

Deuteronomy 21

Good morning and thank you again for joining us. Would you please turn in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 21? We're continuing our verse by verse study through the 5th book of the OT, and we'll only be studying chapter 21 in our time together this morning. As you know we have some baptisms at the end of our service today and after that we have our agape feast as well, so this morning will be a little different, but I'm excited to see what the Lord is going to do.

The title of our message this morning is Freed From the Curse.

Before we begin would you bow your heads and your hearts with me in prayer?

LET'S PRAY

Not too long ago I came across a picture that stopped me in my tracks. **SHOW PIC 1**. According to the article, this is a Siberian bear hunting suit from the 1800's. Quite the digs huh?

But as I stared at the picture, another thought came to mind. Tragically this picture describes exactly how some Christians approach studying the OT! **CLOSE PIC 1**

Because we're not bound by the OT law as believers, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't be studying the law. **Galatians 3:24 24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.** The OT shows us how we all fall short of God's standards, and our desperate need for Jesus!

Now, when giving the law, we know that God didn't condone murder, nor did He overlook sexual immorality, polygamy, or other sinful practices. But in His sovereignty, God knew the sinfulness in the hearts of mankind. So God gave guidelines on

atonement for and making sure that people were still treated properly when these sinful practices would creep into the land...

This first section gives instruction on what to do in the case of an unsolved murder.

Let's read verses 1-2

1 "If anyone is found slain, lying in the field in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess, and it is not known who killed him, 2 then your elders and your judges shall go out and measure the distance from the slain man to the surrounding cities.

These verses were based on an important principle that God stated in Numbers 35:33-34. 33 So you shall not pollute the land where you are; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it. 34 Therefore do not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel.' "

Verses 1 and 2 show that the blood of an unsolved, unavenged murder defiles and pollutes the land. So if there was a murder that is unavenged, some kind of cleansing was necessary, so the land wouldn't be defiled. And the process of cleansing the land is what's described in verses 3-9...

3 And it shall be that the elders of the city nearest to the slain man will take a heifer which has not been worked and which has not pulled with a yoke. 4 The elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with flowing water, which is neither plowed nor sown, and they shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley. 5 Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near, for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister to Him and to bless in the name of the LORD; by their word every controversy and every assault shall be settled. 6 And all the elders of that city nearest to

the slain man shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley. 7 Then they shall answer and say, 'Our hands have not shed this blood, nor have our eyes seen it. 8 Provide atonement, O LORD, for Your people Israel, whom You have redeemed, and do not lay innocent blood to the charge of Your people Israel.' And atonement shall be provided on their behalf for the blood. 9 So you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you when you do what is right in the sight of the LORD. So if the perpetrator was never brought to justice, the city closest to the crime scene took responsibility for offering a sacrifice and atoning for the bloodshed.

When Israel followed God's instructions for atonement, (which is the satisfaction of the penalty for sin) God honored His word by taking away their guilt. But the removal of guilt was always based on blood sacrifice, on a substitutionary atonement - looking forward to the work of Jesus on the cross for the entire world.

Now we have to be cautious to not let our eyes gloss over when reading verses like this that don't seem to have much applicability to our culture. Because this entire scene speaks of the grace of God.

See the heifer had never been worked, the ground in the valley had never been tilled, and the elders, judges and priests had done nothing special to merit God's forgiveness for the people! The sacrifice wasn't even made at the sanctuary or offered by a priest. This entire scene is oozing with God's grace!

And it's all pointing to the future sacrifice of Jesus and the gift of salvation! **Ephesians 2:8-9 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.**

Today you and I receive forgiveness of our sins not because of some ritual, but rather because of faith in Jesus Christ.

The next section of scripture governs what the nation was to do when they conquered an enemy, and fancied the female captives
10-13

10 “When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God delivers them into your hand, and you take them captive, 11 and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her and would take her for your wife 12 then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails. 13 She shall put off the clothes of her captivity, remain in your house, and mourn her father and her mother a full month; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. The captive woman had to go through a month-long process to grieve her past. These steps also demonstrated that the captive woman was no longer a citizen of her former nation and her former family; now she was part of the nation of Israel.

So after a month, if a man wanted to marry her, God gave him permission. But what if marriage was no longer an option after this month-long process?

14 And it shall be, if you have no delight in her, then you shall set her free, but you certainly shall not sell her for money; you shall not treat her brutally, because you have humbled her. If after a month the man decided not to marry the captive woman, he had to set her free with dignity.

The woman would still be a part of the nation of Israel, but not under the obligations of marriage to the man. This was an astonishing protection of the rights of a captive woman in ancient times.

The next section deals with firstborn inheritance rights.

15-17

15 “If a man has two wives, one loved and the other unloved, and they have borne him children, both the loved and the unloved, and if the firstborn son is of her who is unloved, 16 then it shall be, on the day he bequeaths his possessions to his sons, that he must not bestow firstborn status on the son of the loved wife in preference to the son of the unloved, the true firstborn. 17 But he shall acknowledge the son of the unloved wife as the firstborn by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his. If you remember from the book of Genesis, the firstborn son was to receive twice as much inheritance as any other son. So, if for example there were three sons, the inheritance would be divided into four parts, with the firstborn receiving two parts, and the other three sons each receiving one part.

