

## SESSION #29 (21 Sep 10); Deut 12:1-14; The War against Religious Pluralism

### I. INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

1:1-5	Introduction to God's spokesman, the 1 <sup>st</sup> Prophet Moses
1:6 - 4:40	1 <sup>st</sup> Exposition of the Torah = <u>motivation</u> to obey from (1) <u>past gracious actions</u> of Yahweh and (2) <u>sovereign destiny</u> of the nation ( <u>future gracious actions</u> of Yahweh)
4:41-49	Editorial comment on context of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Exposition of the Torah
5:1 - 26:19	2 <sup>nd</sup> Exposition of the Torah = proper response to Yahweh in heart and soul
	5:1 - 11:32 Loving Yahweh with <u>all the heart</u>
	<b>12:1 - 26:19 Loving Yahweh with <u>all the soul</u> (<i>nephesh</i>=life)</b>
	<b>12:1-32 Theological unity of Israel's tribes</b>

2<sup>nd</sup> part of this exposition: 3 parts to exposition

- Exhortation (appeal to action, to response—emphasizes the [personality] of God)
- Argumentation (appeal to reason, to logic—emphasizes the marvelous self-consistency of God, He can be reasoned with and thought about)
- Presentation of evidence (appeal to historic data, to events—emphasizes the [credible behavior] of God, His providential acts)

Exhortation is heavy throughout **5:1-11:32**: e.g., chapters 6 & 7

Exhortation + “How to” operational doctrine / procedures

Argumentation: e.g., chapter 8

Goal of the argument: to refute the claim in **8:11-13, 17** that human effort secured their prosperity

Form of the argument: use past Adversity Test to prepare for future Prosperity Test (based upon the assumption that God is immutable and faithful & Israelites have choice)

Logic of the argument:

- Adversity Test exposed the ‘divine background’ of logistical grace going on during human life
- Implication: human labor and planning are [necessary] but not [sufficient] (8:3)

Presentation of evidence: e.g., chapters 1 & 3

Evidence of population growth rate (**1:9-15**)

Evidence of giant King Og's bed (**3:11**)

### II. ELIMINATION OF RELIGIOUS “PLURALISM” (12:1-4)

#### A. Textual Observations

##### **12:1 statutes and judgments**

“statute” = marking out boundaries of what are acceptable choices (chap 12)

“judgments” = case law (“if. . .then”) (chap 13)

**12:2 utterly destroy green tree**

Israel was forested back then so shaded areas were chosen sites(11:30; Hos 4:1-14)

**12:3 destroy their names**

Scripture doesn't report what these gods' names were; divine names were thought to convey power

**12:4**

B. Reasons for this cultural destruction.

There must be [metaphysical] and [epistemological] agreement for there to be a common ethic and political unity.

Canaanite religion

1. Deities:

El – “elder” god of the pantheon, called “father bull” who procreates gods and goddesses with his sexual potency [corresponds to the modern idea of neo-Darwinism that claims prolonged sexual procreation produces new kinds]; emasculates himself

Baal – “son” of El (but also son of Dagan, a fertility god of Ashdod and Gaza (**Jud 16:23** and **1 Sam 5:1-7**); replaced El in some texts and sometimes appears as Hadad, the storm god.

Anat – a brutal and vicious goddess like Kali in India; perennially fruitful yet perpetually a virgin; another version of Ishtar; goddess of war and butchery who thirsted for human blood.

Yam and Mot—gods of sea and death with which Baal and other like gods must do battle each year to bring about Spring.

2. Worship: “sympathetic ritual” based upon similarities

*Fertility rituals:* if gods gave fertility, then ritual sex might move them to provide; biblical answer was [obedience] to Yahweh would secure fertility

*Sacrificial rituals:* if gods needed to be placated, then human sacrifice (widely practiced) might assuage one's guilt (Canaanites, Phoenicia, Carthage); Abraham story important because Yahweh stopped it while memorializing the act for our understanding of His sacrifice of His Son for us.

*Divination:* seeking the will of the gods via interpreting various animal organs (prescriptions in omen texts).

