



## Deuteronomy 12-13

Tape #7055  
Deuteronomy 12-13  
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn now, to Deuteronomy, chapter twelve.

*These are the statutes and judgements, [The Lord said] which you shall be careful to observe, [God doesn't want sloppy service. Haphazard kind of reaction to His laws. God wants us to pay careful attention to His commandments. So God says, "Be careful now, to observe these. These are the statutes and judgements, you are to be careful to observe,"] in the land which the Lord is going to give to you (12:1).*

So they're about ready to come in and possess the land. "When you do, be careful that you keep these statutes and judgements." First of all...

*You shall utterly destroy all the places, where the nations which you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountain, on the hills, and under every green tree (12:2).*

"Utterly destroy the places of worship. The pagan places of worship of the people who dwell in the land".

*Destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods, and destroy their names from that place. You shall not worship the Lord your God, with such things (12:3-4).*

So, utterly destroy their places of worship, their objects of worship. Their idols, the images. Much of the worship in the primitive world, or in the ancient world, and today in more primitive cultures, is the worship of the capacity of man to procreate. Because there is, it seems, a divine power almost in the capacity of man, to reproduce. The power of creation. The creation of new life. It's an awe, it's a mystery, it's a wonder! Whenever you hold a new baby in your hands, and look at that little thing, and the fingers and the toes, and the whole thing, you just. To me one of the most awesome experiences in the world is the birth of a new child. I don't know of anything that is quite like it. To see the birth of a child, and to hold that new baby in your hands. To cut the umbilical cord, and to experience new life, and hold it there in your hands. It's just a marvelous experience! It's sort of almost a sacred experience. I mean there's something sort of sacred about the whole thing. Here is new life, and you realize this tremendous capacity that God has given us, to bring forth new life.

With the more primitive people, not having a clear understanding or concept of God, they began to worship reproduction capacities, and use the organs of reproduction as symbols and objects of worship. So you will find in many of the more primitive cultures uh, these organs that are carved out, and they are made the object of worship. The woman's breast, which can bring nourishment and life to a child, is often in their carving out of their goddesses, a very prominent feature. Of course, you know and you've seen the pictures of the multi-breasted women, that were, uh not women, but idols that were worshiped because of the capacity of the baby being nourished from the mother's breast. So they began, they worshiped these things and so much of the pagan worship was around the fertility goddess, and the capacity of man to reproduce.

God said, "Get rid of it. Destroy all of these symbols, all of these idols, all of these places of worship. Don't leave them around. Because you're not to worship me with such things". God did not want them borrowing from the pagan society, their methods and objects of worship. God wanted the worship of Him to be pure, from His people.

Now I believe that such is true today. I think that it is a shame that in many places, the church has borrowed pagan symbols, or pagan practices, and introduced them within the church. When we are specifically required in the scripture, not to make any carved image or molten image of any likeness of things that are in heaven. To me it's a shame that they have created images of Jesus, or the apostles, or whatever, and they have them in their churches.

When we were borrowing a church for a period of time, and there were the statues up behind me, it always bothered me that the statue of Jesus was up behind me, looking down at me. It's something that the

scriptures, God said, “You’re not to worship me as they did. Don’t borrow from their practices.” It’s so easy it seems, for us to become attached to some kind of a object of worship. A relic, a symbol, a picture, a image, or whatever. We seem to be drawn to those kind of things. But they’re wrong. God wants your worship of Him to be pure, to be simple.

We’re not to get attached to things. A building, is a building, is a building. We gather in this building to worship God, but this building isn’t essential to our worship of God. Tomorrow night, we’ll be worshipping Him out on the lawn, and I don’t know what I’m gonna like that a little better! If the weather will permit, I think that it would be great to just worship outdoors all the time! Our church up in Applegate, Oregon, has an outdoor amphitheater, and they worship God in the outdoor amphitheater. I think that’s great! I love that! In Hawaii, when we gathered for bible studies, we just get under a Banyan tree, there in the park. I love that! We don’t need a building to worship God.

