



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

# BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

## DEUTERONOMY

Week 3



## Party Time!

DAY 15

Deuteronomy 16:1-22

What holidays do you enjoy most? What special Christian celebrations are especially significant for you? What events does your family celebrate?

**1.** Describe the three celebrations the Israelites were to engage in. Place yourself among the people of Israel. What would you think when first hearing Moses explain that you were to celebrate *Passover*, the *Feast of Weeks* and the *Feast of Tabernacles*? What was the purpose of these religious festivals?

**2.** Besides celebrating, what obligations were placed upon the people of Israel as they observed these three festivals?

**3.** What was the role of the judges? How were they to judge? What instructions were given to the people concerning justice? What reward was promised for living justly?

**1.** Explain how these festivals are centered in and on the old covenant.

**2.** What Christian holidays have been most memorable to you? What Christian holidays do you enjoy the *least* and why? What do *your* Christian holidays teach you about Jesus?

**3.** How do you bring God gifts “in proportion to the way the Lord your God has blessed you” (v. 17)?

*This chapter shows that the God of Israel wants his people to enjoy life. In this chapter, instructions are given for the people to have **three festivals**—a religious term for celebration or party. **The month of Abib** (v. 1) corresponds to March or April of our calendar. Later the name was changed to Nisan, a Babylonian name meaning “beginning.” Nisan marks the first month of the Jewish religious year.*

### OPENING

up to the Word

### DIGGING

into the Word

### LIVING

out the Word

### WINDOW

on the Word

## Nothing But the Best

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Deuteronomy 17:1-20

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

What “best” things in your home are set aside for special occasions? What “best” foods are reserved only for special occasions or special guests?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

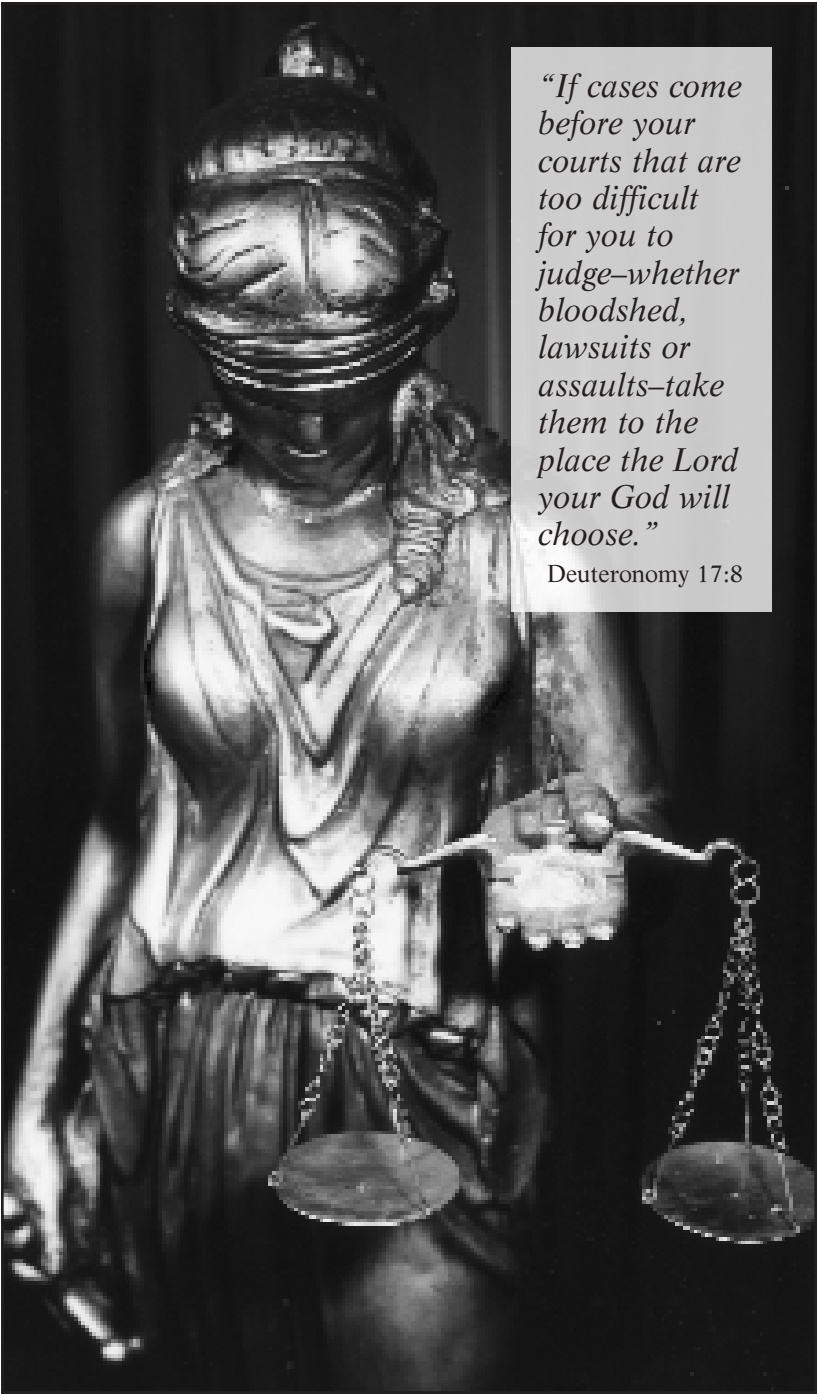
1. What was the problem with sacrificing a sick or defective animal? Why did God object?
2. How were those who worshiped other gods to be treated? Was the process fair and just? Why was testimony required from more than one witness?
3. The appeal process is described in vs. 8-13. Do you feel this process could be used in the courts of our democratic Western world?
4. What qualities and characteristics were necessary for a King of Israel? What limitations and restrictions were placed upon the king?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. How would you describe your own giving to God? (a) a top financial priority (b) the best of your time and talents, (c) what is left after obligations are fulfilled, (d) giving with misgivings.
2. Have you ever been falsely accused? What was the outcome? How do we bear false witness today?
3. Do you know of a political leader who exhibits some of the qualities cited in verses 14-20?