God commanded that the inheritance rights of the firstborn son be respected, even if he were the son of the unloved wife.

The next section, God details how to handle the rebellious child who refuses to heed their parents’ instruction.

18 “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, 19 then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. This isn’t describing a small child, or even a young teen - but a son past the age of accountability, who sets himself in determined rebellion against his father and mother.

20 And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.'

21 Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear. A stubborn and rebellious son was to be put on trial before the elders of the city, and if the elders determined he was guilty, he was to be stoned to death.

Notice that the parents couldn't, by themselves carry out the death penalty. They had to bring the son on trial before impartial judges. Now this seems like a harsh punishment, but look at why God commanded this at the end of verse 21- **all Israel shall hear and fear.**

This law was clearly intended to protect the social order of ancient Israel. No society will last long when the young are allowed to make war against the old. The rabbis say throughout their history this law was never put into practice. Apparently, the mere threat was enough to produce the desired results.

It's amazing how things have changed over the years isn't it? In our day and age today, not only are parents looked down upon for spanking, parents are being discouraged from even disciplining their kids.

Parents, if your kids won't obey you, their parents who they can see, how will they ever obey their Heavenly Father who they cannot see? You are setting the pattern and example for obedience.

The rest of chapter 21, verses 22-23 explain one of the reasons the Jews had such a hard time accepting Jesus as God's Son and their Messiah

22 "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God. In the thinking of ancient Israel, there was something worse than being put to death. Worse than dying was to be put to death and to have your corpse left exposed to shame, humiliation, and scavenging animals as your corpse was affixed to a tree.

This gruesome display was thought to be so severe, that it was reserved only for those for which it could be declared: "this one is accursed of God."

Since Jesus hung on a cross, the Jews wondered, how could Jesus be the Son of God – when He's cursed by God?

The curse that Jesus bore was not His own. It was our curse. Jesus became cursed, He became sin, for us! **2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

Jesus not only died in our place; but He also took the place as the accursed of God, being hung on a "tree" in open shame and degradation. Think about this for a moment-Jesus received this curse, which we deserved, so that we can spend eternity in heaven with Him!

Paul expounds on this in **Galatians 3: 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"[fn]), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.**

We are redeemed from the curse of the law by the work of Jesus on the cross for us. We no longer have to fear that God wants to curse us; He wants to bless us, not because of who we are, or what we have done, but because of what Jesus Christ has done on our behalf.

Because Jesus died for our sins, and rose again, we are saved when we, by faith, trust in Him. **Romans 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.**

If you've never made that decision to turn your life over to Jesus, do it now. Just cry out to Him from your heart, recognizing your need for Jesus as your savior.

Accepting Jesus is the very 1st step of obedience to God. And really the 2nd step of obedience is being baptized. **Matt 28:19 Go therefore[fn] and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,**

This morning we have some folks who have freely received God's gift of salvation, and as a declaration for all to see they have announced that Jesus Christ is Lord of their life.

And in obedience to Jesus' command, and in a public affirmation, they are going to be baptized. **WE'RE GOING TO INVITE THE 7-9 and 10-12 CLASSROOMS TO WITNESS AND CELEBRATE THIS EXCITING EVENT WITH US AS A CHURCH BODY.**

The idea of a baptized believer is that they've gone public in declaring that they are committed to Jesus Christ as their Lord and savior.

To be clear baptism isn't a requirement of salvation, but being baptized demonstrates obedience, it shows allegiance, baptism shows our love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Baptism is an outward sign of inward faith, signifying that you've buried all the guilt, all the sin, all the shame of the old life prior to Christ.

What do you do with a dead body-you bury it. And that's why we immerse the body during a baptism. The immersion under water symbolizes the death of our old sinful nature.

And then coming up out of the water, you rise in the newness of life in Jesus as you identify with His resurrection.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

And

Romans 6:4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Do you need to be made new in Christ this morning?

I want to encourage you, even if you haven't signed up to be baptized, we have extra clothes here if the Lord has put it on your heart to be baptized today

In a moment we're going to pray. If you've never trusted the Lord Jesus as your Lord and Savior, now is the time. Sure, maybe you've gone to church a few times or maybe even read your Bible, but you know that's not a relationship.

But Jesus Christ substituted Himself in your place. Jesus died the death we deserved. The death penalty has been satisfied by Jesus Christ, all you need to do is accept the free gift of salvation.

To accept salvation, to know you will spend eternity in heaven it's very simple, you need to trust in your heart that Jesus died for your sins and accept Him as Lord and Savior in your life.

I want to encourage you, even if you haven't signed up to be baptized, we have extra clothes and towels here. Just come forward in a moment and ladies a lady will help you and men a man will help you. We'll get you all the clothes you need, so really you have no excuse to not be baptized. If the Lord is putting in your heart, won't you take that step of obedience today?

Don't leave here today full of regret wondering what might have happened if you obeyed the Lord this morning. That's really a terrible feeling. Just obey God if He's putting it on your heart.