

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
7-20-22

Deuteronomy 14

The Command To Abstain From Pagan Burial Customs – Verses 1-2

¹ You are the children of the LORD your God. Do not cut yourselves or shave the front of your heads for the dead, ²for you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.

14:1 Among the pagan cultures surrounding Israel, it was common to cut one's self, or shave the front of one's head, for the dead - that is, as a part of pagan burial rituals. The actions described here refer to a cult of the dead. Many other religions today have some kind of worship of or service to the dead. But Christianity and Judaism are very different from other religions because they focus on serving God in this life. Don't let concern or worry over the dead distract you from the tasks that God has for you while you are still alive.

14:2 You are a holy people: The idea behind holy is "separate." The people of Israel were a people separate unto the LORD. In Jesus, we also are a holy people: But you are a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9). The LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself: The people of Israel were chosen by God, to be His own special people. In Jesus, we also are a chosen people, special to God: But you are a chosen generation ... His own special people (1 Peter 2:9).

The Command To Separate In Regard To Foods – Verses 3-8

³ Do not eat any detestable thing. ⁴These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, ⁵the deer, the gazelle, the roe deer, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope and the mountain sheep. ⁶You may eat any animal that has a divided hoof and that chews the cud. ⁷However, of those that chew the cud or that have a divided hoof you may not eat the camel, the rabbit or the hyrax. Although they chew the cud, they do not have a divided hoof; they are ceremonially unclean for you. ⁸The pig is also unclean; although it has a divided hoof, it does not chew the cud. You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses.

14:3-8 Why was Israel forbidden to eat certain foods? There are several reasons: (1) Predatory animals ate the blood of other animals, and scavengers ate dead animals. Because the people could not eat blood or animals they found dead, they could not eat animals that did these things either. (2) Some forbidden animals had bad associations in the Israelite culture, as bats, snakes, and spiders do for some people today. Some may have been used in pagan religious practices (Isaiah 66:17). To the Israelites, the unclean animals represented sin or unhealthy habits. (3) Perhaps some restrictions were given to Israel just to remind them continually that they were a different and separate people committed to God. Although we no longer must follow these laws about food (Acts 10:9-16), we can still learn from them the lesson that holiness is to be carried into all parts of life. We can't restrict holiness only to the spiritual side; we must be holy in the everyday practical part of life as well. Health practices, finances, use of leisure—all provide opportunities to put holy living into daily living.

The Command To Separate In Regard To Foods – Verses 9-10

⁹ Of all the creatures living in the water, you may eat any that has fins and scales. ¹⁰ But anything that does not have fins and scales you may not eat; for you it is unclean.

14:9-10 These you may eat of all that are in the waters: Only certain sea creatures could be eaten, and the rule was simple. Any water creature having both fins and scales was kosher and could be eaten. Therefore, most fishes were considered clean - except a fish like the catfish, which has no scales. Shellfish would be unclean, because clams, crabs, oysters, and lobster all do not have fins and scales.

The Command To Separate In Regard To Foods – Verses 11-20

¹¹ You may eat any clean bird. ¹² But these you may not eat: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, ¹³ the red kite, the black kite, any kind of falcon, ¹⁴ any kind of raven, ¹⁵ the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, ¹⁶ the little owl, the great owl, the white owl, ¹⁷ the desert owl, the osprey, the cormorant, ¹⁸ the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat. ¹⁹ All flying insects are unclean to you; do not eat them. ²⁰ But any winged creature that is clean you may eat.

14:11-18 All clean birds you may eat: Only certain birds could be eaten; though there is no rule given to determine if a bird is clean or unclean, the specifically mentioned unclean birds (and flying creeping things) are either predators or scavengers; these were considered unclean.

Among these animals, they fall into one of three categories: predators (unclean because they ate both the flesh and the blood of animals), scavengers (unclean because they were carriers of disease, and they regularly contacted dead bodies), or potentially poisonous or dangerous foods such as shellfish and the like. Eliminating these from the diet of Israel no doubt had a healthy effect, and one of the reasons for the dietary laws of Israel was to keep Israel healthy!

The Command To Separate In Regard To Foods – Verse 21

²¹ Do not eat anything you find already dead. You may give it to the foreigner residing in any of your towns, and they may eat it, or you may sell it to any other foreigner. But you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk.

14:21 You shall not eat anything that dies of itself: If any animal dies of itself, it has not been properly bled; therefore it is unkosher. It was important to bleed animals before eating them, because the blood represented the life principle of the animal (Leviticus 17:11), and the life principle belonged to God and God alone. Another reason for the dietary laws was to project an important symbolism to Israel regarding blood and the sanctity of the life principle.

14:21 This prohibition against cooking a young goat in its mother's milk may reflect a Canaanite fertility rite. Or it may just mean that the Israelites were not to take what was intended to promote life and use it to kill or destroy life. This commandment is also given in Exodus 23:19.

The Command To Tithe – Verses 22-23

²² Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. ²³ Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and olive oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of

the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always.

14:22-23 The Bible makes the purpose of tithing very clear—to teach us to fear the Lord and to put him first in our lives. We are to give God the first and best of what we earn. For example, what we do first with our money shows what we value most. Giving the first part of our paycheck to God immediately focuses our attention on him. It also reminds us that all we have belongs to him. A habit of regular tithing can keep God at the top of our priority list and give us a proper perspective on everything else we have.

"Long-Distance" Tithing – Verses 24-27

24 But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the LORD your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the LORD will choose to put his Name is so far away), **25** then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the LORD your God will choose. **26** Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice. **27** And do not neglect the Levites living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own.

14:24 But if the journey is too long for you: Since the tithe was to be brought to one place for the whole nation, some would be farther than others. And, if someone was far away, they would find it difficult to transport the grain and livestock the tithe required.

14:25 You shall exchange it for money: If distance prevented the easy transport of the animals, they could exchange their tithe for money, and then use the money to tithe with when they came to the tabernacle (and later, the temple).

14:26 You shall rejoice, you and your household: Laws like this show us that God is a common-sense God. He does not place unreasonable demands on His people. He made a way for them to more conveniently tithe.

The Third-Year Tithe – Verses 28-29

28 At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, **29** so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

14:28-29 The Bible supports an organized system of caring for the poor. God told his people to use their tithe every third year for those who were helpless, hungry, or poor. These regulations were designed to prevent the country from sinking under crushing poverty and oppression. It was everyone's responsibility to care for those less fortunate. Families were to help other family members, and towns were to help members of their community. National laws protected the rights of the poor, but helping the poor was also an active part of religious life. God counts on believers to provide for the needy, and we should use what God has given us to aid those less fortunate. Look beyond your regular giving and think of ways to help the needy. This will help you show your regard for God as Creator of all people, share God's goodness with others, and draw them to him. It is a practical and essential way to make faith work in everyday life.