

Deuteronomy 15:19-23 The First Born

Introduction: The older generation had died in the wilderness and a new generation was about to enter Canaan's land. Israel was camped east of the Jordan River across from Jericho and ready to cross into the promised land. Moses is giving this new generation a crash course on the law and how it applied to their lives - especially how it would apply once they were in Canaan. He has already re-read the Ten Commandments and is in the process of explaining them. He is down to the fourth commandment which is about the Sabbath. In our previous lesson he spoke about the Sabbath year. In this text he speaks about the first born male animals.

I. How the law regarding the first-born is related to the law of the Sabbath.

- A. The law of the seventh day Sabbath required that the people refrain from labor on this day and that the day be hallowed as a day of worship to God.
 - 1. While they were in the wilderness they could go to the tabernacle for worship services (after it was built, of course).
 - 2. After they were in Canaan they would not all be able to go to the tabernacle every Sabbath, but could gather in their communities for worship. (Sing and pray, listen to the reading of God's word and its explanation.)
- B. Three times each year they would be required to go to the place where the tabernacle or temple would be placed and worship there.
 - 1. They would bring tithes and offerings. (In addition to the whole burnt offerings which the priests would offer each day, the individual people would bring meat offerings, peace offerings, sin offerings, and trespass offerings.
 - 2. One of the special offerings which they would bring was the offering of the firstborn male animal from the flocks and herds.

II. The basis for the offering of the first-born male.

- A. On the evening prior to their release from Egypt, the Israelites killed a lamb and ate it and sprinkled its blood on the door posts of the house.
- B. At midnight God sent the death angel throughout Egypt to kill the first-born male of man and beast in every home which did not have the blood on the doorposts.
 - 1. In every Egyptian home the first-born died.
 - 2. In every Israelite home that first-born lived.
- C. God told the Israelite that the first-born male of man and beast belonged to the Lord.
 - 1. Each first-born male child was to be redeemed by a special offering. (The offering as a substitute belonged to the Lord.)
 - 2. The first-born male of the animal kingdom of Israel belonged to the Lord.
 - a. The animals that could not be sacrificed were to be redeemed by a substitute offering.
 - b. But the first-born male of the flock or herd was to be a sacrificial offering to the Lord.
- D. The eatable portion of the animal was to be given to the officiating priest and to be cooked and eaten by the officiating priest and his family.
- E. In this text Moses instructs that the priest was to share the sacrificial meat with the donor and his family.

III. An examination of the text.

A. V. 19-

- 1. All of the first-born males of the flock or herd must be brought to the Lord and given in sacrifice.
- 2. The first-born bullock could not be worked. (He could not be used to plow or pull a cart.)
- 3. The first-born male sheep could not be fleeced.
- 4. The first-born male animal could not be used for the family; it must be used for the Lord.

- B. V. 20-
 - 1. It was to be sacrificed to the Lord. (All of the edible parts must be cooked and eaten by the priest and his family and by the donor and his family.)
 - 2. This must be done at the tabernacle or temple.
 - 3. Moses does not mention here that the priest and his family would eat, but earlier instruction makes it clear that they would.
- C. V. 21- If there was any blemish on the animal it was not to be sacrificed to the Lord. (The animal must picture the Christ, who is without spot or blemish.)
- D. V. 22 - If the animal had a blemish it still belonged to the Lord, but the Lord would allow the family to kill it and eat it for food as they would do with other clean animals which were not allowed to be sacrificed to the Lord.
 - 1. Like the roebuck - a gazelle.
 - 2. Like the hart - a fallow deer..
- E. V. 23 - Under no circumstance were they to eat or drink the blood.

IV. Observations.

- A. In all of the regulations which explained how the Ten Commandments applied to the lives of the people, God is seen to be the Supreme Ruler of the world.
- B. The laws regarding the seventh day Sabbath stressed that not only is God to be worshiped but that a special day each week is to be spent in worship to God.
- C. The law regarding the first-born male as it looked back to the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage points out that it is only by the grace of God, received through the shed blood of Jesus Christ that any man is saved.
 - 1. All have sinned and all deserve to die - not only the physical death, but the second death.
 - 2. Only those who have been redeemed by the blood thru faith in Jesus will go to heaven.
- D. The law of the first-born also points out that those who are redeemed by the blood belong to the Lord.
 - 1. They are His by right of creation.
 - 2. They are His by right of redemption. (He redeemed them by His blood.)
 - 3. They are to present their bodies a living sacrifice to the Lord. Romans 12: 1
- E. The sacrificial meal which was enjoyed by the officiating priest and his family plus the donor and his family pictures the great joy which the redeemed experience in their fellowship with God. Ephesians 2:4-7.