



# MONDAY 4 SEPTEMBER 2017

SERIES: DEUTERONOMY – CHOOSE LIFE

## Read: Deuteronomy 22:1-4

### Plug In...

Chapters 22-26 set before Israel specific situations and how to respond. It's called *case law*. Case law works on 'If x,y,z happens, *then*, do a,b,c'.

Some of the cases list how to *respond* to a violation of rights. Other cases outline terms and duties one should hold in a relationship (with individual or community) *before* a violation.

Chapter 22:1-4 is a specific example of what duties should set up a relationship between brothers.

### Chew It Over...

This week we cover a lot of specific situations and Israel are told how to respond. As we do, keep in mind three things:

- (1) The Scriptures testify that God is good, and with regard to Israel, He acted for the good of His people and knowing their situation gave them the blueprint for having a healthy, good life in their time and space. Remembering this should cause us to avoid charging God's Old Testament laws as being "arbitrary", "legalistic", "external", "mere code". Many describe Old Testament laws with such words and have totally missed the character of God and His nature.

- (2) Scripture directs us that there is a change between the Mosaic Covenant and the New Covenant, but God's moral ideal for humans (grounded in His own nature) has not changed. So, while the Mosaic Covenant calls for obedience to gain life (e.g. [Deuteronomy 4:1; 5:32-33](#)), running alongside it Moses says this path to life will fail them for they are terminally ill – they cannot avoid their heart of sin ([Deuteronomy 4:25-31; 9:23-24; 29:2-4; 30:1-10](#)). So, as Paul explains, God abolished the Mosaic Covenant as a path to life, and provided Christ (the New Covenant of faith) as the way to life ([Galatians 3:10-14](#)), but didn't abolish it as revelation of God's character and standard of morals (e.g. [Ephesians 6:1-2](#)).
- (3) Therefore, we need to ask of every Old Testament law, what about God's character and holiness informs this law (every law is based on love for God and love for neighbour – see Jesus' words, [Matthew 22:34-40](#)).
- (4) So, look at the specific concrete situation given in the Old Testament (e.g. an ox wanders off), ask what about God's character is informing this situation (i.e. God notices people's pain – compassion – and takes positive action – justice), then ask what is the analogous situation today and think what concrete action you would do to imitate God in that situation. (For example, your work colleague leaves their mobile phone at their desk and has left for home. You notice it. This is going to impact their business calls for the next day. Should you run it over to their place for them, which will put your fun afternoon activity back by 30 minutes? What next will you do?)

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Ask the Lord that we will see His character clearly. That we will get guidance by watching how Jesus did love of God and love of neighbour. Ask that we might be full-on imitators of Jesus in attitude and action.



## TUESDAY 5 SEPTEMBER 2017

SERIES: DEUTERONOMY – CHOOSE LIFE

### Read: Deuteronomy 22:5-30

#### **Plug In...**

Israel's culture was a different time and place. This means that some situations are immediately comparable to ours and the character of God informing a command is right on the surface. Other times it is harder to see initially. Think about the principle of God, "Love your neighbour", something that God Himself does. In verse 8 we have the specific command to, "Put a fence around the roof of your house" (which in Israel's time was an open floor space for entertaining). It is somewhat easy to figure out the loving principle in this command that we could apply to situations today, i.e. "Keep your house a safe place for people". This may mean you put up a pool fence, not leave step ladders around for kids, etc.

#### **Chew It Over...**

Think about the hard messy situations that confront us in chapter 22. What clues do we get that suggest that beyond the initial violation against them, they will end up copping further harm and tragedy?

Can you arrive at what from God's character is informing the specific policies for certain circumstances?

How would those concerns God has be replicated in how we handle comparable situations today?

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Pray through a messy situation you're aware of and ask Jesus for wisdom on what actions would best retrieve a situation and promote safety, respect, and peace within the church and community while we wait for the New Creation.



## WEDNESDAY 6 SEPTEMBER 2017

SERIES: DEUTERONOMY – CHOOSE LIFE

### Read: Deuteronomy 23

#### **Plug In...**

Some laws are harder to work through, for we are limited in our ability to thoroughly step into the shoes of Israel's culture. This doesn't leave us without hope though. We are clear on God's character and that He acts for the good of His people. We know that all the social laws hang off loving our neighbour ([Matthew 22:34-40](#)). So, it can be said that all God's laws are 'pro-life' in some manner. Therefore, even with laws that seem so culturally removed from us, we can work through how these laws might be preserving life and protecting the vulnerable in the community from threat.

Also, remember, the Mosaic Covenant still admits sin, and explains that this covenant is temporary and will be superseded by a better, more ultimate, future covenant. Therefore, many of the laws are not enforcing what God says is the absolute ideal and most socially desirable. Rather, they take the characteristics of God's morals and actions (such as: pro-life, generosity, forgiveness, justice that helps the vulnerable and weak) and invest that into practical steps to stop behaviour sinking any further.