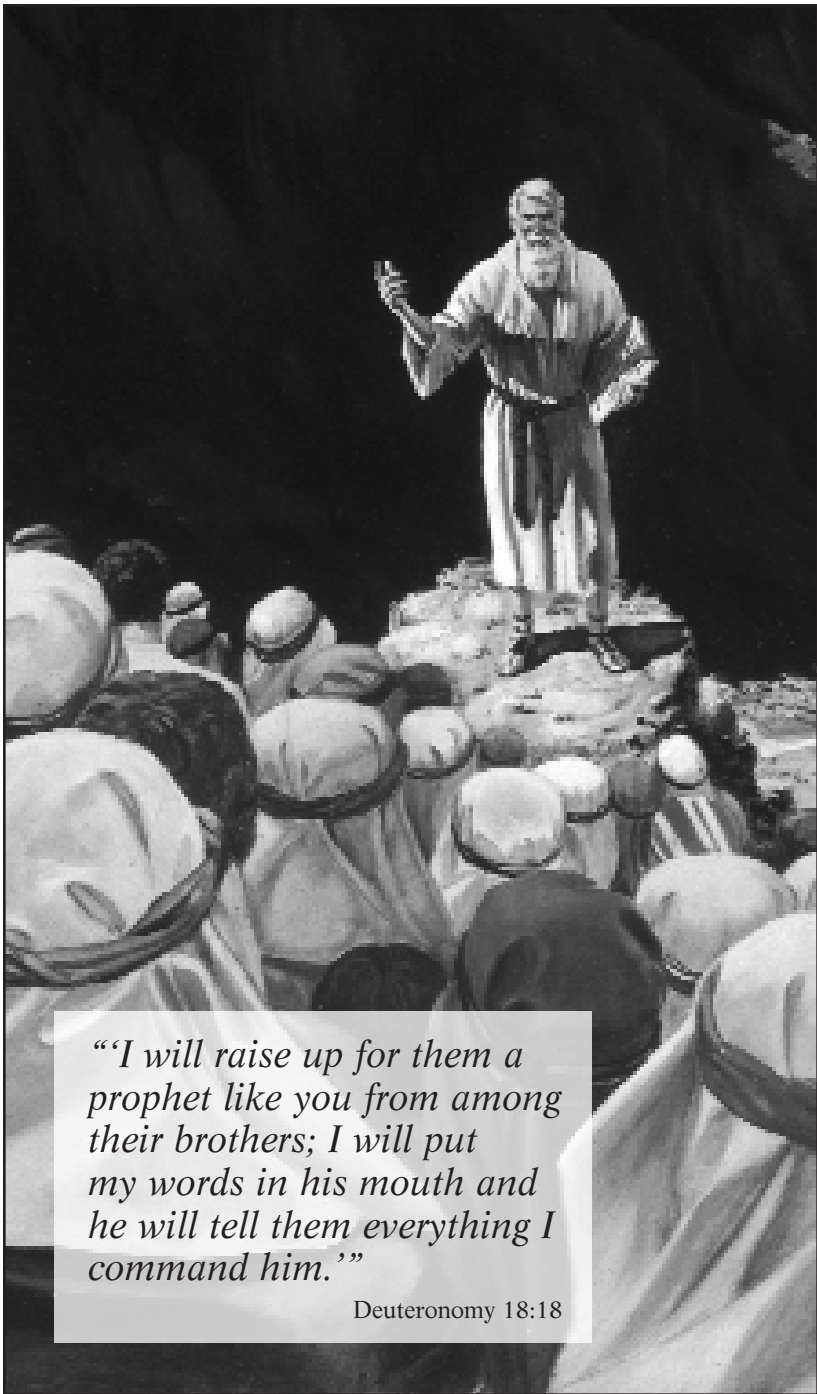
**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*Israel's king is prohibited from acquiring “**great numbers of horses**” (v. 16). Horses in the Old Testament are associated with militarism, faithless self-reliance, great wealth and a pride that relies on secular might rather than trusting God to protect the people. God did not want Israel's king to be a warlord.*