We don’t need objects to worship God. We can worship God anywhere. “God is a spirit. They that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth.” So, “You’re not to worship the Lord your God with such things. Destroy them”.

*But you are to seek the place that the Lord chooses (12:5).*

Now God is going to choose a place in this land, where they are to gather to worship Him. A place where the tabernacle is to be set up. And as they came into the land, the first place where the tabernacle was set up was at Shiloh. The people would go to Shiloh to worship the Lord. Later it was moved to Gilgal, and they would go to Gilgal to worship the Lord. Then even later, at the time of David, it was moved to Jerusalem.

Then David said, “It isn’t right that I’m dwelling in this beautiful palace and God’s living still, in a tent. I’m gonna build a place for God, a house for God that we might worship Him”. Then they built the temple in Jerusalem, and that was the place where God chose in the land, where He was to be worshiped by the people, as they gathered in their great convocations to offer their sacrifices unto God.

“You’re not to sacrifice on every hill. You’re not to sacrifice on the high places within the city.” Now in the pagan practices there was always the temple on the high spot of the city. That was the prominent building within the city, and as you go to Israel today, and as you see the Tels, that uh, of the cities that existed before Israel’s time. The Canaanitish cities, you’ll notice that on one end of the Tel, it’s always higher. That was the end where the temple was, to their gods. These were the things that were to be destroyed. God was to be worshiped in the one place that He had allocated within the land, and not just on every hill, as did the pagans. That is in their offering of sacrifices, of course we worship God wherever we are.

*But there, this place that God appoints, you’re to take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hands, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstling of your herds and flocks (12:6):*

Now these are the things that were to be given unto God. The burnt offering, when you want to consecrate yourself to God. Your sacrifices, as you’re giving to God, your tithes. Then the heave offerings, which was the grain that they brought to the Lord. The vowed offerings. A lot of times, a person would make a vow, “Lord, if you’ll do this for me, I’ll give you this and that”. So there were those vowed offerings, where a person had made a vow to God, if God would bless them or do something for them, they would in turn, give to God. So, then the freewill offerings, and then the first born of the cattle, the first born of the sheep, or whatever, was God’s. They were to offer that as a sacrifice unto the Lord.

*And there [In the place that God has chosen.] you shall eat these sacrifices, those that have been offered before the Lord: And you shall rejoice in all that you have put your hand, you and your households, in which the Lord your God has blessed you. You shall not do as you are doing here today, every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes (12:7-8).*

“You’re not to do that. You’re to do what God declares to be right. We are not the ones to sets the standards for right and wrong. It is God that sets that, and thus you’re not to do like you’re doing here, everyone doing what is right in his own eyes.”

*For as yet you have not come to the rest and the inheritance, which the Lord your God is giving you*

(12:9).

Now in Judges, chapter seventeen, verse two, we read a very sad portion of scripture, in light of this commandment, “You’re not to do as you are doing here, every man doing what is right in his own eyes”. In Joshua, chapter seventeen, we read there that as they came in the land, and were settled, that uh, Judges, beg your pardon! Seventeen, two, go beyond Joshua, into Judges, seventeen, two. Well that’s not right. Somehow I goofed. Seventeen, six? Hey you’re sharp! That’s exactly the one I wanted. “In those days there was no king in Israel, and every one did what was right in his own eyes.” Isn’t that something?! Just the thing God said don’t do, they did! Every one was just doin his own thing. That’s sort of existential philosophy, “Hey man, if it feels good, hey whatever, whatever!” Just sort of you know, experience what is right to you, what is wrong to you. Right and wrong doesn’t really exist, only as you experience it to be so. So, do your own thing, and here is the commandment not to do it. But they disobeyed this commandment.

