

A Holy Nation (4): Deuteronomy 24-26
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Introduction to Deuteronomy 24-26

In this section, Moses continues to highlight certain aspects of Biblical justice. He concludes by reminding the people of the role of tithes and offerings in helping them to nurture and practice love for God and neighbors.

Israel was called to be a special people unto the Lord – a holy people, who obeyed God in all He commanded. This would prove to be a task far too daunting for them in any generation, and pointed them forward to a day when God Himself would fulfill the Law on their behalf, in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Susie and I hope you will find this study challenging and enriching for your walk with and work for the Lord.

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T. M. and Susie Moore

1 Just Relationships

Opening Prayer: Psalm 133.1

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brethren to dwell together in unity!

Psalm 133.1, 3

(Trygarre Kan Ingen Vara: [*Children of the Heavenly Father*](#))

O, behold, how sweet, how pleasant, when the brethren dwell together:
All in unity abiding find God's blessing there presiding.

Today's Text: Deuteronomy 24.5-15

Preparation

1. How many different relationships are touched on in these verses?
2. Which of the Ten Commandments can you see illustrated here?

Meditation

This and the next chapter deal with matters of everyday justice among the brethren living in ancient Israel. You will recall that we earlier mentioned five aspects to a Biblical view of justice: obligatory, preventive, restorative, retributive, and distributive. These two chapters will enable us to illustrate many of these aspects.

For example, verses 5 and 6 are examples of *obligatory* justice. This is merely what God's people owed to one another in the larger covenantal scheme – the opportunity to begin a family and to pursue honest work. Nothing in Hebrew society must impede these, or they would be a violation of the eighth commandment (do not steal).

Verse 7 illustrates *retributive* justice – punishment imposed for a heinous violation of the eighth commandment.

In verses 8 and 9 a kind of *preventive* justice is in view – taking actions to keep something evil or unjust from happening (building a railing around your roof would be another example, 22.8). This is a positive expression of the sixth commandment (do not kill).

Verses 10-13 are another example of *obligatory* justice – owing your neighbor the respect to wait on him to bring out his pledge, rather than barging in to seize it. This perhaps derives from the fifth commandment, honoring proper authorities.

And verses 14 and 15 deal with another form of *obligatory* justice – pay your workers what you promised in a timely manner. Here again, the eighth commandment is illustrated.

All the examples we shall see in chapters 24 and 25 are illustrative and exemplary. Our own society is built upon such precepts, rules, and statutes. So, for example, we drive on the right hand side and according to the speed limits, honoring our neighbors' lives and properties as we do (fifth and sixth commandments). It is not difficult to see how American law is rooted and grounded in Biblical Law.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Kindness can be seen as the overarching theme in all these relationships. That quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate. It can be seen as the motif for God's dealings with us and our dealings with

others: “When you lend [you will share]...you shall not go into his house [you will be polite]...the man to whom you lend shall bring the pledge out to you [you will be civil]...you shall not keep his pledge overnight [you will be gentle]...return the pledge to him [you will be generous]...it shall be righteousness to you [you have done it unto the least of these and therefore done it unto Me, Matt. 25.40] before the LORD your God” (Deut. 24.10-13). Generosity and kindness are acts of righteousness in God’s eyes. Then and now: “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph. 4.32). Justice in relationships either makes us or breaks us in God’s eyes (Matt. 25.40, 45, 46).

Reflection

1. How would you define “justice”?
2. How does the Law of God work to help us be kind and considerate to one another?
3. What happens in a society where the Law of God is neglected (Matt. 24.12)?

He, then, is as cruel, whosoever takes in pledge what supports a poor man's life, as if he should take away bread from a starving man, and thus his life itself, which, as it is sustained by labor, so, when its means of subsistence are cut off, is, as it were, itself destroyed. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Deuteronomy 24.6*

Thank You, Lord, that You have marked out the path of blessing for me today, so that I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 133.2, 3

Pray for the people in your Personal Mission Field. How will you show these “neighbors” the love of God today?