A black and white photograph of a statue of Lady Justice. The statue is blindfolded, symbolizing impartiality. She is wearing a crown and a long, draped garment. She holds a pair of scales of justice in her left hand, which are slightly tilted. The background is dark, making the statue stand out.

*“If cases come before your courts that are too difficult for you to judge—whether bloodshed, lawsuits or assaults—take them to the place the Lord your God will choose.”*

Deuteronomy 17:8



*“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth and he will tell them everything I command him.”*

Deuteronomy 18:18

# Prophet and Priest

DAY 17

Deuteronomy 18:1-22

Have you ever heard predictions of self-proclaimed “prophets”? Did any of their predictions come true? Were any inaccurate—or just plain wrong?

1. Where did Israel’s priests come from? How were they to be supported? Where were they to serve?
2. What religious practices were the Israelites to avoid? Child sacrifice is clearly wrong—but what’s so bad about magic and sorcery?
3. Instead of magicians and sorcerers, what did God provide for the people of Israel? How would they know a true prophet from a false prophet?
4. Is any specific prophet anticipated in 18:18-19 (see Jn 1:45; Ac 3:22-26; 7:37)?

1. Think about members of the clergy you have known. Were any of them more like priests or more like prophets? What was the difference between a priest and a prophet in ancient Israel?
2. Do you know anyone who is involved in any of the practices prohibited in verses 9-13? Does their practice tempt you in any way? What does it mean to be “blameless before the Lord” (v. 13)?
3. Have you ever heard someone who claimed to have a message from God? Were you comfortable with that person and the message? Why or why not? How can you tell when a person truly has a message from God or when the message is simply of human origin?

**Priest** and **prophet** were two distinct religious roles in Israel’s history, although they sometimes overlapped. The Levites or **priests** of Israel were similar to today’s ministers. As spiritual leaders for Israel, they were supported by the people. The priest’s role was to organize, maintain and operate the Temple, where the priest presented sacrifices and offerings according to a prescribed ritual. The **prophet’s** role was to determine the will of God and transmit that message to the individual, the nation or the king.

