

Deuteronomy 23

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[0 : 00] Amen. Deuteronomy chapter 23. Moses is writing to the nation of Israel. And he is giving them, he's actually not just writing, he is expounding the law to the nation of Israel.

Right before they cross the Jordan River and go into the promised land. The overall theme is how they're going to live life inside the promised land. It's a great transition, right?

They're going from a nomadic wandering nation to a settled nation living in houses and planting fields and harvesting fruit and just living life differently.

But they're also going to live among people that are different than them because God doesn't displace the inhabitants of Canaan all at one time. He does it little by little. He says he does that for the sake of the land.

And he also does it for the sake of his people, right? He does it even for the sake of those who have been displaced because his people are called to be witnesses and a testimony to them. And part of that testimony is to live different.

[1 : 02] Some scholars believe, and I'm not so sure that it's not inaccurate, I don't think it should be our most determining factor in reading the book of Deuteronomy, but some scholars believe the book of Deuteronomy follows a pattern of what would be ancient Near Eastern covenants that governments would put upon their vassals or their servants and we're going to rule over you and this is what life looks like as we rule over you and this is what it looks like.

We're going to be your protector and your sustainer and you're going to be loyal to us and this is how you're going to look. And some believe that Deuteronomy follows that example as God rules over his people.

This is his expectation for his people under his lordship or his rulership. Now that has application because we find in Scripture later on, in particular in dealing with Samuel, when God says they haven't rejected you, they've rejected me.

I'm their king. I'm to be their king. Because Yahweh, covenant God, is their king and their ruler and they're his servants and vassals and they're to be subject to him.

And therefore, their relationship with him affects every single area of their life. And we see throughout the book of Deuteronomy, it gets personal, right?

[2 : 21] It's really, really personal. And relationship with God is not just a bit and piece of their life, it is their life. And it has a direct influence or application to everything they do.

And he continues on with that theme. Some Bibles just title this various laws. Yours may have that heading above a portion of the Scripture.

We get into 24 and 25. Most of them have it. Just various laws. All these various kind of seem to be disconnected laws.

All these expectations. But God is a God of order. He's not a God of disconnectedness. So, our job. Wednesday night, slow down.

Dig for the meat. Find out how it connects, right? Deuteronomy chapter 23. No one who is emasculated or has his male organ cut off shall enter the assembly of the Lord.

[3 : 28] No one of illegitimate birth shall enter the assembly of the Lord. None of his descendants, even to the 10th generation. Just so you know, the 10th generation is probably wording for not ever.

Because we're going to read that again in just a minute. Even to the 10th generation shall enter the assembly of the Lord. No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the Lord.

None of their descendants, even to the 10th generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the Lord because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia to curse you.

Nevertheless, the Lord your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the Lord your God loves you. You shall never seek their peace or their prosperity all your days.

You shall not detest an Edomite for he is your brother. You shall not detest an Egyptian because you are an alien in his land. The sons of the third generation who are born to them may enter the assembly of the Lord.

[4 : 33] When you go out as an army against your enemies, you shall keep yourself from every evil thing. If there is among you any man who is unclean because of a nocturnal emission, then he must go outside the camp.

He may not reenter the camp, but it shall be when evening approaches, he shall bathe himself with water and at sundown he may reenter the camp. You shall also have a place outside the camp and go out there and you shall have a spade among your tools and it shall be when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and shall turn to cover up your excrement since the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies before you.

Therefore, your camp must be holy and you must not see anything indecent among you or he will turn away from you. You shall not hand over to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you.

He shall live with you in your midst in the place which he shall choose in one of your towns where it pleases him. You shall not mistreat him. None of the daughters of Israel shall be a cult prostitute, nor shall any of the sons of Israel be a cult prostitute.

You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of a dog into the house of the Lord your God for any votive offering for both of these or an abomination to the Lord your God.

[5 : 49] By the way, a dog would be a male practicing harlotry or prostitution. You shall not charge interest to your countrymen, interest on money, food, or anything that may be loaned at interest.

