not been put to work (19b).
 - b) It had not been shorn (19c).
 - c) It must be without any defect (21).
2. The eating of the sacrificial lamb (20, 22, 23).
 - a) It must be eaten before the LORD (20a).
 - b) The LORD would choose the place (20b).
 - c) It would be eaten by the entire household (20c, 21)
 - d) The blood must not be eaten (23).

E. The Keeping Of The Passover Lamb (16:1-8)

1. The Passover was observed in the month of Abib (1-2).
2. Seven days it was eaten with unleavened bread (3-4).
3. The Passover lamb must be sacrificed at the place chosen by the LORD at sunset (5-6).
4. The meat must be roasted (7).
5. On the seventh day a holy assembly would be convened before the LORD (8).

F. The Keeping of the Feast of Weeks (16:9-12)

1. The feast was celebrated after 50 days from the Sabbath of the Passover (9).
2. The observance of the feast would be done by freewill offering as the LORD had blessed them (10).
3. The whole household and congregation would rejoice together (11).
4. They must remember that they were once slaves in Egypt (12).

G. The Keeping of the Feast of Tabernacle (15:13-15)

1. The feast was to be celebrated for seven days (13).
2. All families, servants, the Levites, the visitors, the fatherless and the widows should rejoice in this feast (14).
3. They were to rejoice at the blessings of the LORD their God (15).

H. The Keeping of the Three Feasts (16:16-17).

1. Three times annually all the men must keep the feasts at the place chosen by the LORD (16a).
2. They must not appear before the LORD empty handed (16b).
3. Every man should give as the LORD had blessed him.

I. The Appointment of Judges (16:18-22).

1. The characteristics of the judge (18-20).
 - a) He must be available (18).
 - b) He must be impartial (19).
 - c) He must be upright (20).
2. There must be no planting of any heathen altar beside the LORD'S altar (21-22).

COMMENTARY

Releasing the Debtor

Every three years, God instructed the Israelites to offer provision to the Levites, who had no land inheritance, and who served the LORD in the Tabernacle; the visitor, the fatherless, and the widow which lived in their midst. The LORD God promised to bless them in all their work which they performed. In six years, the people of Israel would have performed this generosity and kindness twice. And now at the end of the seventh year, the people of Israel would make "a release". Every creditor who lent his neighbour should "release" the debt. But to a foreigner he was allowed to exact the same amount, but not with his fellow Israelite. The word "release" seems to pose a difficulty among Bible scholars.

Does the word mean a permanent cancellation of all debts, or a one year suspension of all debts? This writer agrees with those who take the former meaning, that is, a total cancellation of the debts. God is generous and kind. God promised to those who obeyed Him to do as He had commanded, He would bless the people in the land which God had given (15:4-6). They would be so blessed that they could lend to the other nations. However, they must not borrow from the other nations. To borrow from others would result in economic subjugation and place the debtor under the mercy of the lender. God promised that He would bless His people to the extent that their needs would be sufficiently met, and much more would be given so that they could lend others, if they obeyed Him.

Releasing the Poor

If the Israelites obeyed God, there would be no poor people among them (15:4). But the hearts of man are hardened, greedy and selfish. Not every one will obey God. Therefore, there will always be the poor and needy among us. In this regard, God called on His people that when a poor man lived among them, they ought not to harden their heart, or clench their fist tightly. They must open their hand. They ought to be generous and kind hearted. A further warning against those who would entertain an evil thought of withholding any help to his brethren because the year of release was around the corner. It is a sin against the LORD. The Israelite must still render help and provision. And the LORD God promised to bless the giver in all that he undertook to do. He would be richly blessed. We

learn that God knows and cares for the poor and needy, and He will command His people to provide for those in need.