Psalm 133.2, 3

(Trygarre Kan Ingen Vara: [*Children of the Heavenly Father*](#))

Like the precious oil of blessing flowing down on Aaron’s vestment,
God’s anointing rests forever where His people dwell together.

Like the dew of Hermon’s fountain falling down on Zion’s mountain,
So the blessing of the Savior dwells where unity finds favor.

2 Various Forms of Justice (1)

Opening Prayer: Psalm 19.12-14

Who can understand *his* errors?

Cleanse me from secret *faults*.

Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins*;

Let them not have dominion over me.

Then I shall be blameless,

And I shall be innocent of great transgression.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart

Be acceptable in Your sight,

O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

Psalm 19.12-14

(St. Christopher: [*Beneath the Cross of Jesus*](#))

Who, Lord, can know his errors? O keep sin far from me!

Let evil rule not in my soul that I may blameless be.

O let my thoughts, let all my words, before Your glorious sight

be pleasing to You, gracious Lord, acceptable and right!

Today's Text: Deuteronomy 24.16-22

Preparation

1. What basis did Moses cite for these works of justice?

2. What promise was attached to them?

Mediation

Chapters 24 and 25 contain various “case law” situations which are intended to illustrate how the Ten Commandments were to be applied. These examples also provide insights to the various facets of justice, as God defines it. Again, Moses is not being exhaustive here. He is simply using examples to guide the judges and people of Israel in applying God’s Law of lovingkindness in everyday situations.

All these examples are clear enough that we do not need to explicate them further. Rather, we want to connect each “case” with the commandment from which it derives.

Verse 16 addresses culpability in instances requiring the death penalty, and is a form of *retributive* justice. Death penalty issues typically derive from the sixth and seventh commandments.

Verses 17 and 18 is based on the eighth commandment, which prohibits stealing from others. That would include withholding the love and honor due them as neighbors. These are examples of *obligatory* justice, of giving people their due as image-bearers of God. Verse 18 reminds the people of God’s acting in justice toward them, according to His Word and promise. In every instance of justice, God’s grace is the driving force.

Verses 19-22 exemplify *distributive* justice, by which the Law makes clear our duties toward those in need. God will bless our material circumstances to the degree that we are generous toward those in need (v. 19). Again, the reminder of Israel’s slavery, deprivation, and hardship in Egypt should encourage them to show generosity to those in need. These are forms of *obligatory* justice and derive from the eighth commandment.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this thing” (Deut. 24.18, 22). Twice God reminded them that they should remember they were once slaves, redeemed by Him to live for Him. In this knowledge, they were to do good according to His Law. Any pride in accomplishment was to be removed and replaced by humble obedience and kindness. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 1.27 that “God has chosen the foolish”, and then again in Titus 3.3, “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.” Sounds like we were solid citizens of a land from which we desperately needed to be redeemed! And we, like the Israelites, need to remember this, and do the things God has call us to do, “that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands” (Deut. 24.19). Paul echoes this: “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior... that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works... to *meet* urgent needs” (Titus 3.4-6, 8, 14). Remember. Do.

Reflection

1. In what ways did God’s act of redeeming Israel serve as a standard for them?
2. What would be some forms of *obligatory* justice we should observe today?
3. What are some forms of *distributive* justice still binding on believers today?

*[I]t was wicked and unlawful to gather the sheaves left after the harvest, or to glean the vines after the vintage or to gather up the olives that remain after the trees were picked, because these things were to be left for the poor. Now if this was commanded those who were under the law, what shall we say of those who are in Christ? To them the Lord says, “Unless your justice abounds more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Pseudo-Basil (no dates), *On Mercy and Justice**

Lord, let Your Law dwell in me richly, so that in every situation I will...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 19.7-11

Let God’s Spirit search you and lead you to consider the day ahead. What opportunities for fulfilling God’s Law can you anticipate?