You may charge interest to a foreigner, but your countrymen you shall not charge interest so that the Lord your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are about to enter to possess. When you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not delay to pay it for it would be sin in you and the Lord your God will surely require it of you.

However, if you refrain from vowing, it would not be sin in you. You shall be careful to perform what goes out from your lips just as you voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God what you have promised.

When you enter your neighbor's vineyard, then you may eat grapes until you are fully satisfied, but you shall not put any in your basket. When you enter your neighbor's standing grain, then you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor's standing grain.

Deuteronomy chapter 23. You know, I realized when I preached through the Old Testament that inevitably you come to passages that make you deal with things.

[7 : 05] This is one of those passages. But we see these truths being lived out even in the New Testament. Was not Jesus ridiculed as he and his disciples passed through a grain field and they plucked the heads of grain with their hands and rubbed it together?

Therefore, they were harvesting the grain and eating it and they said, oh, you're working on the Sabbath? This is a practice that was in place even in the times of Christ. These things went through the history of the nation of Israel.

Sure, there are some things here that seem a little outdated, a little antiquated, some things that may not have application literally as much now as it did then, but the truth it embodies, the character of God it embodies and the application that it has to his people is still there.

So this evening I want you to see the peculiar people of God's community. The peculiar people of God's community. Because there are all these strange laws that set them apart.

And any of them by themselves seems odd. But when you compile them and you put them together much like Moses does in the book of Deuteronomy and you just read them one right after another after another after another and we go into chapter 24 and 25 and there's still just these laws that keep just building and building and building and building.

[8 : 29] It makes you really scratch your hand and go, man, these are strange people. They really are peculiar. They're different than anybody around them. Because God literally set a standard in every area of life to separate them from everyone else.

From beginning to end. It is not that they lived in a legalistic society even though by the time Christ came the Pharisees had exalted it to a legalistic society.

The Pharisees had the Mishnah or the oral law and then they eventually recorded that law and had over 634 specific laws which dictated how you should live each and every day, how much weight you could cover, how many steps you could take on the Sabbath.

All these things that were required just set you apart and that's missing the intent of the law. The intent of the law as Paul would say would be a tutor to show us that none of us are perfect, right?

And we don't have to get very far into that to understand that we fall short at some point. But another intent of the law is also just to set apart every area of your life to make you look peculiar, to make you look different.

[9 : 50] For there to be such a difference between you and those you live among that people would have to ask a question. This is why we find again the admonition in scripture to always be ready to give a defense for the hope that is in you.

because God has called his people to so stand out, to be so different, peculiar, to be a strange group of people in the community of the Lord in comparison to everybody else in the world.

And the great danger is not when the church looks different, the great danger is when the church looks similar. to everyone around them. The problem was not when the nation of Israel is seen and recognized as peculiar.

The great problem happens is when the nation of Israel is seen and recognized as everybody else. God intentionally sets them apart.

So I want you to see four truths as it pertains to the peculiar people of God's community. Number one, they are a people of choice.

[11 : 13] They are a people of choice. That's just a way of saying they are God's chosen people. They're God's chosen people.

we see this all throughout the Old Testament. We are reminded of it even in the New Testament. We are reminded in the entirety of Scripture that God chose Abram from the land of the early Chaldeans to raise up a people for his own possession.

Abram did not choose God. God chose Abram. As a matter of fact, we can go to the very first pages of Genesis and we can see God's choice moving throughout the descendants, right?

And even among the descendants of Abram, the Edomites here are referred to as their brother. They are referred to because they are the descendants of Esau. But yet, they are not the chosen people.

They are treated with respect. They are treated with a little bit of recognition, but they are not the chosen people.

[12 : 27] Over and over again, we see God's choice. We see God's movement. And we don't need to discount that and say, well, that's an Old Testament truth and it really has no application to me because you are reminded in the New Testament that before the creation of the world, God called you and chose you.

