

DEUTERONOMY 15-17

March 11, 2012

Today we will study **chapters 15 through 17** of the book of Deuteronomy.

Introduction:

- The Israelites were not only to care for the Levites (14:27, 29) and the aliens, orphans, and widows (14:29), but also other individuals in the nation who needed help (15:1-18). This concern was to mark them as the people of Yahweh.

15:1-3 In chapter 15 verses 1 to 3 we learn about loans and their repayment in Israel. What do we learn?

- At the end of every 7 years all outstanding loans were to be forgiven. This did not apply to loans that a Jew may have given to a non-Jew; those outstanding loans were still collectible.

15:4-6 What does God tell them in verses 4 to 6?

- If they would obey Him, then there would be no poor among them. He would richly bless them in the land they were going to possess. If they would obey the Lord, then they would lend and not borrow, they would rule and not be ruled over.

15:7-11 What does God tell them concerning helping the poor among them?

- He just said that there should not be any poor among them (vs. 4) but knows that they will disobey Him and because of that there will be poor people among them. They were to lend to the poor person *sufficient to his need* (what he “needed” - vs. 8). They were not to allow the nearness of the year in which loans would be released to influence their decision, but to give generously.

15:10 What are we told in verse 10? And what is the principle that we learn here?

- God blesses generosity. See the following verses: Proverbs 11:24-25 & 19:17^[24] Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything. ²⁵ The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.;^[17] If you help the poor, you are lending to the Lord—and he will repay you! Luke 6:38 & 16:10-13;^[38] Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.”^[10] “If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won’t be honest with greater responsibilities. ¹¹ And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? ¹² And if you are not faithful with other people’s things, why should you be trusted with things of your own? ¹³ “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” And 2 Corinthians 9:6-11. [⁶ Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. ⁷ You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. “For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.” ⁸ And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. ⁹ As the Scriptures say, “They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever.” ¹⁰ For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. ¹¹ Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.]

15:12-18 What do we learn about slavery in Israel from verses 12 to 18?

- People did become slaves in Israel because of their inability to provide for themselves or to repay their debts. They were to be released after serving their master for **6 years**. They were to leave with some material possession and not empty-handed. The masters were to be grateful since they had the work of these slaves **24 hours a day 7 days a week** and not just for a regular work day.

What do we learn in **verses 16 and 17**?

- Oftentimes the masters were extremely good to their slaves. So much so, that the slaves didn't want to leave the master's love and care. In these cases the slave could permanently surrender himself to his master. Interesting note: this is the first example of a Jewish male with an earring...it was a sign of slavery and ownership.

15:19-23 What two significant principles do we learn about walking with the Lord from **verses 19 to 23**?

- God is to get the "first" of our lives. We now give Him the first day of the week – **Sunday**. We give Him the first **10th of our earnings**. See **Leviticus 27:20**. The Jews tithed their income (the first 10th of their produce and livestock); we tithe our income, which is financial. See **Proverbs 3:9-10**. [9 Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce. 10 Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with good wine. We are to give our best to God, not our "leftovers". Imperfect animals were not acceptable to God.]

16:1-8 In **chapter 16 verses 1 to 8** the Jews were reminded to participate in the Passover. What did the Passover picture and what detail in these verses parallels that picture?

- Jesus is our Passover (**1 Corinthians 5:7**). Because of His shed blood on Calvary, God passes over (forgives) our sin. The Passover lamb was to be killed at sunset. The reason they broke the legs of the two thieves crucified with Jesus was so that they would die and could be taken down because the Sabbath was about to begin. The Sabbath began at sunset on Friday and ended at sunset on Saturday. Jesus died right at sunset.

What do we learn about our lives from the Passover?

- Because of Christ's blood that was shed on our behalf, God passes over (forgives) our sin.

16:9-12 Look at **verses 9 to 12**. The Feast of Weeks led up to Pentecost; it was celebrated **50 days** after Passover. What two things were they to do during that feast?

- They were to give an offering (**vs. 10**) of their first fruits and they were to celebrate (**vs. 10**) and rejoice (**vs. 11**).

What do we learn about our lives from the Feast of Weeks?

- God is the source of our income and provision.