#### **Chew It Over...**

Old Testament laws are not binding on Christians directly, because they were given to Israel specifically, and given within the Mosaic Covenant. So much of what we read in these chapters is removed from us culturally, and also covenantally (i.e. we're under the New Covenant). Nevertheless, they can be used to build our wisdom. We know God's character, His will for people, so they can be a "quick-start" guide to thinking about what love for God and love for neighbour may look like.

Take some of the specific situations in chapter 23 and ask, how does this show love for God and love for neighbour in the very concrete and specific situation Israel was in.

[Pick up on the motivation and rationale given for many of the commands in this chapter, e.g. verse 7.]

Next, as we love God and neighbour through Jesus, does it have anything to say with how we might shape particular interactions with people this week?

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Lord Jesus help us to not be neutral people. May we more and more intentionally make decisions informed by deep love for you. May our actions towards others follow-on from imitating the action you have taken in our life.



## THURSDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2017

SERIES: DEUTERONOMY – CHOOSE LIFE

### Read: Deuteronomy 24

#### **Plug In...**

Chapter 24:8-9 refers to all of the Book of Leviticus and simply calls Israel to obey it. It comes in a section that calls people to have relationships that preserve people's connection to the covenant and to the prosperity of the Land. It shows that central to life, to living prosperously in the Land, is holiness. Holiness comes from being clean before God, made possible through the sacrifices. The unclean/clean laws (e.g. skin diseases and then becoming clean) vividly teach this.

At this point is a quick recall of Miriam, who disobeyed Moses (that is she disobeyed God) and became unholy, vividly shown to all with an unclean skin disease. She is used here in Deuteronomy as a paradigm of rebellion and what happens.

#### **Chew It Over...**

[Hebrews 10:26-31](#) implores us to learn from Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy the same lesson Moses is now teaching Israel through Miriam. Purity, holiness – maintained through obedience is a necessity – God will judge His people. God has judged His people through Jesus Christ on the cross, but should someone totally disregard this and wilfully, deliberately and continually keep living in persistent patterns of sin – they have trampled all over Jesus' loving acts for them on the cross.

#### **Prayer Suggestion**

Ask the Lord to help you see how you do good deeds to others, meet regularly with Christians, and persevere in suffering, to be encouraged that you are running away from sin and towards Jesus Christ [this is what the rest of [Hebrews 10](#) assures us of].



# FRIDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2017

SERIES: DEUTERONOMY – CHOOSE LIFE

## Read: Deuteronomy 25

### Plug In...

Chapter 25:1-4 really caps off a section that has been about protecting the disadvantaged. Remarkably, even a criminal within Israel is to have his or her dignity protected.

Verse 4 seems a completely random insertion. “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain”. This is possibly an argument technique where you use a smaller thing to argue for a bigger thing. E.g. if a door is large enough for a 7-foot person to come through, then surely a 5ft 2" person will easily get through. The argument here is, given you act righteously and fairly with an animal, then of course you should do the same in all relationships. [*Cf.* Paul understanding it this way – [1 Corinthians 9:7-12](#).]

### Chew It Over...

Consider how these laws show that God did not save His people from degradation in Egypt to have them degrade one another.

Reflect on how this truth still challenges us today in [Galatians 5:13-15](#):

*You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.*



## **Prayer Suggestion**

Confess to Jesus where you have be degrading fellow Christians. Ask for insight how you can now love them and serve them.



## WEEKEND 9-10 SEPTEMBER 2017

SERIES: DEUTERONOMY – CHOOSE LIFE

### Read: Deuteronomy 26

#### Plug In...

This chapter wraps up the block (chaps. 12-26) of laws and statutes given in Deuteronomy. Firstfruits from the bounty of the Land are to be taken to the place where God puts His name and enjoyed there. At that time, they are to rehearse two statements. The first, the sum of their journey (God had taken them from having no land to be a people with their own land; they are populous and free).

The second, a declaration that they have been faithful, purged evil, resisted the Canaanite practices, and played their part in building up relationships of freedom for everyone. The final verse declares that what is next is enjoying intimacy with God: *"Look down from heaven, your holy dwelling-place, and bless your people Israel and the land you have given us as you promised on oath to our ancestors, a land flowing with milk and honey."*

#### Chew It Over...

In what ways do we rehearse the gospel journey as a group of people when we gather together? Can you think of what very vivid symbols we have as a church that rehearse and make these statements? Do you participate in them when they come around?

#### Prayer Suggestion

Thank God for transferring us from being lost in darkness into the kingdom of His Son. Thank Him for the assurance that we will arrive at the destination. Pray that such declarations, like that of Israel, will be close to our hearts and uttered on our lips.