Even now, and we can't discount this and we can't look and we can't deny this even though there are so many theological terms that we can get into. We don't want to get into theological terms and please don't ever attempt to label me because if you ever attempt to label me I'll probably say something the very next moment that will completely total that label and I'm not really going to get into it but don't ever try to label me or yourself with some individual's name but let's just let the scripture say the scripture all throughout scripture salvation is always the work of God and man responds to what God is doing.

the initiative always rests in the almighty no one comes to the father lest he be drawn to the father before the foundation of the world he called you to Christ all these initiatives and the one thing that is so peculiar about God's people is that they are a people of choice they are God's chosen people and as a result of that now this is the part that really starts bothering us but we need to acknowledge it right and we need to just go ahead and say let God be God and us be man okay and we don't need to try to figure out why these things happen we don't need to figure out we don't need to try to tell God what right does the clay have to say to the potter right we need to agree with Paul on that and just assume this but as a result of them being a people of choice God also reserves the right to tell them who can't be a part of his community and this is exactly what he does here he says let no one who has been emasculated or has an organ cut off that means to be made a eunuch let no one be a part of the community of God's people now if you want to take it in his historical setting that was a common practice among those who had performed paganistic idolatrous worship they would make themselves eunuch as a eunuch as a part of their idolatrous worship because we see also in other portions of scripture that eunuchs are giving a place those who were born eunuchs are giving a place of prominence in the kingdom it says they will be made pillars in heaven right so it's not to say that they can't have a place the

Ethiopian eunuch except in Christ and so it's not saying this we don't want to say that this is some this is one of those where we could take this text and pull it out of scripture and we can say well if you're a eunuch and you've ever had this or you've had that done and you can't be a part of God's people we don't need to take it out of context of the rest of scripture because the Ethiopian eunuch accepted Christ and was baptized and and we see him and he more than likely took his testimony back to Africa and there was while there was a vibrant church in Africa long before the any of the apostles ever got there and we see that but we understand that what he is saying here is those who have intermingled in this paganistic worship this idolatrous worship they have no place in the community of God's people even the illegitimate child is it's probably a result of a marriage that was kind of coronated in again this idolatrous worship right so what God is saying is these have no place because you can't worship that and worship me and then he says the Ammonite and the Moabite they have no place now notice the

Ammonite and Moabite are cut off for sins right the Ammonite because of their sins of omission they did not bring you food and water the Moabite because of their sins of commission they hired Balaam against you and and called him to bring a curse upon you but yet I said you will not be cursed you will be blessed so what we see here is that God knows who his people are and God is proactive in the choice of his people so the very first thing that sets the people of God apart is that they are a people of choice and it's not it's not the choice they made that's the fact that God chose to set his love upon them and he wooed us to himself wooing winning others over he wooed us demonstrated his love there is a church sign I pass every day on my bus route anybody knows my bus route probably knows which one I'm talking about but I'm not going to call the church out because I don't like to try to get too theologically too many theological arguments over the churches but right now the sign on the church says your life is determined by choice not coincidence my little caveat to that is it's not just all your choice and I know we're kind of getting to it but I think we lose we lose some of the wonder of salvation when we forget before we ever chose him he chose us while we were yet sinners

[17 : 58] Christ died for us and we don't ever want to lose the wonder of that now I'm not sitting here saying there's some people God didn't choose I'm not saying that what I'm saying is that he has the freedom to choose and he chose to choose me he chose to choose you and to me that's astounding that should set us apart that should call us to attention because there are people of choice number two there are people of care there are people of care and by that I mean you're going to be careful about God's presence among them they're going to take care to ensure that the presence of God among them or whatever they're doing in their life does not offend the holiness of God we see it clearly here when it speaks of going out to battle and you're in this encampment now I can't think of many places that would probably be a place for more crude behavior than an encampment of soldiers all men on the battlefield only thinking about winning the battle and getting home and yet God sets a very high standard for even how things happen inside the camp some of these are very practical and hygienic right dig a hole before you go to the bathroom it's astounding that God had to tell his people that but God told his people that you know why because that wasn't a practice in those days God set a high standard even for hygiene a lot of the laws what they call the sun dry laws like if a rodent runs across a dish you need to destroy it well it's probably because God knew that rodents carry diseases and man didn't right he's a head of science because he created science so he knows all these things right so he gives them these very practical laws but but the reason there's so many practical behaviors right the reason and even the nocturnal emission people are kind of up in arms about that because the wording doesn't seem to apply in the mission that would lead to childbirth without going into much more detail there because of the kids that are here because that wording in Leviticus is totally different something discommened the man just used the bathroom on himself because he was so tired from fighting he didn't want to get up in the middle of the night another common practice and so what

