



Deut. 23:1-8
“Who May Enter the Assembly of the Lord?”

NKJ Deuteronomy 23:1 "He who is emasculated by crushing or mutilation shall not enter the assembly of the LORD.

2 " One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the LORD.

3 " An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the LORD forever,

4 "because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.

5 "Nevertheless the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you.

6 "You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever.

7 " You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land.

8 "The children of the third generation born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD.

These verses specifically address who could and who could not enter the *qahal* or assembly of the Lord, the word *qahal* would later be translated in the Septuagint Greek version of the Old Testament as *Ekklesia* - congregation which would become the word “Church” in the English. We get words like “Ecclesiastical” from it

People of other nations could and did dwell amongst the people of Israel of as foreigners and aliens, but here the Lord is addressing who amongst them could become full members of the covenant people and take part in all the worship of the Lord, first at the Tabernacle and then later at the Temple.

The Lord’s desire in creating these laws is clearly that they would remain a people who were *qodosh* that is HOLY and set apart from all the other nations for His service.

A Eunuch was not capable of producing or continuing a family, he would have no offspring to inherit his land. He was also permanently blemished, and often this was done as part of the ceremonial worship of other Gods. While Yahweh did not call for men to become Eunuchs in order to serve him, several false religions demanded that those who served their gods be Eunuchs.

Not merely illegitimate in the sense of born out of Wedlock, after all we see men born outside of marriage in Israel being used mightily by the Lord:

NKJ Judges 11:1 *Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, but he was the son of a harlot; and Gilead begot Jephthah.*

but rather *Mamzers* those born of a forbidden marriage, either those incestuous marriages forbidden by the Lord or more commonly the marriage of Israelites to pagans.

Zec. 9:6 "A mixed race shall settle in Ashdod, And I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.

Then we have a prohibition in verses 3-6 on Ammonites and Moabites: the Ammonites had not given food or water to the Israelites in the wilderness, more specifically they had done all they could to keep the people of God from entering into their inheritance, the Promised Land. In this they were rather like the Pharisees who as Jesus said "did not go into the kingdom of heaven themselves nor do they allow those who are entering to go in." and that is always the way of those opposed to God and his kingdom in history, they not only reject it themselves, they do all they can to ensure that others do likewise.

The Moabites had done the same and had also brought the prophet Balaam up to speak curses on the people of God. In Genesis 12:3 the Lord had said to Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Their attempt to curse the people of God had as Cragie puts it "boomeranged" on them and they had only succeeded in bringing down God's curse upon themselves. As a people under God's wrath and curse they could not be admitted as worshippers into the Assembly of God.

Just as an aside, this is a theological point that people still don't understand to this day. People just assume that they are inherently worthy to come into the presence of the Lord, but they are born sinners in Adam and under God's wrath and curse, they are not Holy (qodosh) and cannot themselves come into the presence of a Holy God. in order to become true worshippers therefore, that curse has to be taken away, and that is why we need Christ to be our sin bearer and to cleanse us from the curse and give us His own holiness that we might stand before God.

The people of God were also forbidden to seek the peace or the prosperity of the Ammonites and Moabites, which had reference to never making treaties with that people. While there was no peace between these nations and Yahweh, the people of God must not speak peace to them either.

Here to is an application to us, do we "speak peace" to those who remain under God's curse and are in fact His enemies. Do we pretend all is well with them and do we bind ourselves to them in contracts and worse, weddings? In this we forget that 2 Cor. 6:14 which says "***Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?***" is actually a New Testament verse.

Finally there are the Edomites and the Egyptians, they were not to be treated as the Ammonites and the Moabites for they were not subject to a particular curse. The Edomites who descended from Esau the brother of Jacob were kin to the Israelites and the Egyptians had shown kindness to Joseph and his family and had treated the Jews well for many years before the dynastic change that had brought in a line of Pharaohs who made the Jews slaves. They were not to be viewed as permanently incapable of becoming part of the *Qahal* or assembly but rather after three generations they could join.

Why three generations? Well the Lord did not want "fair weather converts" people who came out of the nations dabbled with Judaism and then forsook it again, rather he wanted a people who were serious about not only them, but their households being devoted to the Lord, and desirous of their

offspring having the blessings of the covenant. After three generations their seriousness about being a permanent part of the people of God would be affirmed.

Now where these laws to last forever? Where the nations never to be admitted to the Qahal? No, even in the Old Testament, the Lord spoke of a time when by the instrumentality of his redeemer the nations that were once afar off would be gathered in to the assembly.

God spoke of the coming of the redeemer, the branch, the suffering servant, Jesus, in Isaiah 53, saying ***“He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.”***

Is. 55:4 ***Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, A leader and commander for the people. 5 Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, And nations who do not know you shall run to you, Because of the LORD your God, And the Holy One of Israel; For He has glorified you.”***

NKJ Isaiah 56:1 Thus says the LORD: "Keep justice, and do righteousness, For My salvation is about to come, And My righteousness to be revealed.

2 Blessed is the man who does this, And the son of man who lays hold on it; Who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, And keeps his hand from doing any evil."

3 Do not let the son of the foreigner Who has joined himself to the LORD Speak, saying, "The LORD has utterly separated me from His people"; Nor let the eunuch say, "Here I am, a dry tree."

4 For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant,

5 Even to them I will give in My house And within My walls a place and a name Better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name That shall not be cut off.

6 " Also the sons of the foreigner Who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, And to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants -- Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, And holds fast My covenant --

7 Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices Will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."

One of the earliest converts was of course ***“a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship”*** (Acts 8:27)

Acts 10:34 Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.

35 "But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

36 "The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ -- He is Lord of all --

37 "that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached:

38 "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

39 "And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree.

40 "Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly,

41 "not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

42 "And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.

43 "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

45 And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered,

47 "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

Acts 11:18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

Eph. 2:11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh -- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands --

12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,

16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.

18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,

21 in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Who may come into the Assembly of the Lord? Those who have been redeemed by the Blood of Christ, who because of His work are no longer under God's wrath and curse. Is that you?