

Don't Plow with a Bull and Donkey Together

Deuteronomy 22:1-12

Expository Lessons from the Book of Deuteronomy

I. Introduction

- a. The **Book of Deuteronomy** consists of a few speeches that Moses gave to the Israelites near the end of their 40 years of wandering in the Wilderness.
- b. Now, in **Deuteronomy 22**, we continue in Moses' second address, which provides some interesting instructions for the Jews to follow after Moses dies and they move into Canaan, the Promised Land.
- c. The first half of this chapter addresses several seemingly minor commands in the Law of Moses.
 - i. The commands contained in **Deuteronomy 22:1-12** can be arranged into six groups, as follows:
 - 1. Giving assistance to a neighbor regarding a farm animal that is wandering/lost, or that has fallen down on the road.
 - 2. Prohibiting women from wearing men's clothing, as well as men from wearing women's clothing.
 - 3. Not taking a mother bird along with her offspring at the same time (either eggs or chicks).
 - 4. Providing railings in order to prevent accidental falls from a home (perhaps referring to a deck or roof-type platform).
 - 5. Not mixing two different types of seed in a vineyard, or two different types of fabric in a garment. Also, not using two different types of animals together when plowing a field.
 - 6. Adding tassels to the corners of garments that the people will wear.
 - ii. From the above list of subjects covered in this passage, we plan to focus on four (the ones that I believe will be most interesting and useful for Christians to consider).
- d. My hope is that everyone is devoted to reading the Scriptures on a daily basis on their own, and reading throughout the year from a variety of different parts of the Bible (New Testament and Old Testament, including: Gospels, Letters, Law of Moses, Major and Minor Prophets, Psalms, etc.).

- i. Let us not just attempt to coast by relying only on once-a-week Sunday messages to stay spiritually fed.
- ii. Let us rather remember the words of Moses in **Deuteronomy 8:3** (later quoted by Jesus): “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”
 1. Keep in mind that the people gathered the manna six days/week in the morning, and ate it seven days/week.
 2. The English word “man” can refer either exclusively to males or to both males and females. However, the Greek word for “man” here in **Deuteronomy 8:3** (in the LXX) refers to *all humans*, both men and women.
 3. I realize that the demographic group that may be challenged most greatly in this area, within our fellowship, is the young mothers who care for multiple small children. However, there are some great examples among the sisters who are an upward call.
 - a. For the husbands of those women, may you “know the condition of your flocks” (**Proverbs 27:23**). Then do whatever we can to support your wives to give them the time they need (as we all do) for personal daily Bible study and prayer.
- iii. My hope is that in tackling some tougher passages together in our expository Bible teaching (as we will be doing today), it can help strengthen all of us in our own ability to mine the spiritual ‘gold’ that is embedded in the Scriptures.
- iv. In *How to Read a Book*, by Mortimer Adler and Charles Van Doren, it contrasts ‘active’ versus ‘passive’ readers. The authors state that *passive readers ask no questions* of the text they are reading – and *they get no answers!*
 1. In contrast, the active readers are constantly *asking questions of the text*. However, these readers must then dig more deeply to discover the answers to their questions.
 2. Through the process of doing this (which can be hard work), they become wiser and gain much more from what they are reading!
- v. Some of the questions I want you to consider today, as we are reading from this part of the Law of Moses, include:

1. Is there anything we can learn about *the character or priorities of God* from these commands contained in the Law?
2. What might be the reason that God included some of these commands, which at first glance might strike us as trivial or odd? *Why were they considered so important by the Lord* to be included in the Law?
 - a. Might there be a reason we are missing?
3. Do any of these commands seem like they were more intended for us Christians (at a later time) than for the Jews about to enter Canaan?
 - a. Consider what Paul said: "For whatever things were written before *were written for our learning*, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (**Romans 15:4**, NKJV)
4. Is the passage in view *quoted or alluded to anywhere in the New Testament*, by Jesus or the apostles?
 - a. Or does it strongly *remind us* of any teaching that will appear later, in the New Testament?

II. Helping Animals of a Brother That Have Wandered or Fallen Down

- a. Read **Deuteronomy 22:1-4**.
- b. Here is a summary of the instructions given here by the Lord, through Moses.
 - i. If you see a wandering farm animal (such as a bull, sheep or donkey) in your travels, don't just ignore it. Do what it takes to take care of the animal, and hopefully return it to its owner.
 1. If you know who the owner is and he is nearby, take the animal to its owner.
 2. If the owner is far away, or you don't know who the owner is, take the animal into your home.
 - a. Imagine the conversation of a surprised wife when she sees an unknown cow or sheep that her husband has brought into their home!
 3. Here in the Law of Moses, we have the earliest example of a '*lost and found*'. This principle of protecting and preserving a

neighbor's lost animal also applies to other lost property (such as a misplaced garment).