God is saying is man you're unclean get out of the camp and you say what all does this matter he's telling them to be careful to maintain the cleanliness of the camp because the Lord your God walks among you that wording means he is there to be your deliverer to fight your battles to be your victor and to us it seems kind of odd and strange but what we need to understand is God was calling them to do extra because of the reality that he was present right God was calling them to live differently because of the reality of his presence among them he is there therefore you should take care not to let what does it say not to let any uncleanness or anything that would defile you to be around you every evil thing every evil thing they were to live a life of care now here's the reality if they were to live that way on the battlefield how much more so on the home front if they were to live that way when a group of men were gathered together on the battlefield how much more so at home around the supper table gathered around as a family worshiping praying in the tabernacle or the temple how much more so there God has called his people to be a people of care and where two or three are gathered together I am there as well be very becoming for his people to still live a life of care I would dare say that if every believer lived with the reality of

God's presence among them John chapter 15 Jesus says that if I go away it will be for your benefit because the spirit then the spirit would come and make his abode that word is tabernacle the spirit would come and make his tabernacle with you and then I and the father will come and tabernacle in you as well that is to live inside of the believer the fullness of God and other believer and that's why it says we are a spiritual house right we somehow another because of our relationship with God through Christ now contain the fullness of God within us I can't define it or explain it I can believe it he is present so what if every believer lived in the reality of living a life of care because he was there let him not find anything unclean lest he leave you I'm almost certain that many of the times we lose a spiritual fight not a battle the battle the victor is ours in Christ but we lose a spiritual skirmish is because of the unclean things we've allowed to hang out around our camp that now the presence of God is kind of suppressed in our life and he's no longer there to be our deliverer or victor in that particular moments they were a people of care and that care carried over into the vows that they made and Moses says you don't have to make a vow you don't have to make a vow but if you do make a vow you have to fulfill it you notice what he say so if you make a vow and you don't fulfill the vow that is sin to you but if you don't vow that there's no sin in that you don't have to promise God anything you don't have to make a vow there's no sin in that

Jesus said let your yes be yes and your no be no but he says but if you do make a vow. If you say, God, I will do this, then do it.

Because you made it of your own free will. Your own free choice. Be careful to do it. Resonates within me. You know, there have been so many times where I've said, I feel like the Lord is leading me to do this.

[24 : 50] And as soon as I say, maybe this is not an experience in your life, but I promise you, if you ever make this vow, or you ever say that you will experience this in your life, where you say, I really feel like this is what the Lord's calling me to do, or this is how the Lord's moving our family. The very moment you make that vow, almost immediately it will seem like that vow doesn't make sense.

And Satan will make sure that so many things come your way, and so many attacks come, and so many discouragements come at you, and so many things, and you just say, I just don't, maybe I messed up.

Or maybe you're just in the middle of a battle. You don't have to make the vow, but if he leads you to do it, then be careful to follow through. Live a life of care.

Live a life of care. They're people of choice, they're people of care, they are people of consistency. Number three, they're people of consistency. Which means it's what they are in worship is what they are in work.

Okay, what they are in worship is what they are in work. And we see this in the phrase, none of your sons, I mean, none of the daughters of Israel should ever practice harlotry, or be a temple prostitute, that's what it says.

[26 : 03] None of the daughters of Israel should ever practice temple prostitution, nor should any of the sons of Israel practice temple prostitution. Now, that temple prostitution was a form of their worship, the form of worship of Baal.

There were people who had that position. Baal was one of the fertility gods, and one of the ways that they did that was through prostitution, and they were there. It says, none, so that's worship, right?