But they had yet not come into the rest. Now the tragedy is, they never did come into the rest. God had promised them a rest, but they never experienced it. That is also the tragedy of many believers today. God has promised us a glorious rest. But there’s a lot of believers that never experience that promised rest of God.

We are told in Hebrews, chapter four, “Let us beware, lest having receive a promise of rest, we would not enter into it”. Now, you can only rest as you enter in, to the finished work of Jesus Christ, and begin to relate to God through grace and not through works. As long as you’re trying to relate to God in works, you’ll never rest. It is only as I understand and accept the grace of God towards me, that I really begin to enter into that rest that God has for His people.

*Now when you cross over the Jordan, you dwell in the land which the Lord your God has given to you to inherit, when he gives you rest from all of your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety; Then there will be a place where the Lord your God chooses to make his name abide; and there you will bring all that I command you; [So again, God’s gonna choose a place. “When you get in, when you’ve conquered the land, then God will establish the place for you,] to bring in your tithes, and sacrifices, [and sort of a repetition] the vows that you’ve made to the Lord. And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God (12:10-12),*

Now that is interesting to me, because all the way through, Old and New testament, God commands His people to rejoice. God wants His people to be a happy people! Any kind of relationship with God that would make you sad, or morose or somber, is not really the right relationship with God, that He wants. He wants you to be a happy people. He commands us to rejoice! It’s tragic, that back a couple of generations or so, within the church, there was sort of the attitude that it was a sin to smile. The more sober and somber you looked, the more deeply spiritual you were. There are people today, who have a hang-up with people who are happy in serving the Lord. They say, “It’s serious business man, and we gotta...”, and they want to be somber and sordid, and just, it’s tragic because, God wants you to be happy. God wants you to rejoice, and God commands us to rejoice. “To rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice!” And God wants you to be a happy people. If you truly understand God and what He has done for you in your relationship to Him, and the future that He has prepared for each of us, you can’t help but rejoice in all that God is and God has for us! So, God commands them to rejoice.

*Take heed to yourself that you don’t offer your burnt offerings in every place you see (12:13):*

“Oh that would be a good place to built an altar and offer a burnt offering!” No.

*But only in the place which the Lord chooses (12:14),*

Now this is emphasized over, and over, and over again. We’ve already hit it three times tonight in this text. But we’re gonna hit it a lot more before we’re through. The emphasis of there will be a special place that God appoints, and that is the place to bring your sacrifices and your offerings, and offer them to the Lord.

*Now in the gates of your own city where ever you are you can slaughter and eat all that you want, [You know you can have as many barbecues as you desire! Wherever you are within your gates. But not those that are the firstborn that belong to the Lord as a sacrifice. Or not as an offering or a sacrifice to the Lord. Now it’s not a prohibition against, only eat meat when you come to Shiloh, and don’t eat meat. God*

says, “No, when you’re in your gates, eat all you want”.] *but the offerings, they are to be brought before the Lord* [Only prohibition of eating in your own home or wherever, is don’t eat the blood. Pour the blood out on the ground. Again in verse eighteen,] *in the place where God chooses. There is where you are to make your family and your servants, rejoicing before the Lord your God, in all to which you put your hands. (12:15-18).*

*Now take heed to yourselves* [Notice, “Take heed, take heed”, warnings to them! “Take heed that you don’t offer the burnt offerings every place. Take heed,] *that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land.* [The Levite was their minister. And the Lord is commanding that they not forsake these men who stood before God for them.] *When the Lord has enlarged your border, and you say, Let me eat meat, because you long to eat meat; you may eat as much meat as your heart desires.* [You can have steak every night if you want.] *If the place where the Lord your God chooses to put his name is too far from you, then you may slaughter from your herd and from your flock which the Lord has given you, just as I have commanded you, and you may eat within your own gates as much as your heart desires.* [Again,] *Be careful not to eat the blood. (12:19-23).*

Sort of a repetition of the earlier commandments.