Psalm 19.7-11

(St. Christopher: *Beneath the Cross of Jesus*)

The Law of God is perfect, His testimony sure;
the simple man God’s wisdom learns, the soul receives its cure.
God’s Word is right, and His command is pure, and truth imparts;
He makes our eyes to understand; with joy He fills our hearts.

The fear of God is cleansing, forever shall it last.
His judgments all are true and just, by righteousness held fast.
O seek them more than gold most fine, than honey find them sweet;
Be warned by every word and line; be blessed with joy complete.

3 Various Forms of Justice (2)

Opening Prayer: Psalm 19.7, 8

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes...

Psalm 19.7, 8

(St. Christopher: [*Beneath the Cross of Jesus*](#))

The Law of God is perfect, His testimony sure;
The simple man God's wisdom learns, the soul receives its cure.
God's Word is right, and His command is pure, and truth imparts;
He makes our eyes to understand; with joy He fills our hearts.

Today's Text: Deuteronomy 25.1-4

Preparation

1. What was the role of judges in disputes between neighbors?
2. How does the Law show concern for animals?

Meditation

Let's start with the statute that says an ox must not be muzzled while it's working (v. 4). We might ask with Paul, "Does God care for oxen?" (1 Cor. 9.8, 9) While more is intended in this statute, it's clear that God *does* care about oxen. They should be allowed to feed from the grain that they're being used to thresh. The Law of God prohibits the abuse of animals, especially working animals. Do animals deserve justice? It seems they do, as does all of creation. Paul explained that creation groans under the burden of mankind's sin. We must not add to that burden; rather, we must seek, by our acts of loving concern, to bring all of creation – including pets, farm animals, and creatures in the wild – under the liberating power of the Gospel (Rom. 8.19-22). It is an act of *obligatory* justice to treat the world God loves (Jn. 3.16) and Christ has reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5.19) with love, and it illustrates an application of the eighth commandment.

Verses 1-4 illustrate examples both of *retributive* justice and *obligatory* justice. The retributive part is clear (vv. 1, 2). Corporal punishment was an approved means of justice, as determined case-by-case. It undoubtedly also served as a deterrent for those who might otherwise be inclined to try to take advantage of a neighbor. The threat of corporal punishment worked to preserve all the neighbor-love commandments, since it was applied at the discretion of the local judges. The sparing of the dignity of the guilty (v. 3) is the act of *obligatory* justice and illustrates an aspect of the eighth commandment. Those who are guilty of crimes do not cease to be human beings made in the image and likeness of God. We may not steal their dignity from them. We must always treat people – even despicable people – with the respect their image-bearing status deserves.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

God also disciplines us without humiliation. His goal is never to embarrass or annihilate us, but to restore us. He calls us to be kind and just to animals. And to the wicked. If He wants us to treat others with such respect, we can be sure He will treat us in the same way. We can see this plainly in Scripture: "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly" (Prov. 13.24). "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty" (Job 5.17). "*My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives*" (Heb. 12.5, 6). "For [our parents] indeed for a few days chastened *us* as

seemed best to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Heb 12.10, 11). “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Rev. 3.19, 20). God disciplines us in such a loving way, that even after being rebuked and chastened by Him, we long to welcome Him into our home and enjoy a meal with Him. We aren’t embarrassed or humiliated. Just rebuked and restored to hospitable fellowship with the One Who loves us most. Since we experience this from Him, we must not muzzle this justice to others.

Reflection

1. What are some forms retributive justice takes in our day?
2. Why is it important that people not abuse animals or other aspects of creation?
3. Why does God sometimes chasten us? What is He trying to do for us?

The sum is, that we should freely and voluntarily pay what is right, and that every one should be strict with himself as to the performance of his duty; for, if we are bound to supply subsistence to brute animals, much less must we wait for men to be importunate with us, in order that they may obtain their due. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Deuteronomy 25.4*

Thank You, Lord, that in Jesus Christ You have made me holy, so that I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 19.9-14

Pray that God’s Law and all His Word will you guide you in the paths of righteousness for His Name’s sake today.