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**LIVING**  
out the Word

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

## Safety First

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Deuteronomy 19:1-20

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

As a child, where did you feel most safe and secure? Was it in a place or with a person? As an adult, where do you feel most safe and secure?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

1. Describe the geographical location of the “cities of refuge.” Why would these cities be beneficial for everyone and not just the one seeking refuge?
2. Were cities of refuge to be places of safety for *anyone* who committed a crime? Who was not protected and why?
3. Why was one witness not enough to convict a person? Why were judges asked to be thorough and rigorous in their investigation? How were perjurers to be treated and why?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. What do the cities of refuge teach us about God, mercy and justice?
2. Has God used you to be one of his places of “refuge” for those dealing with the storms of life? How can you be prepared to be a place of spiritual and emotional safety? Who is our ultimate Refuge?
3. Why are perjury and bearing false witness serious matters? Could gossip be part of bearing false witness against a person? How do you respond when you hear gossip?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*The avenger of blood cited in verse 6 was the nearest relative of the person who was killed. In ancient times that person had the right and duty to “avenge the blood” or death of his relative. Verse 21 disturbs many people—**life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.** Today’s readers need to keep in mind that this stipulation was part of the old covenant, based on retributive justice. The “justice” measured out by the old covenant can be explained as “punishment that fit the crime.” But the new covenant is based on restorative justice—restoring relationships rather than defending law.*



# Cities of Refuge



## God Gives The Victory

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Deuteronomy 20:1-20

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Think about a time when you were frightened and even terrified. Did you call on God for help? What happened? Does that experience help to shape your faith and outlook on life today?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**1.** Place yourself in the army of Israel. You are about to go to war. How would you feel about the approaching conflict? (a) confident, (b) anxious, (c) fearful, (d) terrified. Would your feelings change after reading verses 1-4?

**2.** Who was exempted from military duty in Israel (vs. 5-9)? Under what conditions?

**3.** What were Israel's instructions for making war? The basis of these instructions was external force and control, rather than the internal, Christ-centered transformation offered by the new covenant, by God's grace.

**4.** What is the point of verses 19-20? (a) environmental sensitivity; (b) aesthetic considerations; (c) waste not, want not.

