

Ceremonial Laws

Deuteronomy 12:1-16:17

Study Guide

Perhaps you have been in this situation: A boss, parent, or a coach does not communicate with you what he wants you to do, and then he gets frustrated with you because you did not do what they wanted done. This happened to me a few times. During summer, when I was out of school, my dad would come home from work and be disappointed in me because I spent my whole day being selfishly idol. For a couple of days, I never knew if my dad would be pleased with me, or disappointed in me because I never knew what or how much he wanted done. My dad and I talked about this problem and he helped me by creating a list of chores to do. While this list may have been a little longer than I liked, I could be confident that if I finished the list, I had pleased my dad. I also could be confident that if I did not finish the list, dad would not be pleased. Either way, I did not have to hold my breath when the car pulled up, I knew what his reaction would be.

God does not want His people to live the frustrating life of being ignorant of what pleases Him. Israel never had to ask, "How can I make Him Happy?" They never had to be confused if something would make God smile, or make God frown. God did not simply command his people to honor Him, He gave them very practical commands to obey so that they would know how to conduct God honoring lives.

After giving the general principles of how He wants them to live, in this section, God gives specific laws that would help Israel to obey those general principles. These laws are basically how they can practically apply the Ten Commandments. Israel's obedience to these laws was not a means of salvation, but the obligatory response to God's greatness and goodness.

This first section of these specific laws has to deal with the public worship of God. These ceremonial laws were to be observed in their public worship of God. This week, we are going to see specifically how God wanted Israel to honor Him in national (corporate) worship, worshipful daily conduct, and worship through festivals and feasts.

3. The killing of sacrificial animals had to be done at God’s appointed place, but the killing of other animals for food could be done anywhere. What prohibition did God place upon the eating of meat? Read Genesis 9:4-6, Leviticus 17:10-14 and 1 Peter 1:18-19. Why did God make this rule?

4. What motivation did God give for observing and obeying these commands?

5. Because of Christ, the believer no longer has to sacrifice animals, but this does not mean that he is to be less sacrificial. Pray that God will help you offer yourself as a sacrifice. Commit to giving Him back the body He gave you to be used in the service of Christ. This is total surrender and true spiritual worship.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

Day 2

Read Deuteronomy 12:29-13:18

1. Every form of abomination against God that was possible, the Canaanites practiced in their worship. What example of their abominations does God give to show how detestable these people really were?

2. What was Israel to do with the prophet who claimed that he had revelation which said it was okay to worship other gods?

3. These false prophets would sometimes have the power to do legitimate signs and wonders which would make their message very believable. What reason did God give for allowing these things to happen?

4. The children of Israel were instructed on how to handle a situation when their brother, son, daughter, wife, or friend secretly enticed them to serve a false god. List the five things Israel was not to do and the one thing that they were to do to such a person.

5. Obviously you have no authority to kill your friend when they tempt you to put things ahead of God. However, how can you take the instruction of the above answer and practically deal with these situations when they arise in your life?

6. Thank God for being a Holy God who desires to be worshiped above all. Thank Him for providing commandments and principles in His Word which are designed to keep your heart from straying from Him. Praise Him for the truth of His Word which is surer than signs and miracles. Also, remember that following after ungodly pursuits may lead you too into engaging in deplorable practices which are an abomination to God.

3. From verses 6 and 7, what were the determining factors in whether or not an animal was clean or unclean? What was the determining factor among fish (vv. 9, 10)?
4. Many scholars, doctors, and theologians have tried to determine why God assigned some animals the label "clean" and others "unclean." No substantial evidence exists, however, for saying that one group is consistently more superior, healthy, or hygienic. The point of these dietary laws was not to make Israel healthy, but to display to the surrounding nations that they were a separated people unto the Lord. The nation of Israel served a sovereign God who reserved the right to be Lord of His people, even down to the very food they ate. While believers today are not under dietary restrictions, our lives should display our uniqueness and God's authority over us. List 5 ways in which you displayed your uniqueness and God's authority over you today.

14:21 You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk. The false religions of Canaan would do this ritual in order to convince the gods to give their land fertility and productivity. God did not want His people to engage in such superstitious practices. Furthermore, it seems to defy God's order to use milk which He supplied to sustain and nourish the life of an animal to be the instrument of its death.

5. Pray that God will help you to be a person who sticks out as peculiar when you are around worldly people. Ask for His courage to stand firm against godless attitudes and trends. Thank Him again for Jesus Christ, who made clean that which was once unclean. Thank Him for His gift of the Spirit which has written God's law on your heart and gives you the desire to obey, without the need of a strict code of conduct written in stone.

Day 4

Read Deuteronomy 14:22-14:29

1. From verse 23, what was Israel to do with the tithe (a tenth) of the grain that their fields produced?
2. Besides the tithe of their grain, what three other items were they to take as part of their offering?
3. What were Israelites to do if they lived so far away from the sanctuary that they could not transport their tithe there?

4. It may seem like a big waste of time to transport all of that stuff to another city, only to consume it at a party. However, this celebration reminded Israel not to take life's blessings for granted. This was a great opportunity to acknowledge before others how they had been blessed and how God was responsible for giving them this food. Write down three ways that you practice this principle? If you are not currently engaged in using what God has given you to bring glory to Him, write down things that you can start doing. When are you planning to start?

5. This food was not to be kept for their selves, but to be shared with others who did have flocks and fields. What three groups of people were to share in what God had blessed them with?

6. New Testament believers are not commanded to tithe a strict 10% of their income. Christians are still commanded to give. Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15. How much is the Christian to give? Are you faithful in this area?

7. Pray that God will help you honor Him with the possessions that He loans to you. Ask Him to strengthen your faith in the area of giving. Commit to giving your money to pay for the spread of the gospel (to the Levites), and for helping those who cannot earn money for themselves (to the fatherless and widows).

Day 5

Read Deuteronomy 15:1-16:17

1. In the eyes of God, every single person is of infinite worth, regardless of their wealth or status. In order to convey this about His character and get His people to imitate Him, He required them to give practical help and relief every 7 years to three classes of people. What were these three classes? Beside each of these classes, write down specifically how they were to be helped.

2. If someone asked for a loan, and the creditor knew that the 7th year is coming, he may have been hesitant to give it out because he might not get it back because he would be forced to forgive the debt. This may make common business sense to us, but what does God say about the man who thinks this way (vv. 7-10)?

15:1 grant a release of debts. Debt in that day was rarely due to irresponsible stewardship or poor spending habits. A poor harvest, a sickness, or a death could send families into deep debt and poverty. In some societies, families would be broken up and sold as slaves. This is not how God wanted His people to act.