- ii. If you see that your brother's bull or donkey has fallen down on the road, stop to help lift the animal up.
- c. **Question:** Can we learn anything about the *character and concerns of God* in these instructions?
 - i. The Lord wants his people to be *kind, unselfish, thinking of the needs of others*, and doing what they can to protect the vulnerable and to meet their needs.
 - ii. The Lord is even concerned about the welfare of their lost animals.
 - iii. Here we can see a classic practical example of what it means to live out the second greatest commandment, to "love your neighbor as yourself" (**Leviticus 19:18**).
 1. This is also consistent with what Jesus taught regarding the 'Golden Rule':
 - a. "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." (**Matthew 7:12**, NKJV)
 - iv. I believe we can see the kindness of God, and His desire that we show the same kindness to our brothers (and even toward their animals).
 1. The clearer picture of how we see who God is, what He is like, the better disciples, parents, friends, etc. we will be.
 2. As Paul said, we need to appreciate *BOTH* the *kindness/goodness* of God, as well as His *severity* (that He is to be feared). (**Romans 11:22**).
- d. **Question:** Do the instructions in this passage remind you of anything Jesus or the apostles taught in the New Testament?
 - i. The parable of the Good Samaritan, in **Luke 10:25-37**.
 1. Note that the Samaritan had the same heart toward the man who had been beaten by robbers and left half-dead. The Samaritan took care of him and provided for his needs.
 2. The Samaritan in the story is the one who put into practice what Moses had taught regarding "love your neighbor as yourself".

ii. The explanation Jesus gave when criticized for healing on the Sabbath, in **Matthew 12:1-14**.

1. "Then He said to them, 'What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.'" (**Matthew 12:11-12**, NKJV)

iii. The picture of a sheep that is "lost" or "fallen down" being restored by someone with a good heart (Jesus, and those who follow Him), we find many places in the Scriptures. Some examples that come to mind include:

1. In **Ezekiel 34**, the "bad shepherds" refuse to bandage the broken sheep and to bring back those who wandered. There, the Lord says He will "raise up" a good shepherd.
2. In **John 10**, Jesus reveals that He is the promised Good Shepherd, who will lay down His life to protect the sheep.
3. In **Matthew 18:10-14**, Jesus uses a parable about a sheep that has wandered away, where the sheep represent people who have strayed from God's protection.
 - a. There is a similar example of this imagery being employed in **Luke 15:1-7**, the Parable of the Lost Sheep.

e. **Practical Applications for Us**

- i. There are many "sheep" of God who have been beaten up, have fallen down, and have wandered away. They are food for the wolves and the lion, and need help.
 1. They may be in trouble because of suffering under bad shepherds in various churches, from not being fed healthy spiritual food for a long time, or due to consequences from their own sin.
 2. Recall how the apostle Peter called for church leaders (the elders) to "shepherd the flock of God which is among you", in view of the fact that they will have to give account to the Chief Shepherd when He appears. (**1 Peter 5:1-4**)
 3. We must always *be on the lookout* for those *lost or fallen sheep*. God calls us to pick them up and take care of them as a good shepherd (and especially *the* Good Shepherd) would.

- a. Too many Christians are like the priest and Levite in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, in **Luke 10:25-37**. They were too busy with their lives and religious tasks to show the kindness and sacrifice that come out of “loving your neighbor as yourself”.
- 4. Let us see God as kind and concerned, even about the animals. And as Jesus asked rhetorically, “Of how much more value is a man than a sheep?” (**Matthew 12:12**)

III. Don't Wear Clothing of the Opposite Sex

- a. Read **Deuteronomy 22:5**.
 - i. Men should not try to dress in the clothes of women, nor vice versa.
 - 1. This is a controversial passage in our culture.
 - 2. Foundational principles behind this law include the following:
 - a. “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” (**Genesis 1:27**, NKJV)
 - b. Gender was *created and established by God*. He assigns us before birth as being male or female.
 - c. We need to show respect for what God has created and how He made us.
 - d. Realize that gender confusion, the temptation for men to want to be women and vice versa, is nothing new. It had to be addressed by Moses, 3,400 years ago.
 - e. The social pressures we are facing here in Boston are not something new, and they certainly are not some sign of the local culture's spiritual or social ‘progress’. In my judgement, we are in a society that is largely reverting to godless pagan practices that were common long ago.
 - f. However, let us not forget that the church has been through things like this before. We just need to stay on track and be an island of sanity in a world that has let go of God and is reaping the consequences.
 - ii. **Question:** What about us here, today? For example, what about the idea of women wearing pants sometimes (as opposed to only wearing dresses and skirts)?