Ideological & cultural conflict

If the religious facilities and objects were left, they would communicate demonic perversions of God's nature (**1 Cor 10:14-22**)

Moreover, they would be interpreted as Yahweh's “grace” toward such deities because deities and local histories were united in ancient pagan thought; deities “controlled” local areas, particularly “high places.”

Concept of “**sacred space**”:

Garden of Eden = a subdued area—a garden—and the meeting place with God.

Fall excluded man from entry, and even access to God was restricted to divine protocols.

Patriarchs like Abraham spoke of theophany locations = sacred spaces (e.g. Bethel)

Ezekiel's vision of the departure of the Spirit of Yahweh from the Temple.

Conquest was a “test” to see if a sacred space could be restored upon earth; a model of eschatological events that do succeed in re-creating a sacred space.

### III. CENTRAL UNIFICATION OF THE JEWISH TRIBES (12:5-14)

Remember that the “nation” here is only a loose confederation of relatively independent tribes—an organization known to historians of ancient history as an “amphictyony” in which various kinds of political units would sometimes gather around a central shrine administered by priests (ancient Greece). However, in Israel’s situation due to divine revelation there was a written constitution that provided uniform “law” and that prohibited associations with all other shrines.

This model reveals what the [Millennial Kingdom] will look like as well as the [Eternal State] so it behooves us to pay attention.

**12:5 place where Yahweh...chooses..to put His name for His dwelling place**

**12:6-7 offerings, tithes, eat, rejoice**

Implications:

God chooses the meeting place → not just anywhere someone thinks is appropriate

God chooses the meeting protocol → not a matter of individual choice

Worship includes joy from God’s blessings upon their labor

Unity is not in a central civil government (didn’t exist until David’s day); it is a theological unity [maximum freedom]—not even tribal, but family centered.

**12:8-11 not. . .as we are doing today**

**Lev 17:1-9** sloppy with ceremonial protocols prohibiting sacrifices without clearance from the tabernacle.

**12:12-14 place. . .place. . .**

Apostasy of Jeroboam: 1 Kings 12:25-33

Cf **14:16; 15:30; 16:31; 2 Kings 3:3; 10:29,31; 13:2,11; 14:24; 15:9,18,24,28; 17:22**

Political unity over theological unity

cf Kingdom of Man in **Genesis 11**

Language is a shaper of culture → “holds” of ship to prevent disaster

### IV. CONCLUSION: WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY IN OUR PLURALISTIC SOCIETIES?

A. Requirements of the model Kingdom of God

*King of Israel = Yahweh Himself (1 Sam 8:7-8)*; king defines what’s allowed in His realm; outworking of the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> commandments. Relation with other gods = treason. Future kingdom will be global and there will be global [theological] unity.

B. Our Strategy:

Post-millennialists argue that we premils are “pessimillennialists” because we do not believe that theological unity can come about in a fallen world without a similar genocidal holy war prior to Christ’s return; “blocked future”

Want to establish a modified theocracy (“Christendom”)

They believe that the Great Commission implies gradual increase in theological unity.  
**Strengths:** take seriously the structure of the OT Theocracy (good research on its legal and economic aspects) and the authority of Jesus Christ over Satan.  
**Weaknesses:** set aside the texts that exhort endurance against evil on the basis of Christ's return and the contracts with Israel and assume that wheat overtakes the tares in spite of historical experience of the Church.

USA began with a weak polytheism with Trinity and Unitarians → vastly polytheistic nation today

Pre-millennial, pre-Trib view:

So, we work outward starting with our heart toward our marriage/family units toward local community toward state and federal levels with biblical information about “what works.”  
 Taking ground from Satan for “sacred space” in the heart (2 Cor 10:4-5)  
 Winning people to Christ out of Satan's kingdom

Crisis areas:

1. Education of our children

“Education is. . . a most powerful ally of Humanism, and every American public school is a school of Humanism. What can the theistic Sunday-school, meeting for an hour once a week, and teaching only a fraction of the children, do to stem the tide of a five-day program of humanistic teaching.?” Charles Potter, Humanism A New Religion (1930)

2. Family inheritance & integrity of private property  
 Gov't coercion through taxation to feed “other gods”