Releasing the Servant

The law did not allow the Jews to enslave their fellow Jews, although they could have slaves from other nations (Leviticus 25:39-43). But the concept of slaves must be clearly understood. The idea of slave in the Old Testament and that of later centuries was very different. The kinds of treatment of the slaves or servants of later centuries were cruel and ruthlessly oppressive. Slaves were subjected to extreme human indignity. But the slaves or servants in the Old Testament were forbidden to be treated as such. If a Jew became a slave (a hired servant and not a bond servant) or a servant to another Jew, it was because the borrower could not pay his debts and he served his host as a servant for six years. In the seventh year, his debts would be totally cancelled and he would be free. In a way the debtor in serving the host was paying off his debt. And in the seventh year the host must set the servant free. He must send him off with generous gifts of his livestock and drink according to the measure God had blessed him. The host should always remember that he was once a slave in Egypt and how God emancipated him. Now then, if the slave or servant chose not to leave the host but desired to stay and serve the host, the host must receive him. A mark would be made on the ear of the servant and he would serve him for life. The LORD God would bless the host.

Thus far we see that there were three classes of people being

singled out for mention: the debtors, the poor, and the slaves or servants. God is very concerned for the welfare of these people. The debtors were being exploited and manipulated. The poor were despised, disdained and ostracised in the community. The slaves or servants were being badly treated. God's purpose for society at large is that there should not be these people if they all obeyed God and do as He commanded them. God in turn promised to bless them. At least such a situation should be seen in the fellowship of Christian brethren! There is a need today for Christians to examine themselves, purge themselves of the evil that is in our thoughts and hearts, and be what God wants us to be. If Christians want to make an impact in the world to draw people to Christ, the Christian community must show the love of God among themselves. Such a beautiful thing must happen first in the household of God.

Give the Best to the LORD

Continuing in the matter of being generous and kind in giving, offerings made to the LORD God must be nothing less than the best as prescribed by God. All the firstborn male of the herd and the flock belong to God. The bullock from the herd must not be made to do any work. The sheep from the flock must not be shorn. They were to be consecrated to the LORD God. It would be offered to the LORD and the fellowship meal would be eaten before God in the place where God would choose, in this case, it would be at the Tabernacle (in Shiloh), and later at the Temple (in Jerusalem). The animals that did not meet the prescribed conditions must not be

offered to the LORD, but they could be consumed by the family at any place; only the blood of the animal must not be consumed.

Feast of the Passover

Three feasts of the seven feasts (Leviticus 23) are brought up for mention. A common feature of these three feasts is that three times annually, all the men folks of Israel must gather together at God's chosen place of worship. That place would be the tabernacle and later the Temple. Wherever they might be, they had to travel to the tabernacle or the temple.

The celebration of the Passover is a remembrance of the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt in a great and mighty way. God redeemed them and delivered them out of Egypt. The feast of the Unleavened Bread was observed in conjunction with the Passover. The Israelites knew the significance of the feast. They gathered together and made a show of unity and solidarity. Their united worship of the LORD made their bond of oneness strong as a people of God. No Israelite would ever want to miss it. Remembering their deliverance of their bondage in Egypt each year gave the reason for a celebration.

In the New Testament, the Passover parallels the deliverance of believers in Christ from being slaves to sin. The Passover lamb is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ who was sacrificed for the deliverance of every believer from sin. John 1:29, "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Feast of Weeks

The Feast of Weeks is also called the Pentecost (Acts 2). In the New Testament, that was the day when the Holy Spirit descended upon the one hundred and twenty disciples gathered in the room. Israel was commanded to celebrate the feast of weeks on the fiftieth day counting from the Sabbath of the Passover Feast. It commemorated the first barley harvest. It was a time of rejoicing. The men who came to the worship place, as chosen by God, must bring a free-will offering and give it to the LORD God. The amount was determined in accordance to the measure in which God blessed them. In other words, give to the LORD as you have been blessed by the LORD. The focus was on the produce of the land, which would evidencethe LORD's goodness to His people whom He had redeemed. Once again, they ought to remember the day when they were emancipated from Egypt.