1. Let's keep in mind what God's intention is here, and how things have changed over time.
2. He does not define how men and women should dress in this passage (only that they should dress distinctively from each other).
3. At the time Moses wrote this, and throughout Old Testament history, to the best of my knowledge, *no one* (neither men nor women) wore pants.
 - a. During the time of Jesus and the apostles, it was still true that neither men nor women wore pants.
 - i. Since Moses made it clear that men were not to dress like women and women were not to dress like men, I assume that everyone at the time knew what the distinction was (even though both sexes wore robes). But it is not clear to me what the distinction was that Moses was referring to!
 - b. Wearing pants, as opposed to robes or tunics, became common only later in history
 - c. For a long time, they were primarily worn only by men, but more recently in our culture they have become popular for women, as well.
4. In different societies, what was considered *typical clothing for men* and typical clothing for women has shifted over the centuries. Consider, for example, the traditional attire in places like Scotland, Ireland, India and China.
5. Church leaders may vary regarding the application of this principle and others related to dress. What I consider non-negotiables include:
 - a. Women are to have their heads covered, and men uncovered, whenever they pray or prophesy.
 - b. All people (both men and women) need to dress modestly, to do what we can to not lead others to be tempted to lust.
 - c. We shouldn't be adorning ourselves with expensive clothing or jewelry designed to draw attention to our bodies.

- d. Men need to dress like men, and women like women. We should strive to look like the gender we were created by God to be.

IV. Rules on Nesting Birds and Building Code

a. Read **Deuteronomy 22:6-7**.

- i. Don't take a mother bird along with its young (chicks or eggs).
- ii. It is okay to take the eggs or the chicks, but leave the mother.
- iii. It is not clear to me if there is any significance to Christians (foreshadowings or symbolic meaning) in this requirement from the Law.

b. Read **Deuteronomy 22:8**.

- i. When you build a house, make a railing to protect people from falling.
- ii. I assume this refers to a deck or platform (or perhaps a flat roof that people will walk on).
- iii. The owner/builder would be guilty of manslaughter if someone died as a result of no safety railing.
- iv. This again points to a concern for others, for taking the extra effort necessary to protect others from harm that could come in the future.
- v. Perhaps this is an early example of a 'Building Code'.

V. Don't Plow with a Bull and Donkey Together

a. Read **Deuteronomy 22:9-11**.

- i. Keep things pure. Don't mix things together in any of the following ways.
 - 1. Don't plant two different types of seed in your vineyards.
 - a. Doing so will make the seeds and the resulting fruit *unholy*.
 - 2. Don't wear a garment made of two different types of fabric material (such as wool and linen).
 - 3. Don't plow with a bull (or ox) and a donkey together.

- ii. **Question:** Why should the Lord care about such seemingly trivial things, such as mixed fabric clothing or the animals you choose to use in plowing a field?
 - 1. If it is acceptable to plow with either two donkeys or two oxen, then *why can't you use one of each* to pull your plow (for example, as a backup if the preferred second animal is ill)?
 - a. Note that here it is not the *type* of animal, but the *combination* (mixing two different types together) that the Lord is prohibiting.
 - 2. An ox (bull) would be much stronger than a donkey, so perhaps it could be harder to plow in a straight line if you have a mixed team consisting of one of each.
 - a. But if that is the reason for this law, does it make sense that the Lord would insist on something that is simply common sense and a matter of practicality?
 - 3. Another possible reason for this law: Was this because a bull is a *clean* animal (an animal that Jews were permitted to eat) while a donkey is *unclean* (Jews were prohibited from eating) according to **Leviticus 11** and **Deuteronomy 14**?
 - a. Note that the donkey is considered unclean because it does not have a divided hoof.
- iii. **Questions:** Is there anything in the New Testament that quotes or paraphrases this passage, or that seems to be referring to it? Is it possible that this otherwise odd requirement is in the Bible primarily for the later benefit of Christians? Might it be conveying spiritual truth to us using allegorical imagery?
 - 1. Read **2 Corinthians 6:11-18**.
 - a. "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.' Therefore 'Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.' 'I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,

says the LORD Almighty.” (**2 Corinthians 6:14–18**, NKJV)

