

**Message #28****Deuteronomy 23:1-25**

It has been an amazing thing to see, but we have had some tremendous responses to the study of Deuteronomy. One person from our fellowship hit the nail on the head when he said “This is good instruction and we need it and, in most places you don’t get it.”

That is exactly right. This is instruction from God and we need it and if we want God’s blessings, we had better heed it.

We are in a very practical section of the book of Deuteronomy. What we are seeing is this:

**GOD’S WORD REVEALS GOD’S WILL CONCERNING EVERYDAY LIFE AND IF GOD’S PEOPLE WILL OBEY GOD’S WORD IN EVERYDAY LIFE, THEY WILL RECEIVE THE BLESSINGS OF GOD EVERYDAY.**

This is a simple thesis, but one that not too many follow. There are seven regulatory categories of things discussed in this chapter that have to do with a variety of topics.

**REGULATION CATEGORY #1 – Regulations for assembly worship participation. 23:1-8**

You and I are living in a time when most places of worship will do anything they can to bring in the people to participate in what they call their worship services. They will allow anyone to get up on the platform if they think the crowd will like it.

God doesn’t operate that way. He carefully monitors what is happening at worship services and He is very much interested in who is participating. Some people should not be participating in worship. They have no business at all being up in front of the people.

Let me tell you a story I know. There was a man who on Saturday night was smoking pot and in a bar drinking until late and he told some people he had to get going because the next day he was singing in church. Do you think God is pleased with a church that would permit a pot-smoking guy who is drinking in a bar Saturday night to stand up before people and call it worship? That is a disgrace.

We will notice that in **verses 1, 2, 3, 8** there is a phrase that is repeated and the phrase is “shall enter the assembly of the LORD.” The Hebrew “assembly” (qahal) refers to formal gatherings at the public festivals and worship services.

**The verb “enter” (bo) is a word that refers to actual participation.** So the regulations and restrictions have to do with not just living in the land, but actually going to and participating in corporate worship or festivals.

There are three specific regulations brought out concerning assembly worship participation here.

**Gender Regulation #1** - Any man who is emasculated by cutting shall not enter the assembly of the LORD. **23:1**

What we have here is a discriminatory policy that is mandated by God. It is discrimination and God does not apologize for it.

Now what is not stated is why the man was emasculated. But it says he was cut so it must be something he did intentionally. He could have been involved in some religious cult. The text doesn't tell us.

It is also possible, in view of Deuteronomy 22:5 that this was some sort of transgender surgery. But the end result is the same—no man who is emasculated is to participate in a corporate worship service. He could believe in God, but he could not participate in corporate worship.

We know that this cannot mean that one cannot be in the family of God and be greatly used by God in either the O.T. or the N.T. For example, we know that there was an Ethiopian eunuch who trusted in Jesus Christ and was baptized (Acts 8:26-39). We also know from Isaiah 56:4-5 that there were eunuchs who were devoted to worshipping God and pleasing God who would end up with a better name than some of His own sons and daughters.

Most likely the reason for this is because someone had done this in some form of dedication to a foreign deity. It was some form of transgender surgery and may have included the man pretending to be a woman. Any type “deliberate mutilation” of this kind is an abomination to God, and it removes one from being able to participate in the worship service. Those men who have some transgender surgery will discover when they get before the Lord, they will be totally and completely ashamed. They will not be honored.

To have a practicing homosexual or lesbian or transgender person leading some church service is that which will never bring the blessings of God to that organization.

**Illegitimate Child Regulation #2** - Any child born illegitimately shall not enter the assembly of the LORD. **23:2**

Now the word “illegitimate” does not seem to be a reference to a child born out of wedlock. The Hebrew word (*mamzer*) is only used one other time in the O.T. in Zechariah 9:6, where it is translated “mongrel.” It seems to be a reference to children born out of incest or a mixed marriage to a non-Israelite.

William Gesenius says this particular word has to do with a foreigner who often seduced people into idolatry (*Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 480). Brown, Driver, and Briggs add that this comes from a root word that means “stumbling block” (*Hebrew And English Lexicon*, p. 561).

More than likely this refers to a child who was born to a mother from a heathen nation who was dedicated to false deities. God's people were to see to it that no foreigner who had an Israelite father was to be permitted in who could pull the people away from God and true worship. This was to be tracked to the 10<sup>th</sup> generation.

**Foreigner Regulation #3** - No foreign Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD. **23:3-8**

Now these two groups were descendants of Lot and an incestuous relationship that he had with his own daughters.

Now there were proselytes who were allowed into worship. In fact, Ruth was a Moabitess who obviously was permitted into the family of God and into the lineage of Jesus Christ (Ruth 4:10).

The emphasis here is on those who were alive at the time. **Verse 4** brings out the fact that these two groups were hostile to Israel when they were moving from Egypt to Canaan. They refused the normal courtesies that would be typically given.

Because of their hatred for Israel, God did not want them in His worship services. They hired Balaam, a false prophet, to pronounce a curse on Israel (Num. 22:5-6), and God turned the curse into a blessing (Num. 23:5-12, 26; 24:13) because He loved His people. They did not do that out of the goodness of their hearts.

