

Read the Whole Bible with Pastor

Monday (May 8) – Deuteronomy 18, 19

Every tribe of Israel is to be allotted a portion of land after the conquest of Canaan except for the tribe of Levi, for the Lord is their inheritance (v. 2). Rather than living in one place, the Levites were to be scattered among the other tribes, serving the Lord as spiritual leaders (pastors) in every city and village. Jacob prophesied concerning this while on his deathbed: “I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel” (Gen 49:7). Although Jacob’s words are meant as a curse, God turns it into a blessing for Levi and for His people.

Verse 15 of chapter 18 is a prophecy concerning Christ. He is the Prophet like Moses (but greater than Moses) whom God will raise up from among the nation of Israel. When John the Baptist appeared, the people asked, “Are you *the* Prophet?” (John 1:21). But John rightly directed them to Jesus.

In chapter 19 God instructs the Israelites to designate six cities as cities of refuge. An accidental manslayer could flee to one of these cities and find sanctuary from the avenger of blood (see also Numbers 35:6). In a similar way, we sinners may flee to Christ (in particular, to the promise of forgiveness that He delivers in His Sacraments) and be sheltered from the vengeful accusations of Satan.

Tuesday (May 9) – Deuteronomy 20, 21

God gives instructions to his people concerning war. First, they are not to trust in numbers or strength of arm, but in God alone. Second, any man who has just built a house, planted a vineyard, or is engaged (to a woman, of course) is to go home and enjoy these God-given blessings. Third, the enemy city is to be offered a chance to surrender peacefully. God desires that all would be saved – even the enemies of Israel. However, the wicked inhabitants of Canaan, who have spurned God’s call to repentance for over 400 years, are to be utterly exterminated. God’s wrath may at times be severe, but even this is done out of mercy, “lest the inhabitants of the land teach you to do according to all their abominations...” (v. 18).

In chapter 21 God makes provision for female captives, who are to be treated honorably. This is in stark contrast to the surrounding nations that treated prisoners of war with brutality. God also makes provision for the unloved wife and her children. Although God never condoned polygamy, it was sometimes practiced among the Israelites, though always with disastrous consequences to the family. (Some sins carry their own built-in punishment.) Nevertheless, God directed that the sons of an unloved wife would not be cheated of their rightful inheritance.

Wednesday (May 10) – Deuteronomy 22, 23

Luther’s explanation of the Seventh Commandments teaches us that we ought to help our neighbor protect and improve his property. If we fail to do this, we have stolen from him. This is what God teaches in the first four verses of Chapter 22. Although most people don’t have oxen or donkeys, the principle of protecting our neighbor’s goods still applies to

Christians today. Likewise, the general principles concerning sexual morality are still applicable to us, even though the specific punishments for adultery (stoning, payment of shekels, etc.) are no longer imposed by our government upon law breakers. When determining the guilt of a woman, God makes a distinction between consensual adultery (what happens in the city) and rape (what happens in the countryside). God also outlines the circumstances in which a “shotgun wedding” would be necessary (vv. 28–29).

Thursday (May 11) – Deuteronomy 24, 25

Because of the hardness of the people’s hearts, Moses permits a man to divorce his wife if she “finds no favor in his eyes.” But Jesus made it clear that this was never God’s intention for marriage (Matthew 19:8). According to the words of Jesus, unfaithfulness is the only scriptural reason for divorce. (Abandonment and abuse are forms of unfaithfulness).

Chapter 25 outlines the duty of a surviving brother to his brother’s widow: He is to take her, not as a second wife, but as a wife for the purpose of providing her with a son to carry on her dead husband’s name. This custom is called “levirate marriage,” from the Latin “levir,” brother-in-law. We find two examples of this in Scripture: Onan, who wickedly refused to perform his duty to Tamar because he wanted his dead brother’s inheritance (Gen 38:8–10), and Boaz, who fulfilled his duty to Ruth with honor.

Friday (May 12) – Deuteronomy 26

Chapter 26 concerns the laws of firstfruits and tithes. After the people find themselves blessed by God with an abundant inheritance, they are to give a tithe to God. None of the tithe is to be removed for “an unclean use” (v. 14), but all of it is to be given to the priest to be set before the altar of the Lord (v. 4).

Saturday (May 13) – Deuteronomy 27

Moses gives instructions to be carried out after his death when the people cross the Jordan River: Half of the tribes shall stand on the mount of blessings (Gerizim) and the other half on the mount of curses (Ebal). Each curse shall be read aloud by the Levites while the people respond, “Amen.” Each of these curses relates directly to one of the Ten Commandments.

Sunday (May 14) – Deuteronomy 28

The first part of chapter 28 lists the overflowing blessings that God will shower upon His people if they obey His voice. Consider the beautiful imagery of blessings that come up from behind and overtake every aspect of one’s life! On the other hand, the list of curses is quite severe, and it is very long. By verse 29 it may seem that the curses could not possibly get any worse, but in fact, they are just getting started. So it is with the evil that follows if we turn away from God. How much evil? Seemingly without limit—unless God, in His mercy, brings us again to repentance and renewed faith in Christ. Any stubborn sinner who thinks he can outlast the wrath of God ought to read chapter 28 and think again. But however terrible these curses, we know that the mercy of God shown to us in Jesus is even greater. Thanks be to God!