*Only the holy things* [verse twenty six] *which you have, and your vowed offerings, you shall take, and go to the place with the Lord chooses. And there offer the burnt offerings. So observe and obey all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you, and your children after you for ever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God (12:26-28).*

So these are the orders, but you know it’s sort of like talking to children. You have to tell them over, and over, and over again. So Moses dealing with them as children, repeats these in our text, some four times. Says basically the same thing. Then the warning of false gods.

*Take heed to yourself* [verse thirty] *that you’re not ensnared to follow the gods of the people of the nations that you’ve dispossessed; and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? I will also do likewise. You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way: for every abomination to the Lord, which he hates, they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods. And whatever I command you, be careful to observe it: you shall not add or take away from it (12:30-32).*

The Canaanites had a very common practice of human sacrifice. Especially that of babies. In their ceremonies and in their festivities, and in their special holidays, they would build these fires. They would put these little gods of iron, or stone within the fires. If you go to the museum of natural history in Jerusalem, you will see many of these gods that the archeologists have uncovered from the Canaanite period. And you’ll notice that these little gods have arms in front of them, with hands extended upwards, and that was to cradle the babies. They would put these gods in the fire, and heat them until they were glowing red hot, and then they would place their babies in the arms of these little gods, and offer them as human sacrifices unto the gods. Screaming loudly that they would not hear the cries of the baby, as they were being burned in the fire. But it was a horrible thing that they did. Thinking that they were somehow appeasing God, but it was awful. And God said, “I hate it! It’s an abomination! Don’t be ensnared by their practices!”.

### Chapter 13

Now the warning against those men who would purport themselves to be divine.

*If there arises among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and he does something that you can’t understand, he gives you a sign or a wonder, [You’re sort of awed by what he did.] He tells you something and it comes to pass, and then he says to you, Let us go after other gods, which you have not known, and let us serve them; You shall not listen to the words of that prophet, or the dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether or not you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. For you shall walk after the Lord you God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and you shall serve, and hold fast to him (13:1-4).*

“So there will be those that will come in, and they will show marvelous signs. But they will lead you to worship or to follow some other god. You’re not to do it. They are a false prophet. Now, notice in this

case what they said was true. They give you a sign, and the sign comes to pass. They declare something's gonna happen, and it happens. You say, "Wow! Unreal"! What makes them a false prophet? That they told something false? No. What makes him a false prophet is that after they have captivated you, by the sign or the wonder, then they say, "Let us serve other gods". That's what makes them the false prophets. What they would lead you to trust in. If a man would lead you to trust in him, he's a false prophet. No matter how much truth he may declare, how great a bible teacher he might be.

A true prophet of God will lead you to rely completely and totally upon Jesus Christ for your hope of salvation. If they say you've got to rely upon the church, they're a false prophet. The church can't save you. If they say you have to rely upon continued membership in the church to be saved, they're false prophets. The only thing that can save you, is a living faith in a living Lord, our Lord, Jesus Christ. If a person would lead you to trust in anything else, rituals, or church memberships, or activities, he is a false prophet. He is leading you to trust on sandy soil. It's gonna, you're gonna fall. There's only one thing that can save you, and that is your faith in Jesus Christ. That prophet or dreamer of dreams in this time, was to be put to death.

*Because he has spoken in order to turn you away from Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst. [Get rid of him!] Now if your brother, or the son of your mother, or your daughter, or the wife of your bosom, or your friend, who is so close to you that he's like your own soul, if they secretly seek to entice you saying, Let us just go and worship these other gods, [Let us see how they do it and let's worship these other gods.] gods that you have not known, neither, you nor your fathers; The gods of the people which are all around you, or near to you, or far off from you, from the one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; You shall not consent to him, or listen to him; nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him, or conceal him: But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him, to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. And you shall stone him with stones until he dies; because he sought to entice you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. And so all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall not again do such wickedness as this among you (13:5-11).*

Now God calls for some very severe penalties. Even if it's your own daughter, your wife, someone secretly seeks to entice you to worship another god, they were to be put to death. It was a capital crime, put him to death. Now, God said, "The effect of that will be this will be eliminated in Israel".

