

Deuteronomy Chapter 23 Commentary

1 He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD.

We are reminded here of the Lord's desire for the purity of Israel. His commandments are designed to make Israel remember, God's desire for them.

"He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off" Wounded means: *to be mutilated*. Here we see; a man whose private parts are wounded is not to enter into the congregation.

"shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD" Congregation means: *assemblage or an assembly, congregation*. As we consider this definition, we come to an understanding; shall not enter into the "**congregation or the Lord**", means an organized ceremonial or sacrificial service. This would not infer, I don't believe, that they would not be a part of the whole of Israel, just not a part of the ceremonial and sacrificial services, just as an unclean person could not participate in the same. We know that the Levites have already been given this instruction in: **Le 21:16-23; 16 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 17 Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God. 18 For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous, 19 Or a man that is broken footed, or brokenhanded, 20 Or crookbackt, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scury, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken; 21 No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the LORD made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God. 22 He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy. 23 Only he shall not go in unto the vail, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I the LORD do sanctify them."** This reference gives us the picture; God will only accept sacrifices from those who are completely whole; those who have no deficiencies. It is a picture, of the requirement, of the sinless blood of Christ, which is needed for the remission of sins.

We could further ascertain that they would not hold offices and be heads of Israel, judges, priest, and other official offices of Israel. The elders, judges, officers, and heads of the tribes, often met together as a congregation before the Lord. From this reference; we seem to get the same sense, as is being set forth here in Deuteronomy, it pertains to leadership positions, and not the priesthood only.

We know from scripture; there were many who were not Israelites who dwelt with Israel, as a part of the whole of the congregation Israel. There is no indication that they were a separate body from the congregation of Israel, or that they were totally excluded from the nation Israel. We get a picture of this from scripture and the phrase "**without the camp**" as demonstrated in: **Ex 33:7 "And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp."** This teaches me; that when Israel gathered as a whole body unit in the ceremonial rites and rituals of the law service; they put out of the congregation, all that God has excluded from the assembly. In effect they were put out of the camp at the time of the assembly.

2 A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD.

Bastard means: *a mongrel, i.e. born of a Jewish father and a heathen mother.* Mongrel simply means having mixed parentage. I believe; this was a deterrent for Israel; to not intermarry with other nationalities of people, even though God has provided for them to do so under certain circumstances.

This penalty, as well as that in verse 1, would certainly make a man consider his conjugal relationships, knowing that his offspring would be in a class of shunned people, for at least 10 generations. This severe penalty was the deterrent, to Israel, to keep the nation's bloodlines pure, and not to disseminate the family names, to the loss of family services to God (the priesthood), the loss of prescribed property possession, and etc.

"even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD." The penalty, of 10 generations, appears to be; the number generations (without further tainting) it would take, for the bloodline to be purged, to the point it was not considered tainted by God, any longer.

Some commentators say, this was a curse that they could never come into congregation of the Lord. They get this definition from the text in: ***Ne 13:1 "On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God forever;*** These commentators explain that because the word "**forever**" is used here in Nehemiah, that the ten generations actually means forever.

3 An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD forever: 4 Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee. 5 Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee. 6 Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days forever.

We have a scripture reference here that may give us an insight: ***Ne 13:1-3; 1 "On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God forever; 2 Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing. 3 Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.***" A better perspective can be had by reading the whole chapter, I will include the latter part of the chapter to help show some of the meaning: ***Ne 13:23-31; 23 "In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: 24 And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. 25 And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves. 26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin. 27 Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?***

28 And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me. 29 Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites. 30 Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, everyone in his business; 31 And for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good." In this reference we see; the whole of Israel was admonished, and yet those who had disobeyed the commandment of God, and those who had defiled the priesthood, were put out of the congregation of Israel.

The Ammonites and Moabites are descendants of Lot, a nephew of Abraham. God had made promises to both of these tribes of people seen in:

- **De 2:9 "And the LORD said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession."**
- **De 2:19 "And when thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon any possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession."**

We see that God would not give them the land that he had given to the family of Lot. However, God is giving Israel warning, defensive armor, that you are not to mix or mingle with these idolatrous nations. We recognize that for the Israelites, who had possession of property on the other side of Jordan from the land of promise, they are bordered by these idolatrous nations. God knew of Israel's tendency to turn to idolatry and was giving them instruction of how to avoid idolatry.

Also, the possession of the land of promise was to Abraham and his seed, not the families of Lot. Again we see, God keeping the bloodline of Israel pure. We also see; there is a curse, from God, upon them; because they despised Israel as stated in the verses above. They were cursed; because they tempted Israel into immorality and idolatry, instead of meeting them with the provisions of life.

God tells Israel; you are not to seek their peace, or prosperity, forever. This drew that distinguishing mark upon these two nations; you may be akin to Abraham, but you are not Abraham's seed, and therefore you are not inheritors of the blessing of promise to Abraham, and his seed, forever. These nations are under a judicial curse from God.

