

How Then Shall We Worship? – *Deuteronomy 12:1-12*

Introduction – If the first commandment tells us *Who* we are to worship, the second word tells us *how* we are to worship. Having chosen to worship the Triune God of Scripture, we must then listen to Him to instruct us as to what pleases Him in worship. The next couple of chapters give us plenty to consider.

No Graven Images, Anywhere, All Your Days (vv1-3) – There are statutes and judgments that direct the people of God as to how to worship Him (v1). Put another way, this means that the Word must accompany the ritual, the Word must accompany the sacrament. The Canaanites worshipped their gods on the mountains and under lush trees (v2). These places and all of their instruments of worship were to be utterly destroyed (v3). Avoiding idolatry begins with destroying idols whenever we have a lawful opportunity to do so. We are not to build a society that studies comparative religion, or build our multicultural pantheon of gods, as though there were no real differences. Nor are we to seek to learn and imitate the worship of false gods as a means of learning how to worship the true God.

Idolatry and Graven Images – Of course, we are not to create images to worship or worship through. But Paul teaches us that idolatry is more subtle than that, for even covetousness is idolatry (Col 3:5). Calvin taught that the mind is a great furnace for creating idols of the mind, and so we must not be naïve. What little is known of the orgiastic fertility worship of the gods of the Canaanites with their child-sacrifices, revelry and sexual immorality, looks quite similar to much of our culture. There is much danger in letting an idolatrous, unbelieving culture teach you how to worship and celebrate. In both world missions and church culture here at home, there is an ongoing debate about “conquest” vs “assimilation.” We must let the Word instruct us.

At The Name of Yahweh (vv5-6) – In verse 3 we learn that the goal of destroying the idols is to “*destroy their names...*” and in verse 5 we learn that we are to place the name of Yahweh instead in the place of worship He chooses. It is the placing of the name of God that makes the place holy, and not the other way around. We can liken this to our baptism; and we also know that today we are the temple of God (1 Cor 6:19, 3:16). His name upon His place of worship declared His ownership and right to determine the practices which were to take place (Jer 7:8-11); His name declares His powerful sovereignty over His people (Deut 28:10).

The Sacrifices – Many sacrifices are listed here (and in v11) reminding us that God gave many instructions on how to worship Him. These sacrifices are subsumed in Christ (Heb 10:11-14) and His perfect sacrifice which brings forth our Lord’s Day worship of Him (Heb 10:19-25) where we offer up our sacrifice of praise (Heb 13:15) and living out lives of the grace given to us (Heb 13:16).

The Name Above All Names – And now, the name of Jesus has been placed over all He has taken dominion over as the new Adam and Son of God (Phil 2:9-11) which means that He owns it all and has sovereignty over it all. This also affects missions and church culture. It means that we do not rename God, “*Allah*” for the sake of cultural sensitivity, nor only sing of “love” coming down, but not “*Jesus*.” Names are powerful.

If All of Grace, the Primacy of Feasting and Joy (vv7-12) – The celebrations of the pagan worshippers were not destroyed because God is against celebration. They are to be destroyed because they vandalize true worship, true celebration, true intimacy and communion, and true joy. Keep all of Deuteronomy in mind to this point as you read this section and you remember that worship and celebration occur all because of God’s grace – His gracious election, His gracious redemption, His gracious expansion and blessing in His gracious covenant, His gracious love and gifts. Therefore, “*...you shall eat before Yahweh your God, and you shall rejoice in all to which you have put your hand, you and your households, in which Yahweh your God has blessed you*” (v7, also v12). They are to anticipate a growing maturity in their worship as God takes them into the land and in His name they conquer enemies, take dominion over the land, and bring everything “*to which you have put your hand*” before the Lord in thankful celebration for His grace (vv8-11). And so we worship because God has saved us from false gods, He has established us in his name, and He has given us so much even on this earth and in this part of our eternal life.

Disciplined Celebration – That is not an oxymoron. God instructs us as to how to worship Him: “rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice.” He would have us delight in Him for He delights over us with singing (Zeph 3:17). And notice that rejoicing is always accompanied with feasting. Coming to the Lord’s Supper is to inform our feasting and rejoicing in all other areas of life (not the other way around).

A Glad-hearted People – How are we to worship God? With glad hearts, because He has commanded it, with full glasses and full tables, because He delights in it. We are to immerse ourselves in His Word to discover the principles which God delights in and delight in them ourselves. We are to do all in the Triune name of our God, from our baptism, to our supper-memorial, and in all that we offer up to Him. And the more we practice rejoicing in the presence of the Lord, the more we will find ourselves rejoicing in all of life.