

An Invitation to Celebrate In the Presence of the Lord

Deut. 12:5-7

Introduction:

1. The Bible assumes that people will seek to worship.
2. The book of Deuteronomy acknowledges the worship of the Canaanites, even though it calls on Israel to utterly destroy their places of worship. They were to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and obliterate the name of their gods.
3. In the passage that we have just read God invites Israel to seek Him at the place where He chooses.
4. This invitation constitutes a radical shift. Instead of men pursuing God, God is making Himself available to men.
 - a. The Canaanites had pursued god in their own way (12:1-4).
 - b. Even Israelite worship at this point was incomplete (12:8).
5. To actually be invited into the presence of God created a whole new dynamic.

Discussion:

- I. It would be at a place God would choose (12:5).
 - A. The Canaanites worshiped in various places: “on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree” (12:2).
 1. This is what characterizes worship when men pursue God in their own way: diversity and confusion.
 2. Worship by invitation from God is clear and specific. It is based on revelation. Cf. Jn. 4:22; Acts 17:23).
 - B. Our God is a God of order, not of confusion.
 1. The church at Corinth needed to apply this principle more effectively.
 2. There were many problems: division, immorality, Christians taking advantage of one another, confusion in the Lord’s Supper. Paul writes to bring order founded upon the wisdom of God’s revelation (1 Cor. 1:18-2:16).
 - C. This is the nature of invited worship—God controls it. He chooses not only the place, but governs and oversees all those invited into His presence.
- II. Implied in God’s invitation is the fact that He is a gracious host.
 - A. God’s invitation is not like a summons.
 1. Perhaps you have been summonsed to be on a jury.
 2. Sometimes there are duties that we might prefer to avoid.
 3. Some might look at their relationship to God as something they had just rather avoid.
 - B. But God invites us into His presence after having blessed us and therefore there is rejoicing in His presence (12:7).
 1. In pagan religions worshipers made offerings to their gods as if they were giving to the gods. Food was offered as if the gods needed the worshipers to provide for them. Some religions today act under similar assumptions.

2. Note in Deut. 12:7 that the sacrifices brought before God were used as a banquet, not to feed God, but to feed the worshipers.
3. They rejoiced because God had blessed their undertakings.
4. Worshipers were not trying to appease God, nor were they trying to get into His good graces, nor were they trying to make Him favorable toward them. The invitation implied that He was the giver (Acts 17:25-26).
5. There is an element of thanksgiving among worshipers that are invited!

III. God's invitation to a banquet prepared for His worshipers is a theme throughout Scripture.

- A. Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a wedding feast (Matt. 22:2-10).
 1. Some did not understand the value of the invitation and focused their attention elsewhere (5).
 2. Others reacted by killing the ones who delivered the invitation (6).
 3. But some accepted the invitation (10).
- B. Isaiah had spoken of a lavish banquet prepared by the Lord (25:6-9).
- C. Jesus invited people to come to Him (Matt. 11:28).
- D. The wedding feast imagery is part of the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-12).
- E. Revelation 19:7-9 and 22:17 remind us of the invitation and the wedding feast as part of the culminating plan of God.

IV. The blood of Jesus is the means by which we can enter into the presence of God (Heb. 10:19-24).

- A. We can draw near with confidence.
- B. We can draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.
- C. We should hold fast without wavering.
- D. Let us consider how to stimulate one another.

Conclusion:

1. Will you reject God's gracious invitation to celebrate in His presence?
2. Will you go your own way after other things?
3. Will you join the celebration of God's blessing upon us?