You shouldn't do this as worship. That's not how it happens. It shouldn't happen. It's not gonna happen. And he says, don't intermingle this with worship. God says, you come before me with rejoicing, sacrificing, praising.

Don't come before me like that. So, you're not to live that way in your worship. And then, it almost seems like it's connected, but in the original wording, there are different words here, because the word prostitution and the word harlotry is a totally different word.

He says, and you shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of a dog, which is a male practice in harlotry, into the house of the Lord your God for any votive offering, for both of these are an abomination to the Lord your God.

[27 : 02] So, what he's saying is, the money you make from harlotry, if that's your business, don't bring it to me. Because I'm not gonna accept that money. That means what you do for a living matters.

That's what he's telling his people. How you are in worship is how you should be in work. Live a life of consistency.

Life of consistency. You can't separate the two. Just to say it plainly, there should be some things we would never do, no matter how much it paid, because of who we are in Christ.

And the way I see it, if I can't do it as an act of worship, then I should not be doing it as an act of work.

Does that mean that I may miss out on some financial gain because of it? Yeah. Consistency. And we are called to live that way.

[28 : 18] And God is calling his people that way. And he's calling them to live a life of consistency. He said, well, pastor, what are those things? That would be easy, right?

And I'll tell people the same answer. I always do. If you can worship your Savior while doing that, if that job or that occupation is a demonstration of worship, then carry on.

If it's not, then ask yourself, why not? Is it because maybe we're not looking at it that way? Is it because maybe we shouldn't be there?

And it doesn't necessarily have to be a bad job or a bad thing. It could be a good thing at the wrong time. It could be a good thing that's taking a wrong place in our position in your life.

But you are to live a life of consistency. Our livelihoods should be consistent with our worship. Therefore, there is no area of our life that does not stand out as a testimony, an example.

[29 : 30] because I guarantee you, I guarantee you, and you know it too, there are more people watching you when you work than there are watching you when you worship.

You have a greater testimonial field at work than you do at worship. And that is a wonderful opportunity.

I remember when I hired on phone company, I was a lineman and all the stereotypical line crew things.

That was about the time the NES hazing incidents came out. I don't know if you guys remember that. It was like for the first time it was put on News Channel 5 I think came out with it.

I'll never forget that because I had just hired on as a lineman and lineman started getting this bad rep because of the way they treated junior lineman and all this other stuff. It was all true in line crew. Right after me there was like two weeks after me there was another young man hired on he was the same age I was.

[30 : 35] Both of us were 21 and he was a believer. I was a believer. I was about a year into my walk with Christ. He was about six months into his walk with Christ.

We both had similar stories and we were both new believers both on fire. He was connected in church. I was connected in a different church and we were gathered together. The Lord was gracious to me and put me on a truck by myself.

I told you about that. I was in this truck all day long by myself and got to hear a lot of good preaching because I had an AM only radio so banjo picking or preaching was my two options. I got there and I was by myself and God really just kind of put me in a cocoon.

Unfortunately for this young man the irony is he works for NES now. This young man was immediately put into a truck with another man. And if there was one man on the line crew he didn't need to be with it was that guy.

His last name I won't tell you his first name I doubt anybody knows him. His last name was Staniszewski okay. He was a Polish guy. Big old he referred to himself as a big old Polak and he was he was a big I mean just a giant of a man.

[31 : 45] And thought himself bigger than he was. one day he walks into the office. We'd been there maybe six months and he was so happy.

He goes boys I did it. I finally did it. He was excited. I didn't have any idea what he was talking about. Well Seth was the young man who already did that for me and Seth walks in with his head down.

Bill said I finally made him so mad he cussed like a sailor because what Bill would do for eight hours was hound him and hound him and hound him and hound him and hound him and hound him. Now you need to understand something about phone company bucket trucks.

When you get in a bucket in the phone company there's a speaker that's connected to the cab. The new trucks thankfully by the time I got a bucket truck you could cut the cab speaker off. At that time you couldn't. So whoever was in the cab talked to you and you couldn't get away from it because you're working eight hours and he would just hound him and hound him and hound him until finally one day Seth broke and just cussed him up one side down the other went back to eight months ago Seth.