Psalm 19.9-14

(St. Christopher: [*Beneath the Cross of Jesus*](#))

The fear of God is cleansing, forever shall it last.

His judgments all are true and just, by righteousness held fast.

O seek them more than gold most fine, than honey find them sweet;

Be warned by every word and line; be blessed with joy complete.

Who, Lord, can know his errors? O keep sin far from me!

Let evil rule not in my soul that I may blameless be.

O let my thoughts, let all my words, before Your glorious sight
be pleasing to You, gracious Lord, acceptable and right!

4 Various Forms of Justice (3)

Opening Prayer: Psalm 128.1, 2

Blessed is every one who fears the LORD,
Who walks in His ways.
When you eat the labor of your hands,
You *shall be* happy, and *it shall be* well with you.

Psalm 128.1, 2

(Fountain: [*There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood*](#))

How blessed are they who fear You, Lord, who walk within Your ways!
Rejoicing in Your bounteous Word, they prosper all their days!
They prosper all their days, they prosper all their days!
Rejoicing in Your bounteous Word, they prosper all their days!

Today's Text: Deuteronomy 25.5-10

Preparation

1. What are the conditions in which this statute would be invoked?
2. What kind of justice does this situation represent?

Meditation

Here is another statute that seems strange to us, and which we no longer regard as essential for our time and place. Nevertheless, it holds an important principle of neighbor love that we ought to keep in mind.

For ancient Israel, preserving family identities, lineages, and heritages was a very great concern. This statute was designed to help reinforce that conviction. It represents both a form of *obligatory* justice – what the brother owed his dead brother and sister-in-law – as well as a form of *retributive* justice – the shame that would come on the brother who refused to comply. I see it as an elaboration of the ninth commandment about living truthfully with our neighbors, and perhaps the eighth commandment, regarding stealing what belongs rightfully to someone else.

We note that certain conditions had to be in effect to invoke this statute. A man died without a son, and his brother had been living with him and his wife (v. 5). The living brother owed his dead brother the continuity of lineage and property, since he had been living with them and benefiting from their hospitality. He also owes his sister-in-law the security of marriage within family and tribal bounds (v. 9).

If he refused, the retribution imposed on him was public shaming, as we read in verses 8-10. That was a real form of retribution, albeit a mild one.

Is there a lesson here about love and duty? The man may not have wanted to take the woman as his wife, but – at least in ancient Israel – it was regarded as his duty to do so. Performance of duty would have been an act of love. Failure of duty resulted in public shaming and an uncertain future for the woman.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

A memorial is defined as serving to preserve remembrance, or something that keeps remembrance alive. In this passage we are told of the importance of perpetuating family lines. God is also telling us that people are important and remembering them after they have died is a kindness and a tribute. Each life is important and

should be remembered by family and friends. We find Jesus expressing the same sentiment in Matthew 26.1-13. His disciples could not muster any emotion regarding His impending crucifixion. In fact, their response to the woman showing kindness to Him, by pouring costly oil upon His head, was, “Why this waste?” Yet Jesus, because He is Jesus, cared more about the woman’s feelings than His own. But He also wanted all of us to know that this woman’s love should be remembered in perpetuity. Always. A special act. A special person. So He said, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always. For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did *it* for My burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.” “She has done what she could.” “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Mk. 14.8; Matt. 25.23). Justice is accomplished when we say the same, and remember those who have gone before us, who served to carry on the lineage of Christ.

Reflection

1. “Duty” sounds like such a cold, superficial notion. Is it?
2. Jesus did for that woman what God’s Law intended a brother-in-law to do for his deceased brother. Explain.
3. What can you do to carry on the legacy, lineage, and heritage of those faithful believers who have gone before you?