2. While Paul does not quote directly from **Deuteronomy 22:9-11**, it seems to me that here he is utilizing imagery from that passage to make his point.
 - a. Two animals are “yoked” or bound together in unity to accomplish a task. We still apply the term “yoked together” figuratively in referring to marriage.
 - b. Here, Paul is laying the foundation for teaching on holiness. It means to be set apart, kept separate and pure. Not mixed or contaminated with something that is significantly different.
 - c. This passage points to the fact that Christians are not to pursue intimate bonding type relationships (marriage certainly included in that) with unbelievers.
 - d. The same point is made to Christian widows, that they can remarry, but “only in the Lord”.
 - i. “A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, *only in the Lord*.” (**1 Corinthians 7:39**, NKJV)
 - ii. [Elsewhere, Paul and Peter address the situation where someone who becomes a Christian is already married to an unbeliever, in **1 Corinthians 7:12-16** and **1 Peter 3:1-2**.]
- b. **Question:** Is there anything to learn about the *character and priorities of God* from this part of the Law?
 - i. God is a holy God, and He wants his people to remain holy (set apart). That includes that we not be yoked to those who are not walking with the Lord.
 1. “...as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’” (**1 Peter 1:14–16**, NKJV)
 2. “Pursue peace with all people, *and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord*: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause

trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.”
(Hebrews 12:14-17, NKJV)

c. **Challenge for Single Christians** (as Well as for Those Considering Becoming Christians):

- i. If you belong to Christ, if you desire to get married, you can only marry someone else who belongs to Christ.
 - 1. You can either marry another Christian, or remain single and celibate. Those are the only two options for a single Christian.
- ii. Therefore, it is essential for you to guard your heart to keep yourself from getting emotionally attached to others who are not likewise single Christians, eligible for marriage.
 - 1. If you ever find yourself struggling with this, be open with a mature brother or sister about it. Get whatever help you need to gain strong, unshakeable convictions on this!
- iii. This is a non-negotiable, and should be an essential part of counting the cost for anyone who wants to become a Christian.

VI. On Tassels or Fringes on Garments

- a. Read **Deuteronomy 22:12**.
 - i. The Israelites must make tassels (fringes) on the corners of their garments.
- b. **Question:** Why did they have to do that?
 - i. Read **Numbers 15:37-41**.
 - ii. They were to include blue thread in tassels at the corners of their garments. When they saw these, it was to remind them to *remember all the commands of the Lord, and to do them!*
- c. **Question:** Is there any mention of this practice in the New Testament?
 - i. **Answer:** Yes, when Jesus is rebuking the Pharisees in **Matthew 23**.
 - 1. “Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and

do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and *enlarge the borders of their garments.*" (**Matthew 23:1-5**, NKJV)

2. This "borders of their garments" is the same Greek word (kraspedon/κράσπεδον) as the tassels referred to in **Deuteronomy 22:12** and **Numbers 15:38-39**.
 - a. The religious leaders were focused on showing off the outward signs that could be seen in their clothing, but missed the entire point that the outward sign was supposed to reflect.
 - i. In this case, it was supposed to remind them to obey all the commands contained in the Law of Moses (which included loving their neighbors as themselves).
 - b. Jesus blasts them for focusing on the smaller things but neglecting the most important matters.
 - c. Jesus said they should have focused on doing the most important commands of God (yet not neglecting the lesser commands).
 - i. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also." (**Matthew 23:23-26**, NKJV)
- d. **Lessons / Applications for Us:**
 - i. Don't make the mistake of Pharisees (focusing on the lesser things while neglecting the important things that underly the outward sign).
 - ii. For example:

1. Don't *neglect* the inner things of the spirit, such as having a pure and submissive heart, while focusing exclusively on externals, such as wearing a particular style of modest clothing or head covering.
2. Follow the most important commands first, without neglecting the lesser ones.

VII. Overall Conclusions and Takeaways from This Lesson

- a. Keep an eye out for the *wandering and fallen sheep*. Help them out!
- b. *Respect the gender distinction* that God established in His creation and gave each of us at birth. Let us reflect that in how we dress ourselves.
- c. Be devoted to *holiness*, living a *life set apart for God* that is not polluted by the world. Don't seek to be yoked to an unbeliever. Settle that in your mind, once and for all.
- d. While following the smaller commandments, let *us never lose sight of the most important ones*. Don't fall into the same trap that the religious hypocrites did in the time of Jesus' ministry on earth.