His BC days right? That made Bill I just told you Bill's first name Bill that made Bill so happy because it was his ambition to see if these believers were fake.

[33 : 05] Seth ended up becoming a really good lineman that was bad from that but people watch us when we work and they only think as much about our walk as they see in our work and we need to live a life of consistency.

Fourth and finally and I know I went a little on a Wednesday night fourth and finally people of choice people of care people of consistency number four people of concern one of the peculiar things about God's people is that they are a people of concern it is there to be there to care about other people it says that when a slave comes to you who is fleeing from his master you should not send him back to his master now immediately my mind goes to the New Testament and says what about Paul he sends Onesimus back to his master right he sends him back and well that's what we're referring to here in the Old Testament is when someone outside of the promised land from a distant land flees to the nation of Israel because they see them as looking different and is leaving a suppressive mean Canaanite ruler don't send them back what he's saying is my people are people of refuge because they were to treat their servants different anyway they were to take their servants with them to worship they were to take their servants with them to have celebratory meals right his people were to be a people of refuge people should be running to them living among them because it's different no different today people of

God are still to be a people of refuge says you're not to charge your countrymen or your brother interest money you lend him and food you lend him anything that you could charge interest don't charge your countryman interest you can charge a foreigner interest but don't charge your countryman's interest which means it shouldn't only be a people of refuge they should also be a people of help if someone among you falls in need and you have the means to help them out you help them out not for personal gain but because of personal concern right don't charge them interest raise them up and then there's this odd law that you can walk into anybody's vineyard you want to and eat all the grapes you want to you just can't take any with you you can walk into anybody's grain field use your hand to gather some grain but you can't put a sickle to it you can't go out and just harvest their field but you can get some food this means that there should never be a hungry person among them there was literally an open buffet for anybody who would walk to the field

God says don't be so stingy with your products that people are starving among you what about the widow we see it right in the book of Ruth for the orphan there's a place for them to be fed there's an opportunity all these laws and rules really was enabling God's people to live with a demonstrable concern for others around them live with a genuine concern and to ensure that everybody around them knew it and would experience the benefits of it and would be able to be refreshed by it live as people of concern and hey that was radically different than anyone else among them and by the way that's radically different than most people among us

I'll end with this and we'll be done several years ago I mean several years ago probably 10 years ago or more Francis Chan maybe you don't know Francis Chan Francis Chan right after he authored a book called Crazy Love he was pastor of a church in Simi Valley California and they were outgrowing their building they were really just God was adding to them right we had a chance our family and I had a chance to hear him preach several times during that time and it was kind of amazing to watch what was going on so they were needing to build a new church in Simi Valley California and they did a couple of things first thing they realized that they lived in an area that was beautiful weather kind of like today all the time and they decided that it would probably be the best use of their money to build an amphitheater instead of a major mega church building they just worship now that may have since changed since then so don't go looking it up it may have changed so they did they said well if we get rained on once or twice a year so be it we'd be able to give more money to our community if we build an amphitheater instead of building this mega building right but then

[38 : 26] Francis and the leaders of that church did some radical things as far as I know they're still binding upon one another even though Francis is not the pastor there anymore hasn't been the pastor there for some time a group of men came together and they entered into a covenant with one another every one of them took their money out of retirement and gave it away and they looked at each other and said if anything happens to you I'll take care of your family and they said if anything happens to you we'll take care of your family your wife your kids they'll be taken care of we bound ourselves or they bound themselves to take care of one another's family and they began to place their trust in one another instead of their trust in their financial means taken in context of where they live that was radical and I remember hearing

Francis Chan talk about he said you know what that really is it's just the church being the church and it shook a lot of churches like you mean you take those things literally and as far as I know I mean like I said he hasn't been the pastor there in a number of years last I read those men are still they're bound for life to one another they're still responsible for one another because they're part of God's community and you know what they are a peculiar people they are peculiar people but it testifies to a watching world Deuteronomy chapter 23 peculiar people of God's community thank you brother so

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[42 : 38] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[45 : 08] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.