For this people, by the things that happened to them as a type, whether they recognized these types or not, were indeed prophetic of Christ, from whom Christ was to take flesh. Hence, in order that this race might be multiplied, the man who did not raise up seed in Israel was held accursed by sentence of the law. That is why holy women were animated by the pious desire of offspring rather than by desire. Augustine (354-430), On the Good of Widowhood 7.10

Help me, Lord, to be faithful in all my duties before You, that I may...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 128.3-6

Pray for the families of your church, that they might know the rich blessings of God in every way.

Psalm 128.3-6

(Fountain: [*There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood*](#))

Their homes with happy children bloom who fear Your holy Name;
their tables and their every room declare Your glorious fame!
Declare Your glorious fame, declare Your glorious fame!
Their tables and their every room declare Your glorious fame!

O Lord, from Zion send Your peace, and prosp’rous make our ways;
thus may Your blessings e’er increase upon us all our days!
Upon us all our days, upon us all our days!
Thus may Your blessings e’er increase upon all us all our days!

5 Various Forms of Justice (4)

Opening Prayer: Psalm 83.1-3

Do not keep silent, O God!
Do not hold Your peace,
And do not be still, O God!
For behold, Your enemies make a tumult;
And those who hate You have lifted up their head.
They have taken crafty counsel against Your people,
And consulted together against Your sheltered ones.

Psalm 83.1-3

(St. Chrysostom: [*We Have not Known Thee as We Ought*](#))

O God, do not be quiet now; do not be silent, nor be still!
See how Your foes erupt in a row and those who hate You chafe at Your will.
Shrewdly they plan, conspiring as one, against Your daughters and Your sons.

Today's Text: Read Deuteronomy 25.11-19

Preparation

1. What do the statutes in verses 11-16 preserve?
2. Why was the nation of Amalek to be destroyed.

Meditation

Let's start with the Amalekites, as this is an obvious case of *retributive* justice (vv. 17-19). The Amalekites consistently attacked the stragglers – those who were having trouble keeping up with the rest of the nation – as the people of Israel wandered through the wilderness. This went on for nearly forty years, even though Joshua led one strong attack against them *en route* to Canaan (Ex. 17.8-13). Their hostility against Israel continued into the later days of the judges, when Samuel finally oversaw the destruction of Amalek (1 Sam. 15). The war against Amalek was a just war, as God's standards had clearly been violated. Here we see that God holds even unbelieving nations to His standards for holiness.

Verses 11-16 deal with violations of the eighth and ninth commandments. The situation in verses 11 and 12 involves a woman who “steals” the progeny of a man fighting with her husband. Her punishment is a form of *retributive* justice. This was a harsh punishment, perhaps so harsh, that anyone might think twice before doing what is described here.

The false weights and balances involved both lying and stealing (vv. 13-16). When merchants falsified their scales and measures, they were lying to their customers about how much they actually were purchasing. They were also stealing from them by charging them for more than they were receiving. We can assume that local judges would have exercised some oversight over weights and balances. The statutes addressed in these verses are forms of *preventive* justice – preventing injustice by making sure all measures are true beforehand. They also are forms of *obligatory* justice, because we owe truth to our neighbors.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“...that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget” (Deut. 25.19). You shall not forget. Remember. Blot out. So that they will be forgotten. Any way you look at it, as Israel was to deal with the Amalekites, so we must think about our sins. We must remember, and not forget, that we need a Savior to blot out our sins. As David prayed, “Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all

my iniquities” (Ps. 51.9). Or as Peter preached, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...” (Acts 3.19). And as Jesus wrote to the church in Sardis, “He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels” (Rev. 3.5). So we must not forget; we must remember that we are guilty of so much more than attacking stragglers. Our sins demand the *we* be blotted out. But because of Jesus, and the grace of God at work in our lives, our sins are blotted out. He remembers to forgive and remove them, so that we are not blotted out of the Book of Life! “He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us... For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust” (Ps. 103.10-12, 14). We *must* remember our sins, and repent of them. We must not forget His forgiveness. And we rejoice that He has blotted out our sins forever: “For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jer. 31.34).

