

Deuteronomy 12

**From the beginning of creation and time, God has commanded that we worship Him, Him only—
and prescribed how we should do so**

BACKGROUND, CONTEXT, AND MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

1. Allow me to make a couple observations about the scope of what we are learning in **Deuteronomy** as a whole, and the flow of the text as we come to **chapter 12** here...
 - a. **Deuteronomy** is an intensely doctrinal book: after all, Deuteronomy is the heart of the *Torah*—the law of instruction. God is revealing Himself in this book. And He is revealing His will for how they should conduct every detail of their hearts, thoughts, words, actions, and their relationships with Him and others. And so, here in **chapter 12**, Yahweh is prescribing how they should view Him, think of Him, and approach Him in worship.
 - b. **Chapter 12** is also Yahweh's expansion and commentary on the second of His 'Ten Words / Commandments,' "**You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve; for I The LORD your God am a jealous God...**" [see ch 5.7-8]. (Cf. also Deut 4.12, 15: "...you saw no form...")
 - c. Remember in our last lesson [**Deuteronomy 6 | LOVE | Yahweh's covenant of Love**], I told you that **chapters 6-26** contain these expanded commentaries and applications of The Ten Words:
 - i. **Commandment 1: Divine Authority [Deut 6-11]** "*You shall have no other gods before Me*"
 - ii. **Commandment 2: Divine Dignity [unique and exclusive Holiness] [Deut 12]** "*You shall not make for yourself an image*" [reason: "**You saw no form...**" ch 4.12, 15]
2. And so, **chapter 12** is '**Yahweh's Prescription for True Worship of the One and Only True God.**'

I | YAHWEH HAS ALWAYS PRESCRIBED OUR WORSHIP OF HIM FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION, TIME, AND HUMAN HISTORY

1. **God is very serious about our worship. He is 'a jealous God' over His worship and our obedience to His prescriptions for our worship of Him!**
 - a. If we go back to the first accounts of worship after the Fall in Genesis 4, we'll see Cain and Abel bringing to The LORD their offerings of worship. "**Cain brought to The LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And The LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering He had no regard**" [Genesis 4.3-5]. When Cain became angry with The LORD and with his brother, Abel, The LORD reminded him: "**Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?**" [Gen 4.6]. Meaning, "*Cain, you know full well how you should worship Me and what you should bring!*" How did Cain know? Because we know that Adam and Eve would have told and taught them what they had learned from God. But Cain rebelled against The LORD and what he knew well was the true form of worship. And more...it appears there was even a designated, prescribed *place* where their offerings of worship must be '*brought to The LORD*'!
 - b. **Hebrews 11.4** says: "**By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.**" What was Abel's faith in? It was in God's prescription for acceptable worship that He had revealed to them to obey and practice. But Cain's spirit and attitude was: "I'll do it my way—I'll bring what I want to bring and offer it according to my own desires." That is the spirit and way 'of the evil one—the dragon.'

2. **False worshipers create their own gods—the True God creates His own worshipers.**

- a. We also learn from this earliest example of false worship where all false worship comes from—it comes from the Evil One. The apostle John tells us in **1 John 3.12** where Cain's false worship came from: **"We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous."** And so Cain's rebellion against The LORD and the true worship of God were inspired within him by the Evil One.
- b. Satan has been deceiving the whole world from the very beginning [**Revelation 12.9**] by counterfeiting a false system of worship to advance his rebellious vendetta against God and His Christ through false religions and forms of worship. [And we might add here that that way and system of false worship was formalized, developed, and manifested by the rebellion at Babel, **Genesis 11.1-9.**]
- c. And, of course, we all know from reading **Romans 1** that every teaching, belief, form, exercise, or expression of worship other than that which God has prescribed from the beginning is a perversion of God's revelation from the beginning of the creation—and it is Satan's big, deceptive lie...
 - i. ²¹ **For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.** ²² **Claiming to be wise, they became fools,** ²³ **and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.** ²⁴ **Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,** ²⁵ **because they exchanged the truth about God for [the] lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.**

3. **Any worship or form of worship that is contrary to what God has prescribed in His Word is 'the teachings of demons'—'of the evil one' [1 Timothy 4.1-2; 1 Corinthians 10.20-22; 2 Corinthians 11.1-3, 13-15; Revelation 2.9; et. al.]—including those which arise in the churches of the Lord.** Satan's deceptive schemes and anti-Christ conspiracies of rebellion are not limited to the worlds of social culture, academia, group-think, commerce, politics, and entertainment; one of his most major targets of perversion is his counterfeit culture of religion...because he knows that humans are by nature and creation religious creatures—we are insatiably seeking some 'other' beyond ourselves.

II | DEUTERONOMY 12—HOW YAHWEH PRESCRIBES THEY [AND WE] SHOULD WORSHIP HIM

1. And so, when Yahweh brings His chosen covenant nation of people into Canaan, the Promised Land, He knows that the whole land was full of cults, systems, and rituals of false demonic worship that Satan had created and cultivated. But Yahweh had called His people to be a holy, distinct, and distinctive people. Jesus reiterated and re-affirmed in His own temptations in His own wilderness encounters with the devil that: **"For it is written, 'You shall worship The LORD your God and Him only shall you serve'" [Matthew 4.10].** It had been written in that expression in **Deuteronomy 6.13-15:** **"It is The LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by His Name you shall swear. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you—for The LORD your God in your midst is a jealous God—lest the anger of The LORD be kindled against you, and He destroy you from off the face of the earth."**
2. So, that's why we will find all these strict, stringent, and specific prescriptions of worship emphasized all throughout this part of the **Deuteronomy** narrative here in **chapter 12**. So let's highlight just a few of the most prominent prescriptions here. Each and all of these highlighted expressions are woven into the fabric of this 'order of worship' that Yahweh commanded should serve as their prescribed way to worship...