There are churches who think it is real culturally relevant to permit some false religious teacher to stand in their church and give some lecture. That is an abomination in the sight of the living God.

God says when it comes to these kinds of people:

- 1) You shall never seek their peace. **23:6a** - Don't make peace deals with them.
- 2) You shall never seek their prosperity. **23:6b** - Don't seek their prosperity.
- 3) You shall not detest them because you were an alien in their land. **23:7** - Don't hate them.
- 4) You shall let third generation people into the assembly. **23:8** - Protect worship through time.

**REGULATION CATEGORY #2** – Regulations for military cleanliness. **23:9-14**

God expects His people to practice personal hygiene. He knows what people are and He knows what people need. He wants His people to receive His blessings in all areas of life so He lays out guidelines for everything in life. The instruction here has to do with a military camp.

**Military Guideline #1** - When you go out with your army you keep yourself from every evil thing. **23:9**

Many a military man has gotten into trouble simply because he did not follow this principle. When you are in the military and you are deployed somewhere, stay away from evil stuff and you will have the blessings of God. The word “evil” (ra) does have immoral and perverse and depraved kinds of things. Which in some ways explains the next guideline.

**Military Guideline #2** - If some man in the army has any nocturnal seminal emission, he is unclean. **23:10-11**

The man may not reenter the camp until he has bathed and then at sundown he may come back into camp. One can get cleaned up and become a good clean soldier again even after having been involved in something unclean.

**Military Guidelines #3** - You shall go to the bathroom outside the camp. **23:12-13**

Each person was to carry a spade and was to dig down into the ground and bury waste there.

This is interesting because sanitation departments actually derived the idea that sewage needs to run underground from this concept.

Sewage that is not underground is not only gross, but it opens people up to serious disease. Sewage is a part of life. It is a normal part of the physiological system God has created in every one of us. But the sewage is to be buried underground.

**Verse 14** is critical theology; God monitors the decency of His people and He gives victory to those who pursue pure, clean ways before Him. So God is monitoring all things about His warriors and if they honor Him, He will honor them and bless them. **If God’s people pursue what is clean, He will give them victory. If they do not, He will give them defeat.**

If God sees any impure thing in the life of His people, He will not fellowship with them and He will not do for them what He would have done for them.

**REGULATION CATEGORY #3** – Regulations concerning escaped slaves. **23:15-16**

If a slave was a fugitive who had escaped from his master, he was not to be handed back over to the master, but was to be given asylum and freedom to go anywhere in Israel’s land. He was not to be mistreated in any way.

These apparently were slaves who wanted to join Israel, because they knew that Israel was the nation of God. Such people were to be helped, harbored and honored.

**REGULATION CATEGORY #4 – Regulations concerning prostitution. 23:17-18**

Canaanite religion featured religious cult prostitution. God is clear on this point that no child of His, male or female, is to be one of these prostitutes. That is an abomination to God.

Furthermore, no offering was to be accepted if given by a prostitute. Contributions were not to be accepted if they were given by one who was involved in this prostitution. This is a far cry from churches that will take money from anyone.

God does not want money given to Him from immoral or illegal activities.

**REGULATION CATEGORY #5 – Regulations concerning charging interest on loans.  
23:19-20**

Sometimes God's people do need a loan and one who needs a loan obviously asks one who is in a position to give a loan. Things happen and sometimes people find themselves in a situation that is very lean. If the person asking for the loan was a child of God, that person was to pay it back but he was not to be charged interest.

I literally saw this principle applied by a loan made by a Christian man on a handshake for \$90,000. The man who made the loan said I don't want interest because it is not Biblical to charge it to a believer. He cited this very text.

On the other hand, if the loan was made to a foreigner who needed money, food or anything, God did permit interest to be charged.

God says I monitor how you deal in these financial issues and I will bless those who are faithful to Me.

**REGULATION CATEGORY #6 – Regulations concerning vows. 23:21-23**

Vows were common in the O.T. world. God said if you make some vow to God, pay it or else it is sin. If you don't make a vow, it is not sin. But you must be very careful what you promise God voluntarily and pay what you promise. In fact, Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 says, "when you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools."

I know a person who has promised God a certain percentage of additional income above and beyond the norm. He made this promise years ago and as far as I know he still does it. No wonder God has blessed him.

**REGULATION CATEGORY #7 – Regulations concerning gleaning your neighbors' crops.  
23:24-25**

When God's people were traveling, God gave them right to pick a few grapes to eat from your neighbor's field. But you are not to put any in a bag and walk away.

Jesus was actually criticized for doing this very thing in Luke 6:1-5. He and His disciples plucked some heads of grain. Even the Pharisees knew that was legal, so they accused Him of doing it on the Sabbath Day.

When it comes to grain, you may pick with your hand some grain, but you cannot cut it down or harvest it and take it with you.

One is legitimate and the other is stealing.

What we are learning here is God is concerned about all aspects of our lives and if we will apply His word to all aspects of our lives, He will bless all aspects of our lives. That is the book of Deuteronomy.