Reflection

1. Why is it important to remember that we are sinners? Why is it important to remember that Jesus has blotted out our sins?
2. How would you explain the basic principle embedded in the law of just weights and balances?
3. How can you see that this principle is still important today?

Dishonest gain always brings a curse on men’s property, families, and souls. Happy those who judge themselves, repent of and forsake their sins, and put away evil things, that they may not be condemned of the Lord. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Deuteronomy 25.13-16

Lord, help me to resist every temptation to stretch or withhold truth, so that I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 83.4-18

Pray for the Church in various places which is undergoing persecution. Ask God to give them courage and strength. Pray that He might shame their tormentors into believing in Him (v. 16).

Psalm 83.4-18

(St. Chrysostom: [*We Have not Known Thee As We Ought*](#))

“Come, let us wipe them out,” they say. “Let Israel’s name no more be heard!”
Bold they conspire to do us away, and covenant against You, O Lord.
Peoples and nations cast in their lot for this ambitious, wicked plot.

Deal with them, Lord, and bring them down, as You against old foes prevailed,
When You Midian cast to the ground and all her kings and princes assailed –
all who Your pastures sought to possess You brought to ruin and deep distress.

Make them like whirling dust, O God! Scatter them like the windblown chaff!
Rage like a fire consuming a wood, like flames that burn a mountain pass!
Blow like a tempest, bring them to harm, and terrify them with Your storm!

Fill with dishonor every face that they may seek Your Name, O Lord.
Bring them to shame, dismay, and disgrace, and let them perish under Your Word,
that they may learn Your infinite worth, O God Most High of all the earth!

6 God's Special People

Opening Prayer: Psalm 128.1, 2

Blessed is every one who fears the LORD,
Who walks in His ways.
When you eat the labor of your hands,
You *shall be* happy, and *it shall be* well with you.

Psalm 128.1, 2

(Fountain: [*There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood*](#))

How blessed are they who fear You, Lord, who walk within Your ways!
Rejoicing in Your bounteous Word, they prosper all their days!
They prosper all their days, they prosper all their days!
Rejoicing in Your bounteous Word, they prosper all their days!

Today's Text: Deuteronomy 26.1-19

Preparation

1. What did God require accompanying the giving of tithes and offerings?
2. What would characterize Israel as a “special people”?

Meditation

We have previously addressed the issue of tithes and offerings, so we will not review the role of these in the worship God's people offer Him, except to note again their obvious importance.

What is new in this context is the addition of confession or testimony to the worship of God. In verses 4-10 the testimony consists of a recitation of God's historical work of salvation. By confessing this when giving their offering of first fruits, the people would remember *why* they were tithing – out of gratitude for God and His gracious salvation.

For the third-year tithe, a different confession was in order (vv. 12-15). This one was designed to acknowledge that the giving of tithes and offerings worked to strengthen the people of God by meeting various needs. Here again the *why* of tithing is recalled. Thus, giving of tithes and offerings is *motivated* by love – God's love for us and our love for Him – and *issues* in love – for the needy among the people of God. In both cases, the people should expect God to bless them for their faithfulness in tithes and offerings (vv. 11, 15).

Moses concludes this portion of his address to the people by reminding them they are a special people unto the Lord. They are special because He has appointed them to be His people above all the nations of the earth. They must acknowledge that calling and keep the Law of God “with all your heart and all your soul” (vv. 16-19). Only as they observe those rules, statutes, precepts, testimonies, and judgments that mark out the practice of love for God and neighbor will they realize the blessing of God and fulfill their calling to a distinct people among all the nations of the earth. We whom Jesus has conveyed into His own glorious Kingdom may rise to greatness in that Kingdom by obeying and teaching the Law of God, and by serving God and one another in love (Matt. 5.17-19; Mk. 10.42-45).

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Isn't it fun when you find just the perfect gift to give to someone you love? You've spent time thinking and praying about it, and listening for clues from that person about what might be a conveyance of love to them.

