

How to Worship God when Living in Covenant With Him: Deuteronomy 13-16

- Blessing > response > practical obedience > continued blessing (Wright 184)
- Deuteronomy's "pastoral strategy" is to weave statements of the ideal situation with legislation for the realities of a sinful people (Wright 189)
- Deuteronomy Insists upon Relating (Wright 191)

1. Worship God by Remaining Faithful (Ch. 13)

vv. 1-5 What if amazing prophets suggest other gods?

Commands?

Reasons?

Application? We can use the same measure in judging "prophets" in our day:
how does their teaching relate to the central truth of the saving gospel.

We need to judge with our ears and not just our eyes (Wright) 175

vv. 6-11 What if a close friend suggests another god?

We must understand how important this is...

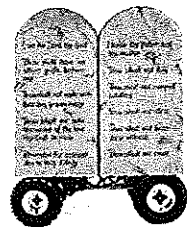
Luke 14:26

Matthew 16:22

vv. 12-18 What if the next town over serves other gods?

What responses are required?

Why?



2. Worship God by Giving Him your Best (Deuteronomy 14:22-28; 15:19-23)

“Eat...” (v. 23) live in a way that shows an enjoyment of God’s blessing

“...in the presence of the LORD” (v.23) : in remembrance (not Canaanite harvest festivals)

The “triennial tithe” is only found in Deuteronomy, but fits with other elements of the welfare system given to Israel: gleaning rights, sabbatical years, etc.

3. Worship God by Caring Deeply About Those in your Community (Ch. 15:1-18)

In Exodus (23:10) the law required a “release” of the land; here in Deuteronomy, that “release” is extended to people in debt.

The text calls for **ideals** (4-6) and recognizes **sinful realities** (7-11)

The Text Uses Bodily Images to communicate this (Wright 190)

The Hand = this passages uses the idea of a hand opening or closing to describe the power of the creditor over the debtor: “cancel”(2); opening/closing (7,8,11);

The Heart = the heart governs the intentions and directions of economic action: “hard”(7) “wicked” (9), “evil” (10);

The Eye = How one looks at another: (9, 18)

Communicating Community: (Wright 191)

We find “neighbor” or “brother” used repeatedly through this section

“Your” is emphasized throughout: vv. 7, 11.

Free Servants who want to be Free (vv. 12-22)

On a theological principle:

On an economic principle:

Worship God Through Special Ceremonies (Ch. 16)

Sources: Wright, Christopher. Deuteronomy. New International Biblical Commentary. Ed. Robert and Robert Johnston Hubbard. Vol. 4. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996.

Wright 177-178

Contemplating the severity of a chapter like this, one's first reaction may be gratitude that we no longer live under the sanctions of a theocratic state in which apostasy threatens the constitution and survival of the state itself and is thus criminal and capital. But we then have to face the fact that we owe that social and practical liberation more to the Enlightenment, which broke so-called Christendom's power to enforce legislation like this, than to an understanding of the implications of the NT gospel and its effect on the relationship of God's people to the state in the messianic age. But then we need to recognize also the extent of the penetration of Enlightenment secular presuppositions into the worldview of the church as much as of secular society.

C. S. Lewis once said that if we no longer feel comfortable with the cursing psalms, for example, it is not because of our greater, "Christian" sensitivity, but because of our appalling moral apathy. We no longer feel the passion of the psalmist that God should deal with evil and evildoers and vindicate God's own moral order in the world. We respond to idolatrous, blasphemous

* evil not with a curse, but a shrug, and then have the gall to claim morally higher ground than ancient Israel. Similarly, if we can no longer identify with the scale of priorities and values that undergird Deuteronomy 13, it is manifestly not because we have acquired a greater appreciation of the value of human life, but because we have lost any sense of the awful majesty of God's reality. The western church, more than it cares to admit, has imbibed that dichotomized, privatized, cultural worldview in which God is no longer the ultimate governing reality and Lord of all human life and community, private and public, domestic and political, local and global. And having for all practical purposes accepted the box into which the surrounding culture has confined God, it is not surprising that we have difficulty with the concept of idolatry. For if the living God is little more than an idol, where do other idols fit? We lack the categories to define them and the tools to discern them. And thus, in reality, their power over us is infinitely enhanced because we don't even recognize them. We can't begin to work on the relevance of a chapter like Deuteronomy 13 when we don't know what it is talking about. We have long since failed the test of verse 3. For only those who know and love the living God "with all their heart (= understanding, mind, intellect) and soul (personal commitment)" know what idols are. One of the most critical missiological tasks facing the church today is to recover, rethink, and reapply a fully biblical understanding of idolatry, with a sober and painful evaluation of the extent of its penetration, not only to the roots of western culture, but into the very bloodstream of the church. We will not find ourselves reviving the legislation of Deuteronomy 13, but we may become more impressed by the sharpness of its delineation between truth and falsehood, between the saving God and lifeless substitutes, and ultimately, between life and death.