- a. **vv 1-4: You must utterly destroy all of their places and ways of demonic, false worship—obliterate until there are no remnants, vestiges, or even reminders of what had been there!** This includes the places, shrines, 'sanctuaries,' rituals, images, forms, and even the names of their false demonic gods. *This strict prohibition from copying, imitating, or conforming to any other object, form, or expression of worship is a reiteration from ch 4.15-31—along with the judgments of Yahweh against them if they do! ...which, of course, they did!*
- b. **v 4: “You shall not worship The LORD your God in that way!”** Yahweh could not have made this prohibition any more exclusive [or inclusive] of all their forms, rituals, and ways than with this one statement.
- c. **v 5: “But you shall seek the place that The LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put His Name and make His habitation there. There you shall go....”** In every age, God has designated the 'place' where He would manifest His Presence, meet with His worshipers, and accept their offerings of worship. **vs 13: “Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place that you see.”** [We can't follow them all here, but this phrase 'the place that The LORD your God shall choose' is repeated at least seven times here in **Deut 12** and +/- fifteen other references throughout Deuteronomy in **chs 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 26, and 31**. If you're interested, you can trace them using an exhaustive concordance.]
 - i. In Eden, it was most likely at the east of Eden [**Genesis 3.24**];
 - ii. later, we read in **Genesis 4.26** of the descendants of Seth, **“At that time people began to call upon the Name of The LORD,”** implying that Yahweh's worshipers were gathering with one another to worship Him according to His revelation of Himself;
 - iii. of course, after the construction and erection of the tabernacle, 'the tent of meeting,' it was there—**“...there I will meet you...”** [**Ex 25.22; 29.42-43; 30.6, 36; Num 17.4; et. al.**];
 - iv. then it was the temple;
 - v. **and for us, it is the New Testament church!** [**Ephesians 2.19-22; 1 Timothy 3.14-15**]. **CHRIST—and Christ in us and among us—is the New Temple.**
- d. **v 7: “And there you shall eat before The LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households, in all that you undertake, in which The LORD your God has blessed you.”**
 - i. Eating together has always been an exercise of covenantal fellowship—both among human parties and even between Yahweh and His covenant people. [See **Exodus 24.11: “...they behold God, and ate and drank.”**] Here in **Deuteronomy 12**, Yahweh provided that they would even eat portions of their food offerings that they brought to offer Him in worship *in His Presence!* We continue this communal covenant celebration in our churches: **Acts 2.42-47; 1 Corinthians 11** [both the Lord's Table and their communal 'love feasts']; compare also **Jude, 12**.
 - ii. And, we must not overlook the prescription to **“and you shall rejoice...”** This 'rejoicing' was their gladness and joy in The LORD their God. Worship is a joyful, glad expression of our thanksgivings to God for all His graces and blessings **in which The LORD your God has blessed you!** Our places and services of worship in the Presence of God should be our 'happy place' because God is there! **“Make a joyful noise to The LORD, all the earth! Serve The LORD with gladness! Come into His Presence with singing! ... Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him; bless His Name!”** [**Ps 100; et. al.**]. Again, this essential prescription to **'rejoice before The LORD your God'** is repeated numerous times, both here in **ch 12** and also in **chs 14, 16, 26, 27**.

- e. **v 8: “You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes...”** We are not permitted—in fact, we are strictly forbidden—to worship The LORD any other way or with any other expressions or exercises than those that are prescribed by Him!
- f. **vv 29-32:** I want to fast-forward to this paragraph because the natural tendency and proclivity of Israel's hearts [and ours] is to look at how the ‘world’ does their thing, and think that *“Maybe if we adopt or conform to some of their ways, we can attract them or gain some favor or acceptance with them—you know, enhance our witness to them.”* But we will never attract or convert them by becoming like them or adapting the worship of God to their ways. To the contrary, their ways will inevitably corrupt us, our witness, and the true worship of God. And in the end, it will incur the wrath of our jealous God against us and destroy us.
 - i. **²⁹“When the LORD your God cuts off before you the nations whom you go in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, ³⁰take care that you be not ensnared to follow them, after they have been destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods?—that I also may do the same.’ ³¹You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way, for every abominable thing that the LORD hates they have done for their gods, for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods. ³²Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.”** [for that last statement of the authority and sufficiency of the Word of God, see also ch 4.2]

III | WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH THE LOVE OF YOUR HEART

1. Lest we should ever think that The LORD was prescribing all these commandments and prohibitions ONLY to require them to follow the rituals and exercises in a cold-hearted, legalistic performance of the details, we must keep in mind, first and foremost, that He commanded them—and us—to do everything we do from our hearts that have been renewed by His redemptive Grace. Listen to Yahweh's heart, even here in the Book of Deuteronomy:
 - a. **ch 5.28-29:** And the LORD heard your words, when you spoke to me. And the LORD said to me, ‘I have heard the words of this people, which they have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken. ²⁹*Oh that they had such a heart as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments,* that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!’”
 - b. **ch 10.12-16:** *And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul,* ¹³and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good? ¹⁴Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. ¹⁵Yet the Lord set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. ¹⁶*Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.*
 - c. **ch 30.6:** *And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,* that you may live.
2. **John 4.23-24:** But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

Philippians 3.3: For we are the circumcision,

who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh...