

## Meat & Blood, Sacrifice & Substitution, Children & Gods—Deuteronomy 12:13-32

**Introduction** – The chapter continues with exhortations and instructions surrounding the way in which Yahweh is to be worshipped and how this plays out in the broader life of the community. Moses makes clear that in the covenant community there is life and rejoicing while outside there is death and devouring.

**All Kinds of Meat** – Sacrificial offerings had to be made in the “*place which the LORD chooses*” (v14), but this did not mean that all animals had to be sacrificed to the LORD in order to be eaten (v15). Certain wild animals could be hunted, killed and eaten simply for food and one did not have to be ritually clean to eat (v15b). In addition, domestic animals (such as bulls and goats) could be slaughtered and eaten at home; there was nothing sacred about these animals outside of the sacrificial ceremonies (vv20-22), so again, the ritually unclean could freely partake.

**Dealing with Blood** – The only restriction was that the blood was to be poured out on the ground (v16, 23-24). This kept the blood from being offered to any other god (instead, only the blood of sacrifices was presented to Yahweh in the sacrificial rites – v27). Life was “in the blood” and so it was to be poured out into the ground. These distinctions served to protect Israel and the children from looking at partaking of food as some kind of religious activity outside of the covenant worship structure. Finally, there was a connected blessing to children when this ordinance was kept (v25).

**Sacrifices, the Firstborn, and the Tithe** – Sacrifices and offerings presented to Yahweh had to be done in the place where He placed His name (vv17-18). This was to be done in the context of celebration and rejoicing before Yahweh because the firstborn and the tithe represented “*all to which you put your hands*” (v19). The Levite, because He did not own any land and therefore had nothing to offer, must be included in this celebration (v20). But we must understand who the Levite is in this offering – and so we have to step back a minute and consider the principle of the substitute.

**Substitutionary Sacrifice** – After God rescued Israel, bringing them up out of Egypt, He required that every firstborn was to be rendered to Him (Ex 13:1-2). However, God set apart the Levites as a substitute for those firstborn, rendered to Him and brought into His tabernacle for service (Num 3:12-13). And so, while animals were sacrificed before Yahweh, children were not, for such child sacrifice was an abomination to Him (v31). However, we must understand this in light of the fact that God sacrificed His own Son. All of these sacrifices pointed to the perfect substitutionary sacrifice – offered to the Father at the place He determined and in His name. All of these sacrifices pointed to God’s lovingkindness in bringing Israel into His tabernacle, providing for their sins, welcoming them into fellowship and life with Him in the life of the covenant.

Once again, Moses tells Israel that in keeping these commandments, it will go well for Israel *and for your children after you* (v28). This is all connected to completely destroying the wicked worship practices of the Canaanites (vv1-12). To steal a popular saying, “Do it for the kids.”

**Children and Gods** – The Canaanites had a wicked practice of sacrificing their children to their gods (v31) and Yahweh was protecting Israel from falling into such wicked practices and wicked gods (Israel would fall into just these sins in future generations as she rebelled against Yahweh and His laws). Israel, as a nation, was God’s firstborn (Ex 4:22-23) and because Pharaoh refused to let Yahweh’s firstborn go, Yahweh killed Egypt’s firstborn, a representation of all of Egypt.

**Children and Gods** – We learned previously that the law that is kept reveals the god who is loved. Here we learn that a god of a people can be identified by noting where the children are sacrificed. All gods require the dedication/sacrifice of the children; the question is not whether the children will be sacrificed but to which god. Our nation’s gods, personal convenience, radical individualism, and the right to choose, have required the sacrifice of our children – and this is not a metaphor. This is where our abortion culture comes from, the slaughter of millions.

**The Place of Grace** – God has a place where His name resides and it is in His covenant people, Christ’s body, the church. Here, He requires that you render your children. But He has provided a Substitutionary sacrifice for them, just as He has for you. Dedicated to the LORD, our children have the privilege of being brought up in the tabernacle, the community of the covenant people of God. God graciously gives you and your children this covenant of grace where we live by faith in the redemption provided by Another.

**Life or Death** – This is why Moses is so emphatic, “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it;” (v32). God owns your children. Outside the only place where real nurture and admonition can occur (read: Christian education, Deut 6) there are many Canaanite sanctuaries developing a culture of death because they are a culture of rebellion against God.