There is a lesson for us as seen in: **2Co 6:14 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"** As God tells us here to not mix the natural world with the spiritual world, so he is thus instructing Israel here in Deuteronomy 23.

7 Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother: thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land. 8 The children that are begotten of them shall enter into the congregation of the LORD in their third generation.

The nation of the Edomites is from Jacob's brother, Esau. They were nearer kinsman to Israel than the children of Lot; and this seems to account, for the purging of the bloodline for only three generations. However, see the comments in the last paragraph for more thoughts on the third generation.

The Egyptians were the nation from whom God delivered Israel. God reminds them; you spent many years in Egypt, and most of them were not years of bondage. Many were years of prosperity and growth in your own population. I believe; one reason the Egyptian bloodline only required three years purging was because of the great punishments God sent upon Egypt when He freed Israel from bondage.

We know that Joseph's children were from an Egyptian wife, given to him by the Pharaoh of Egypt, seen in: ***Ge 41:45 "And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On."*** We know that Israel adopted Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, as his own children, and they were established as tribes of Israel. There was no tribe of Joseph, though he was one of Jacob's sons.

"The children that are begotten of them shall enter into the congregation of the LORD in their third generation." We remember that God has given some instruction about mixing with idolaters in: ***Ex 20:1-6; 1 "And God spake all these words, saying, 2 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; 6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."*** When we consider this, we see that God is protecting Israel from going into idolatry. How, you ask? Visiting the iniquity upon the fathers to the third and fourth generations, was God's way, of giving the idolatrous families time, to turn from idolatry, to learn the statutes and commandments of God, to be circumcised, and become a part of the nation Israel. Therefore, the third generation, should be well purged of idolatry, fully taught in the ways of serving God, and thereby be fully eligible to enter into the worship of God.

9 When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing.

We see; God is giving instruction, for those who are going to war, in this section of scripture. Although, it may be applicable to the whole camp of Israel, the specific address of instruction is to a group of warriors, who are going to battle against the enemies of the Lord, and enemies of Israel. They are being instructed, in how to keep the war camp clean, and undefiled. In going forth to war; they are to keep themselves from all wickedness and uncleanness. Why? God's anger would be kindled at their faults and he, in judicial wrath, would not go to war with them. We saw this principle demonstrated; when they refused to go into the land of promise the first time. When they heard the judgment, of 40 years of dying in the wilderness, for their rebellion against God, they decided, in their own will, to go to war and lost, because God was not with them.

Secondarily, when you take spoils of war to yourself, do not take any idolatrous thing; but as I have commanded you already, destroy all idolatry completely.

10 If there be among you any man, that is not clean by reason of uncleanness that chanceth him by night, then shall he go abroad out of the camp, he shall not come within the camp: 11 But it shall be,

when evening cometh on, he shall wash himself with water: and when the sun is down, he shall come into the camp again.

When the host of the army is camped; when one becomes unclean during the night, they shall remove out of the host of the warriors, and remain apart throughout the day, that there be no uncleanness in the camp, which would kindle God's wrath against Israel. This is what we would call defensive armor, or action taken to keep us safe.

12 Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad: 13 And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee: 14 For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.

Here we see; God not only directed moral and spiritual cleanliness; he also directs physical cleanliness. Can you imagine the stench and the uncleanness; if everyone did their business wherever they were, in the camp? Very soon, the whole camp would be unclean. We know today (as God knew and is teaching Israel) that physical cleanliness helps keep sickness and disease down. This is another piece of defensive armor/action to be utilized.

"For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp" This is the real reason for keeping the camp clean. God cannot abide sin, or uncleanness, and if he is to be in the midst of them, they must keep themselves, and their camp, clean. The same principle is true in application to our lives today.

In verses 09-14; we see some application to our own lives today. The host going to war would be representative of the church today, which is at war with the devil, his minions, and his defiling doctrine that permeates the world. This is a war that is both physical, and spiritual, to keep the camp clean, and to keep each individual life clean. We see this principle continued, in New Testament scriptures, in several places, here are a few:

- **1Co 5:9-13; 9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. 11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. 12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.** We easily see the application of keeping all uncleanness outside the camp. You see; the church today has the duty of keeping the camp clean. Why? Because if it doesn't, the wrath of God will be kindled against it, and the deliverance of God, from the enemy, will be withheld; just as it was for Israel. It would be like letting the weeds overcome the garden.
- **1Co 3:1-3; 1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. 2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. 3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?** You should read this whole chapter to get the big picture. We see the admonition; clean up our own lives, and purge ourselves of uncleanness.

- **2Co 10:3-6; 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; 6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.** We see in these references; the warfare between the spiritual and carnal. We see that the purging of carnal leads to cleanliness; both carnally and spiritually. We understand; this begins with application to the individual, and then to the church body.

15 Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee: 16 He shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him.

"the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee" "He shall dwell with thee, even among you," As we consider these two phrases; we can see application to two scenarios. One would be; a servant of an Israelite, and one would be; a servant to any other people. Most commentators give this to servants fled to Israel from another nation. This could be applicable, as we would reason that if they were of Israel, and were mistreating their servants, they should be dealt with and the problem corrected.