And here God gives us a chance to give Him something He wants. Amazing that, because everything belongs to Him. And everything is made by Him. But in His graciousness, He has allowed us to give Him something. Something that will show our love for Him. Something that only we can give. He wants the firstfruits of our produce. He wants our hearts and souls. Tithing includes more than money. Like the woman who poured costly oil on Jesus' head: "She has done a good work for Me. She has done what she could" (Mk. 14.6, 8). Or, like the carolers sing:

"What can we give Him?
What can you bring?
What can you offer
That's fit for a King?
Bow before Jesus
That's where you can start.
What can you give Him?
Just give Him your heart."

Reflection

1. How does giving to the Lord help us to grow in love for Him?
2. How does giving to the Lord demonstrate love for our neighbors?
3. Tithing is just a part of what we give to the Lord. What else is He seeking from us?

He shews them from the consequence that nothing can be better or more desirable for them than to embrace God's Law; for nothing can be more honorable to ourselves than to give to God His due honor, and to exalt His glory to its due preeminence.
John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Deuteronomy 26.17*

Thank You, Lord, for making me part of Your special people, so that I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 128.3-6

Pray for God's special people around the world, that He may revive and renew us in the Gospel, and send us to the world for a great awakening to Christ.

Psalm 128.3-6

(Fountain: [*There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood*](#))

Their homes with happy children bloom who fear Your holy Name;
their tables and their every room declare Your glorious fame!
Declare Your glorious fame, declare Your glorious fame!
Their tables and their every room declare Your glorious fame!

O Lord, from Zion send Your peace, and prosp'rous make our ways;
thus may Your blessings e'er increase upon us all our days!
Upon us all our days, upon us all our days!
Thus may Your blessings e'er increase upon all us all our days!

7 Chosen for Justice

Opening Prayer: Psalm 132.13-18

For the LORD has chosen Zion;
He has desired it for His dwelling place:
“This is My resting place forever;
Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.
I will abundantly bless her provision;
I will satisfy her poor with bread.
I will also clothe her priests with salvation,
And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.
There I will make the horn of David grow;
I will prepare a lamp for My Anointed.
His enemies I will clothe with shame,
But upon Himself His crown shall flourish.”

Psalm 132.13-18

(Finlandia: *Be Still, My Soul*)

God dwells among us, and He will forever, to meet our needs and clothe us with His grace.
He has to us sent Jesus Christ, our Savior, and made us His eternal resting-place.
His foes are banished from His Presence ever, but we shall reign with Him before His face.

Review Deuteronomy 24-26; meditate on Deuteronomy 26.16-19

Preparation

1. Which of the various forms of justice do we find in these chapters?
2. What makes God’s people a special people among the nations of the earth?

Meditation.

A holy people is a people set aside to the Lord for His purposes. We can’t make ourselves holy; we are unable by ourselves to do what is required to constitute us as a “set aside” people unto the Lord. He has to do that, just as He had, first, to call Israel His people, then to deliver them from Egypt. By giving them His Law, He revealed His mind concerning what their “set-aside-ness” should look like.

And that “set-aside-ness” – that holiness – includes forms of justice that ensure neighbors know how to love God and one another as a shining light of wisdom before the world. God intends His people to be special, set apart, holy and “high above all nations” to show the way into the grace of God and lead the rest of the world to salvation.

Living as a holy people was no small challenge for Israel, because God required that they do so from the heart (v. 16). Yet, as Moses has pointed out several times thus far in the book of Deuteronomy, these people did not have a heart ready to believe, fear, love, and obey God in all things. That heart would only be given when the Spirit of God was sent to dwell in the people God was calling to Himself, to give them a heart of flesh which would warm to the Law of God in all things (Ezek. 36.26, 27).