16:13-15 In **verses 13 to 15** Moses reminds the people to celebrate the Feast of Booths. In this feast they live in temporary shelter ("booths" – **Leviticus 23:34-43**). The "booths" reminded them that they lived in tents during their wilderness wanderings (**Leviticus 23:42-43**).

What do we learn about our lives from the Feast of Booths?

- We are reminded that we are just passing through this world. This world is not our home; heaven is our home. See **Hebrews 11:8-16** [8 It was by faith that **Abraham** obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. 9 And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did **Isaac** and **Jacob**, who inherited the same promise. 10 Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.]

11 It was by faith that even **Sarah** was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise. 12 And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them. 13 All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. 14 Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. 15 If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. 16 But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.] And **1 Peter 2:11**. [**11 Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls.**]

16:16-17 What do we learn from verses 16 to 17?

- The Jewish males were to *appear before the Lord* three times a year. The Feast of Unleavened Bread ended with Passover. They were to bring offerings to God at all of these three feasts.

16:18-20 What do we learn about their court system in verses 18 to 20?

- They were to appoint judges. Those judges were to execute justice in every case. They were never to be swayed by money or any other means of influence. See **Micah 6:8**. [8 No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.] We are to *do justice*.

16:21-22 Moses warns the people again about idolatry in verses 21 to 22. [21 “You must never set up a wooden Asherah pole beside the altar you build for the Lord your God. 22 And never set up sacred pillars for worship, for the Lord your God hates them.]

17:1 What do we learn from verse 1 of chapter 17?

- It is an insult to God to give Him less than our best.

17:2-7 What do we learn about the nation remaining true to God in verses 2 to 7?

- Anyone who worships any other god was to be stoned. There had to be at least two witnesses and those witnesses would cast the first stones. They were to do a thorough investigation (**vs. 4**) before reaching a guilty verdict. They were to *purge the evil from their midst*.

17:8-13 We learn more about their judicial system in verses 8 to 13. What do we learn there?

- If they had a dispute that the local judge could not easily reach a verdict on, the matter was to be taken to a priestly court. Those priests would render a verdict (**vs. 10**) and teach them why they rendered that verdict (**vs. 11**). If anyone failed to act according to how the priestly judges ruled, then that person was to be stoned so that they would *purge the evil*. Those who failed to abide by the law were executed, not jailed.

In your opinion, how would the U.S. be a different place if crime was treated this harshly here?

- There would be *no* prisons or prison system. There would be *no* repeat criminals. Knowing the price that would be paid for disobeying the law, crime would be almost nonexistent. Rather than people living in fear of criminals, criminals would live in fear of the law. See **Romans 13:1-4**. [1 Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. 2 So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished. 3 For the authorities do not strike fear in people who are doing right, but in those who are doing wrong. Would you like to live without fear of the authorities? Do what is right, and they will honor you.

- ⁴ The authorities are God’s servants, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you. They are God’s servants, sent for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong.]

17:14-20 What do we learn about the requirements upon Israel’s future kings in verses 14 to 20?

- First, we realize that they will have kings some day. See 1 Samuel 8:4-9. [⁴ Finally, all the elders of Israel met at Ramah to discuss the matter with Samuel. ⁵ “Look,” they told him, “you are now old, and your sons are not like you. Give us a king to judge us like all the other nations have.” ⁶ Samuel was displeased with their request and went to the Lord for guidance. ⁷ “Do everything they say to you,” the Lord replied, “for it is me they are rejecting, not you. They don’t want me to be their king any longer. ⁸ Ever since I brought them from Egypt they have continually abandoned me and followed other gods. And now they are giving you the same treatment. ⁹ Do as they ask, but solemnly warn them about the way a king will reign over them.”] The kings were not to multiply horses or wives and they were not to enrich themselves. They were to personally write down their own copy of God’s laws and they were to read from those laws every day of their lives so that they would fear and obey God. They were not to consider themselves to be “better” than the people (vs. 20).

What was the problem with horses, wives, and money?

- Horses represented military power. They were to trust in the Lord, not in their own military potential. Wives were accumulated through treaties and alliances. These were entered into as result of not trusting the Lord and the foreign women would turn their hearts from God (as they did Solomon – 1 Kings 11:1-10). Money would make them arrogant and self-sufficient rather than God-sufficient.