The lesson learned from this feast is the Christian's giving on each Lord's day to worship God. The amount of the gift is proportionate to the blessing of God bestowed upon him. C.T. Studd remarked, "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him." Christians should not be tight fisted in giving to the LORD. Our power of getting wealth is from God. We should echo the words of King David who praised and thanked God, saying, "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee"(1 Chronicles 29:14).

Feast of Tabernacles

The Israelites were to observe this feast for seven days. They were to gather together and rejoice in the LORD. They rejoiced because the LORD God had blessed them in all the things that their hands had put to work. These three feasts in a year, all the men folks must assemble at the Tabernacle (later at the Temple) to worship God and rejoice because God had blessed them. And they must not come before the LORD their God empty handed! Each gave according to what the LORD had given him.

Judges & Leaders

Since the time they departed from Egypt and throughout their journey through the wilderness, Moses had been their judge. Moses could not go over with them. He must now give them the guiding principles in choosing judges and leaders. These two categories of people were essential to the peace and progress of the new nation. Moses gave at least four characteristics of judges and leaders which they ought to note when they chose their judges and leaders. These judges must be available. Judicial courts would be set up throughout the land. Judicial courts presided by judges must be accessible to every one (16:18). Secondly the judge must be impartial without respect of any person (19a). Next the judge must be upright and must not accept any bribe. The reason given is clear and simple. The acceptance of a bribe would result in corruption and injustice (19b). Finally, the judge must be dedicated to his office and work (20). Judges were necessary in Israel. There would be people who gave false testimony. There would be those who stole. And

there would be those who committed murder and adultery. All these evil deeds that undermined a society must be appropriately and impartially dealt with. Then Israel could enjoy peace, prosperity and progress.

Moses ended this chapter with the injunction that at the place where God would choose for them to congregate and worship, they must not plant “a grove of any trees” (literally Hebrew: *Asherah*) which was a sacred pole set up by the heathen near an altar of God. The LORD God forbade His people to follow the manner of the people in the worship of God. At the Tabernacle or the Temple of God they must not erect this pole. There must be only one place of worship symbolising that there is only one Living and True God and there is also only one way of salvation.

SUMMARY

These two chapters emphasise two important characteristics of the conduct of the people of God. God’s people who would be blessed by Him must reflect the same generosity and kindness of God to others who are poor and needy. In giving liberally to these people is to trust God who promised to bless the cheerful and willing giver and helper, so that he will abound in this work and God will be praised. Then God wants His people to be joyful when they worship Him. It should always be a celebration of joy by the people of God when they remember His great and mighty works done in them and for them. May the LORD be praised. AMEN

DAILY READING & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Deuteronomy 15:1-11; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

TUESDAY: Deuteronomy 15:12-23; Philemon 1:10-19

WEDNESDAY: Deuteronomy 16:1-8; 1 Corinthians 5:7

THURSDAY: Deuteronomy 16:9-17; John 15:7-11; 1 John 1:3-4

FRIDAY: Deuteronomy 16:18-22; 1 Timothy 5:21; James 3:17; Matthew 23:23

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What promises from God do you see in verses 4-6?

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2. In verses 7-10, what attitude did Moses want to see among the people of Israel?

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3. In verses 7-10, what attitude did Moses want to see among the people of Israel?

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4. Why did God disallow Israel to borrow from the Gentiles but allow Israel to lend to them?

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5. Do you find in the words of verse 16 the expression of your own heart's resolve towards Christ?

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6. What were the most important things God wanted the laws in Chapter 15 to accomplish?

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7. What light do the laws in Chapter 15 throw upon God's character?

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8. What does the Feast of the Passover remind the Israelites of?

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9. What does the Feast of the Passover remind Christians of today?

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10. In connection with the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles, what two requirements were made of the worshipper, and why?

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11. With regard to free-will offerings, on what principle is the amount of the gift to be determined?

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12. What does it reveal in verse 15 of God's desire for His people?

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13. What were God's requirements of a judge? In what way are they applicable to the church today?

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