Nonetheless, this is what God required of His special people of old, just as it’s what He requires of us. We need to learn the ways of justice by learning and obeying the Law of God. And we need to keep up our offerings to God, and our confession of faith in Him and love for one another. Becoming a holy people isn’t something that “just happens.” We have to work at it, and in working at it, we find God Himself at work

within us, willing and doing according to His good pleasure (Phil. 2.13).

The people of ancient Israel didn't have that blessing. But God exercised His grace toward them, teaching them the ways of justice and holiness, and bearing with them through many acts of disobedience and rebellion to demonstrate the power of grace to save, renew, and restore His people unto Himself. God's relationship with Israel in the Old Testament demonstrated the need for a greater work of grace than even the giving of His Law. It pointed to the coming Servant of the Lord, Who would fulfill all the righteous requirements of God's Law and bear all the judgment that Law requires against sinners such as we. Jesus is the great "Set-Aside One" Whose holiness and obedience make it possible for us to be the holy and special and set-aside people of God today.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Deuteronomy 26.16-19 is like an antiphonal song, sung between God and us:

God: I command you to observe these statutes and judgments. You must be careful to observe them with all your heart and soul.

We: Today we proclaim the LORD to be our God.

God: Here is what loving Me with all your heart and soul will look like. You will walk in My ways and keep My statutes, commandments, and judgments. You will obey My voice in all ways.

We: Today we proclaim that we will do it.

God: Today I declare you to be My special people, just as I promised. And because of that, you will keep all My commandments.

We: Today we proclaim ourselves to be Your special people.

God: Today I have spoken that I will set you high above all nations in praise, in name, and in honor, so that you will be a holy people unto Me.

We: We thank You and praise You and proclaim that we will do all You have spoken. For by grace we have been saved through faith, and that not of ourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest we should boast. For we are Your workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which You prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Eph. 2.8-10).

God: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine (Is. 43.1).

We: LORD, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life (Jn. 6.68).

Reflection

1. How does keeping God's Law make us a special people unto Him?
2. We do not keep the Law to *be* saved; we keep it *because He has saved us*. Explain.
3. Jesus fulfilled the Law for us, both unto righteousness and unto wrath. Explain.

God makes his own the person who is eager to serve truth and reality and comes as a suppliant. Even if he is only one in number, he is honored on equal terms with the whole people. He is a part of the people. He becomes the complement of the people once he is reestablished out of his previous position, and the whole in fact takes its name from the part. Clement of Alexandria (150-215), Stromateis 2.19.98.1-2

You have made me one of Your special people Lord. Help me to live in holiness as I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 132.1-12

Thank God that He has made His dwelling in your soul. Praise Him for His Word, His promises, His Spirit, and for Jesus. Then ask Him to show you what being one of His holy and special people requires of you today.

Psalm 132.1-12

(Finlandia: *Be Still, My Soul*)

Remember, Lord, we pray, in David's favor, the hardships he endured, the oath he swore, the vow he made to Jacob's mighty Savior: "I shall not enter through my palace door; I shall not sleep, nor slumber my eyes favor, until I make a dwelling for the Lord!"

The word throughout the chosen nation spread, to Ephrata, and in the fields of Jaar: "Now let us go," the faithful people said, "and worship where our Savior's dwellings are! Around His footstool let our worship spread; come, gather to Him, all from near and far!"

Arise, O Lord, come to Your resting place; Your holy Presence meet with us in might. Clothe us with righteousness in Jesus' grace, and we will shout to Your divine delight! For David's sake, turn not away Your face, but look upon us in Your holy light.

Remember, Lord, the oath You swore to David; do not turn back, do not deny Your Word: "One of your sons, with your throne I will favor, and He shall keep My cov'nant evermore, and walk within My testimonies ever, thus He shall ever rule as Israel's Lord."

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What is justice? Who is required to be just?
2. Explain the different types of justice we have seen in these chapters.
3. How do giving tithes and offerings help to immerse us more fully in the love of God?
4. What makes the people of God a special people above all the nations of the earth?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Deuteronomy 24-26? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.