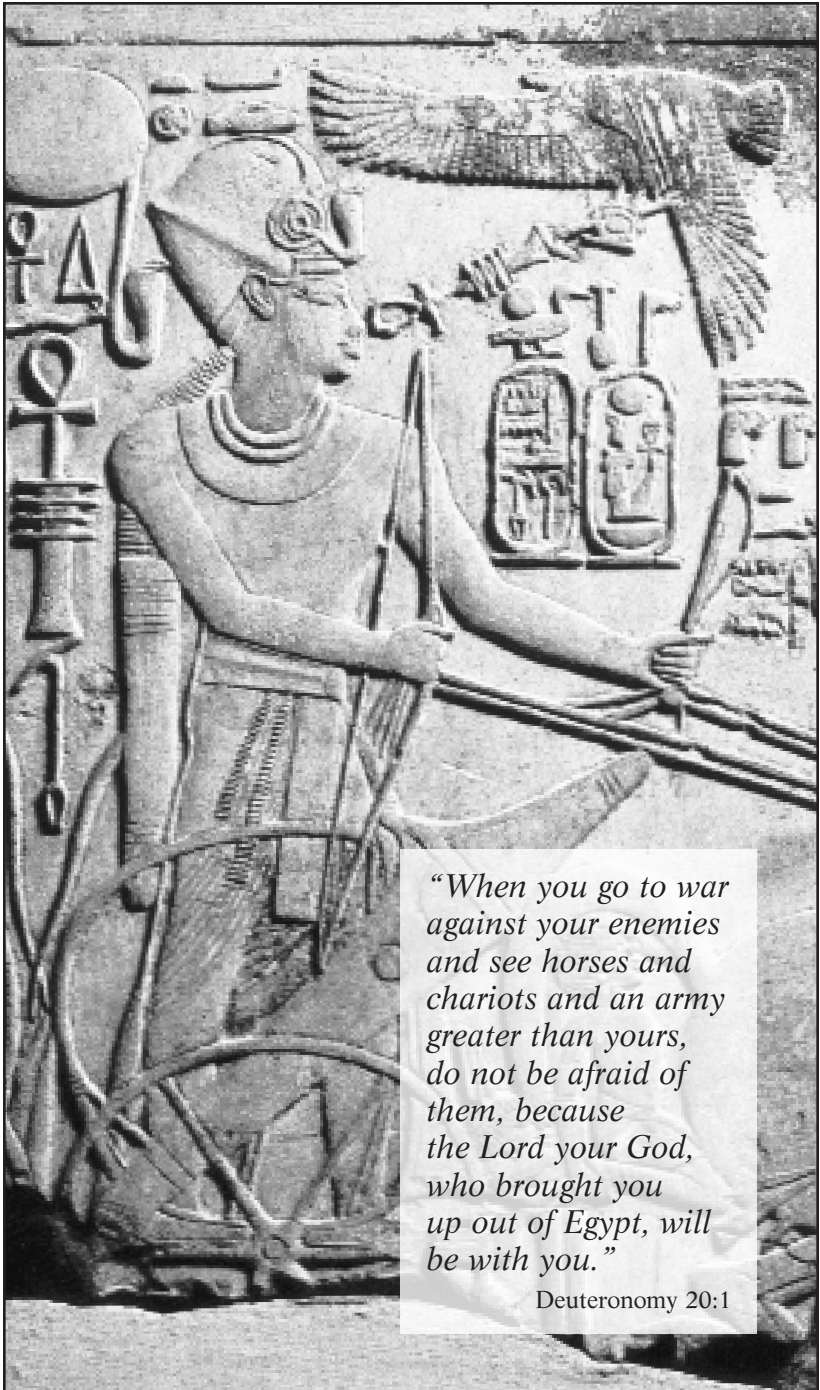
**LIVING**  
out the Word

**1.** What do verses 1-4 teach us about life? What do they teach us about God?

**2.** When you are engaged in a spiritual "battle," how will God give you the victory?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

Verse 20 indicates Israel would have to be patient for victory: **"When you besiege a city..."** Archeologists have excavated the remains of fortified cities. Some of those had walls up to 30 feet high. Israel would not only have to be patient but use different battle strategies than when fighting on open plains.



*“When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you.”*

Deuteronomy 20:1

## Fair Treatment of Women

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Deuteronomy 21:1-22

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

How do you feel women are treated in today's society? Have women been relegated to lesser roles, even within Christendom? Why?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

1. Why kill an innocent animal when there is an unsolved murder? Describe the ritual that was to take place.
2. Could an Israelite man marry a non-Israelite woman (vs. 10-14)? What was she to do before the marriage? How was she to be treated in the event of a divorce?
3. Verses 15-17 sketch how a man with more than one wife was to treat those wives and children. Were those laws fair, in your opinion?
4. Do you think verses 18-21 were to be taken literally? What other ways could the Israelites "purge the evil" from their community (v. 21)?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. Has there ever been a serious crime in your neighborhood? How was the community affected? How can Christians help in the wake of a serious crime?
2. What do verses 10-17 say about God's love? God's justice? God's mercy?
3. Have you been the "favorite" in your family? What blessings and problems did that create? Have you been "disinherited" from your family? How did you feel about it?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*Shave her head and trim her nails refer to ancient purification rituals used to signify the transition from one state of life to another (see also Nu 8:7 and Lev 14:8). The space of a "full month" is designed to give the woman a period of mourning as well as a time of adjustment to a new stage of life.*

# Laws, Laws and More Laws

DAY 21

Deuteronomy 22:1-23:25

Do you ever feel overwhelmed by the number of religious laws you are required to obey?

1. Describe the help that was to be offered in 22:1-4.
2. What role does culture play in defining what clothing styles are appropriate for men or women? Is there a problem with mixing styles today?
3. Relationships between men and women are addressed in 22:13-30. Who was being protected by these laws? Why was the penalty for sexual misconduct so harsh?
4. Who was to be excluded from the “assembly of the Lord” (23:1-8)?
5. Do you know of anyone who suggests that some old covenant laws are required for Christians today? What does the new covenant say about such stipulations?

1. Have you ever ignored the plight of an animal (22:1-4)? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think many of today’s marriages end in divorce? How can the church strengthen ties between husbands and wives?
3. How do you feel about the principles of separation and distinction mentioned in 23:1-8? Have you ever been excluded from an organization, group or team? If so, how did it make you feel and how do you feel about it today?

*Deuteronomy 23:15 expresses an extraordinarily humane law, given its time and culture. The **slave** cited here was probably a non-Israelite who fled into the Israelite camp. This law prohibits extradition. Some scholars believe there is a basis in this verse for the abolition of slavery even though that idea would not have been implemented in the tribes and nations of ancient Palestine.*

## OPENING

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