There is the social scientists today who declare that capital punishment is unusual and inhumane. Therefore, capital punishment does not deter criminals. It is not a deterrent. This is the statement of the social scientist, who of course, sort of took over and became the ruling class, in a way. I mean we listen to these social scientists for so long, until we realize that most of them had so many social problems themselves, they couldn't get along with anything. But, those in the social scientists, uh, those in the social sciences were taking over the prison systems, and they were no longer referred to as uh, prisons, but they were now correctional institutions. They were going to seek to correct these people, and to give them psychological counseling and modify their behavior, and you know they were going to take these criminal people and reeducate them and the whole ten yards. A very damning study was done over a ten year period of time. Over a thousand peers and others, went through this whole education and resocialization program, by the social scientists. They were sort of the model, and they were gonna demonstrate what they could do in the rehabilitation and that was a buzz word for them, "rehabilitating" these people.

Over a period of time they did a case study on a thousand prisoners that went through the whole resocialization process and of the thousand prisoners, after ten years period of time, nine hundred and ninety seven, were again back in jail, and three had died. So they concluded that all of their efforts weren't very successful. It was a very damning report to that whole philosophy. It's a philosophy that Rose Byrd adheres to. That is that capital punishment doesn't have any deterrent, and thus she has set herself against the decisions of the lower courts, and the decisions of the people of California, and she sits as a god, in the Supreme Court of the state, or in the uh Superior, you know the, well I guess it is a State court, and vetoes and blocks every person who comes along, who has been sentenced to death. Saying it's not a deterrent.

Well, the bible says it is a deterrent. When all of Israel hears of this, that they will not again do such wickedness.

Now, in Singapore, an area of the world where you might think that they would have a tremendous drug problem, they have absolutely no problem with drugs. The reason why they have no problem with drugs in Singapore, is that if you are apprehended by a police officer and you have drugs on your person, he shoots you on the spot! I mean, there's the evidence. You've got the drugs on your person. They don't have to go to court, they don't have to have a long trial, they don't have to go through a line, they just pull out the gun, and they shoot you! So, drug traffickers steer clear of Singapore. If you're coming through Customs, and they find drugs, they just take you aside, and pow! That's it! Every drug trafficker in the world knows that, and they steer wide of Singapore. No drug problem at all. Because the punishment is a deterrent. When a punishment is severe, when it is carried out, it becomes a strong deterrent against crime. So, the whole philosophy that it is not a deterrent can be proved to be false. Just go to Singapore and see how completely free it is of any drug problem at all. It's because they deal so severely with the offenders there. So, God declares, it would be a deterrent. "All Israel will hear, and fear, and not again do such wickedness as this among you."

*Now if you hear that someone has gone to a city and gotten the whole city involved in worshiping another god, [turned them away from God] then you are to inquire and seek diligently, if this is actually so, and if it is, then you're to go and you're to wipe out that city; Bring all of the possessions and artifacts of the people into the middle of the city, have a bonfire, destroy them and don't let that city be inhabited again. [Just break it down. Destroy the city completely.] Don't take any plunder so that none of the accursed things shall remain in your hand, that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of his anger and show you mercy and have compassion on you, and multiply you just as he swore to your fathers; because you have listened the voice of the Lord your God, to keep all of his commandments which I command you today, and do that which is right in the eyes of the Lord your God (13:12-18).*

Now, in reality these laws, to us seem extremely severe. But you see the whole national survival depended upon them keeping these laws. They were severe. They were extremely severe. But the guilty were to be punished and punished severely, in order for the survival of the entire nation. And God's interest was in the whole nation, because He wanted to develop a nation through which the Messiah might come.