

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

All monuments of idolatry in the promised land to be destroyed, Deuteronomy 12:1-3; and God's service to be duly performed, Deuteronomy 12:4-7. The difference between the performance of that service in the wilderness and in the promised land, Deuteronomy 12:8-11. The people are to be happy in all their religious observances, Deuteronomy 12:12. The offerings must be brought to the place which God appoints, and no blood is to be eaten, Deuteronomy 12:13-16. The tithe of corn, wine, oil, etc., to be eaten in the place that God shall choose, Deuteronomy 12:17, Deuteronomy 12:18. The Levite must not be forsaken, Deuteronomy 12:19. All clean beasts may be eaten, but the blood must be poured out before the Lord, and be eaten on no pretense whatever, Deuteronomy 12:20-25. Of vows, burnt-offerings, etc., Deuteronomy 12:26, Deuteronomy 12:27. These precepts are to be carefully obeyed, Deuteronomy 12:28. Cautions against the abominations of the heathen, Deuteronomy 12:29-31. Nothing to be added to or diminished from the word of God, Deuteronomy 12:32.

Verse 3

Ye shall overthrow their altars - Where unholy sacrifices have been offered; and break their pillars, probably meaning statues and representations of their gods cut out of stone; and burn their groves, such as those about the temple of Ashtaroth, the Canaanitish Venus, whose impure rites were practiced in different parts of the enclosures or groves round her temples; and ye shall hew down the graven images, probably implying all images carved out of wood; and destroy the names of them, which were no doubt at first graven on the stones, and carved on the trees, and then applied to the surrounding districts. In various instances the names of whole mountains, valleys, and districts were borrowed from the gods worshipped there.

Verse 14

The place which the Lord shall choose - To prevent idolatry and bring about a perfect uniformity in the Divine worship, which at that time was essentially necessary; because every rite and ceremony had a determinate meaning, and pointed out the good things which were to come, therefore one place must be established where those rites and ceremonies should be carefully and punctually observed. Had it not been so, every man would have formed his worship according to his own mind, and the whole beauty and importance of the grand representative system would have been destroyed, and the Messiah and the glories of his kingdom could not have been seen through the medium of the Jewish ritual. For uniformity in every part of the Divine worship the same necessity does not now exist; because that which was typified is come, and the shadows have all fled away. Yet, when it can be obtained, how desirable is it that all sincere Christians should with one mouth, as well as with one heart, glorify their common Lord and Savior!

Verse 15

Thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates - With the proviso that the blood be poured out on the ground.

1. The blood should not be eaten.

2. It should be poured out by way of sacrifice. I think this is the meaning; and not that they should pour out the blood with as little ceremony and respect as they poured water upon the ground, which is the meaning according to Calmet and others.

The roebuck, and - the hart - It is very likely that by אֵיִם (tsebi) the antelope is meant; and by אֵיִל (aiyal), the hart or deer. This is the opinion of Dr. Shaw; and from the report of travelers we learn that both these animals are found in that desert to the present day. See Harmer, vol. iv., p. 25, etc. Of the propriety of eating clean animals there could be no question, but the blood must be poured out; yet there were cases in which they might kill and eat in all their gates, cities, and dwellings - such as the roebuck and the hart, or all clean wild beasts, for these being taken in hunting, and frequently shot by arrows, their blood could not be poured out at the altar. Therefore the command appears to take in only such tame beasts as were used for food.

Verse 19

Forsake not the Levite - These had no inheritance, and were to live by the sanctuary: if therefore the offerings were withheld by which the Levites were supported, they of course must perish. Those who have devoted themselves to the service of God in ministering to the salvation of the souls of men, should certainly be furnished at least with all the necessaries of life. Those who withhold this from them sin against their own mercies, and that ordinance of God by which a ministry is established for the salvation of souls.

Verse 23

For the blood is the life - And the life being offered as an atonement, consequently the blood should not be eaten. See the notes on Leviticus 17:11, where the subject of the vitality of the blood is largely considered.

Verse 31

Their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire - Almost all the nations in the world agreed in offering human victims to their gods on extraordinary occasions, by which it is evident that none of those nations had any right notion of the Divine nature. How necessary, then, was the volume of revelation, to teach men what that religion is with which God can be well pleased! The Hindoos to this day offer human victims to their goddess Cali, and at the temple of Jaggernaut; and yet, notwithstanding this, there are found certain persons who, while they profess Christianity, are absolutely unwilling to send the Hindoos the Gospel of Christ, because they think it would not be politically wise! But the wisdom of this world has ever been foolishness with God; and in spite of all this infidel policy, the word of the Lord shall have free course and be glorified.