

Exegetical Notes, Deuteronomy 14:1-21

“The Children of God”

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Deuteronomy 14:1-21

Verses 1-2

You are the children of the LORD your God. Do not cut yourselves or shave the front of your heads for the dead, ² for you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.

- The opening statement is an emphatic. You ARE the children of God. The assumption is that this fact changes everything. The children of God behave differently than do the other people of the world. What follows are examples of how God's children act differently because they are God's children.
- First, they do not cut themselves. In ancient times, people cut themselves as an act of worship in certain pagan cults. It is now believed that cutting one's flesh releases endorphins into the body which produce a mild sense of euphoria. Scholars believed that people did this in worship of pagan gods to experience release from emotional pain.
- Second, the children of God do not shave the front of their heads as an act of mourning. In pagan religious cults of the time when someone died, their loved ones shaved the front of their heads to declare their sorrow. The children of God would reject this ritual practice to declare that they were not like the rest of the world.

Verses 3-21

Do not eat any detestable thing. ⁴ These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, ⁵ the deer, the gazelle, the roe deer, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope and the mountain sheep. ⁶ You may eat any animal that has a divided hoof and that chews the cud. ⁷ However, of those that chew the cud or that have a divided hoof you may not eat the camel, the rabbit or the hyrax. Although they chew the cud, they do not have a divided hoof; they are

ceremonially unclean for you.⁸ The pig is also unclean; although it has a divided hoof, it does not chew the cud. You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses.⁹ Of all the creatures living in the water, you may eat any that has fins and scales.¹⁰ But anything that does not have fins and scales you may not eat; for you it is unclean.¹¹ You may eat any clean bird.¹² But these you may not eat: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture,¹³ the red kite, the black kite, any kind of falcon,¹⁴ any kind of raven,¹⁵ the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk,¹⁶ the little owl, the great owl, the white owl,¹⁷ the desert owl, the osprey, the cormorant,¹⁸ the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat.¹⁹ All flying insects are unclean to you; do not eat them.²⁰ But any winged creature that is clean you may eat.²¹ Do not eat anything you find already dead. You may give it to the foreigner residing in any of your towns, and they may eat it, or you may sell it to any other foreigner. But you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk.

- Third, the children of God will show that they are different from the rest of the world by following the dietary rules laid down in the law of Moses. See Leviticus 11 for a full discussion of the dietary laws. It is not important to understand the reasons behind these rules here, though there are good reasons for them. The point is that because they are God's children, the children of God obey God's instruction without question or explanation. That makes them different than the people who are of the world.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Children of God*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)