We can surmise; this would be applicable to servants, who are being mistreated and wronged in their service to their master. Else, why would they **"escape?"** We would expect; that inquiry would be made, and if the servant was indeed in need of protection, Israel was bound to protect them and afford them such privileges as God directed. Remember, God has directed Israel, to instruct both Israel, and the strangers among them, in all the ways of the Lord. Therefore, if the servant fled from one master in Israel, because of his own sins, we would expect them to be returned to their master, to face the consequence of their sin. We see a picture of this in the New Testament, seen below:

Phm 1:10-19; 10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: 11 Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: 12 Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels: 13 Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel: 14 But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly. 15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him forever; 16 Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? 17 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. 18 If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; 19 I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides. We see in this text; the basis for our comments above. Onesimus had escaped from his former master to Paul. Paul received him, and after finding out the facts, returned Onesimus to his former owner, not as a slave but as a brother in Christ.

We can make application of this principle to our organized church bodies today. How? Let's look at some New Testament scripture: **Mt 10:23 "But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come."** Don't you see? This is the same scenario presented here in Deuteronomy? Should you be

wrongly treated and persecuted in the church where you have membership, you should flee to another church and seek refuge there. Here are a couple of examples to demonstrate what I mean:

- I, and several others, was once a member of a church, in an association of churches, which forbid their members from having fellowship with any other churches of like faith. We were removed from our church homes there, and found refuge in another group of churches of like faith.
- Secondly: Suppose you were a member of a church, where the organized body began to push upon you, to accept things you know are not biblically sound. There are several religious groups that are doing this today. You should escape from that group, and flee to a body of believers that are biblically sound.

17 There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel. 18 Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these are abominations unto the LORD thy God.

If Israel is doing all God has commanded; there will be no whores of Israelite lineage. Why? Because, they were to be slain for sexual misconduct. Here are a couple of texts:

- ***Le 21:9 "And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the whore, she profaneth her father: she shall be burnt with fire."***
- ***De 22:21 "Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you."***

I was having trouble with the phrase "***or the price of a dog,***" until I saw the definition of dog. Dog means: *to yelp, or else to attack; a male prostitute*. We often think of prostitution as belonging to the female sex only, but we understand that is not true. God, in this text, is expressly including male prostitution as well as female prostitution, and sodomy, and lesbianism. All manner of sexual impurity can be included in this thought. God tells Israel; do not bring the gain of ungodly conduct into my house as an offering or gift. It is an abomination to me; just as the actions that got the gain to you is an abomination to God.

The word dog is used several times in scripture and mostly in a derogatory sense or connotation. Think about the spelling of dog; it is the exact opposite of God, which leads us to this thought: the devil and satan are the exact opposites of God. How is this? Scripture attests: satan is the father of lies, and God cannot lie, which is a good example, as seen in scripture in:

- ***Joh 8:44 "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."***
- ***Tit 1:2 "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;"***

19 Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury: 20 Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

Usury means: *to strike with a sting (as a serpent); to oppress with interest on a loan.* God is again directing Israel; do not mistreat your brothers and sisters, your own nation of people. They were to treat one another fairly, and equitably. If the stranger is willing to pay the exorbitant interest rates, you may exercise usury with them.

God has already addressed this within the confines of Israel in: **De 15:7-8; 7 "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: 8 But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth."** If you read the whole chapter; you will find that not only were they to lend, but if necessary give the needs of their brethren, with no expectation of return of what they gave.

21 When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. 22 But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. 23 That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth.

God is simply saying; keep thy mouth, and do not speak without due thought, and meditation, upon the words of thy mouth. Do not make a vow, until you have thoroughly weighed all the advantages, and disadvantages, thereof. Remember, this is not some mandatory obligation, which the Lord is putting upon you; it is a mandatory obligation, which you are putting upon yourself. Failure, to do that which you have promised to do, will bring God's judicial wrath upon you. Also, if you prove to be a liar, it will bring shame upon the name of your God.

24 When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel. 25 When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn.

God reminds Israel; you may eat of that which belongs to another, to satisfy your own hunger. However, you may not gather, and carry it away to make gain for yourself. You are not to make your living off your neighbor, at your neighbor's expense. To satisfy your immediate hunger is not a sin. To make gain of thy neighbor's produce is stealing, which is against the commandment of God seen in: **Ex 20:15 "Thou shalt not steal."**

How can we apply this to our lives today? One way is to think of the work of others, who give out the gospel and revelations of God from the scriptures. If God gives us the light and understanding of a scripture, and we spread abroad that gospel of Christ given to us, we are glorified by that which God has done through us. We should not take what God used to glorify another and claim it as our own. That is why; I always try to give credit to other commentators for things God revealed to them, when I use their notes in my writings. Sometimes, I may use their commentary because they were better able to express the thought, or revelation, than I could have done myself. This not only gives them the glory, of God working through them, but gives glory to God who revealed it all to start with, which is a real application to us. God is the revealer of all things scriptural and is to be credited for the revelation.