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**What The Bible Teaches About Capital Punishment**  
**Num. 35:9-34**

Our land has become a very violent and cold hearted society that thinks nothing of taking human life, be it by aborting babies in the womb of a mother, killing someone for things as senseless as an initiation rite to a gang, the desire to possess your car or just because you happen to be there.

I could give you statistic after statistic of the numbers of victims each day in America that are murdered but we are all very aware of the staggering numbers already.

The common answer to solveing the problem of crime is more policemen on the streets but that is as foolish as saying that the way to stop cavities is to put more dentist in business.

The problem is not the presence of the police in small numbers but the lack of and failure to execute justice regarding the ones who break the law, to fit their crime.

The problem of evil starts at the top with our legislators, the judicial system and the executive branch of our authorities be they federal, state or local government.

\* When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan. Prov. 29:2

\* Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Isa 5:20

\* No one calls for justice, nor does any plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies; they conceive evil and bring forth iniquity. Isa 59:4

\* All that has to occur for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing. (Edman blake)

There are three things that are absolutely essential for law and order to be present which ensure a safe and orderly society.

1. A recognized authority.
2. A recognized submission.
3. A recognized consequence.

If you circumvent, compromise or fail to execute consistent consequences, you destroy authority and encourage rebellion and self will!

This applies to all forms of crime but how much more to the crime of murder in the land!

This morning we want to look at what the bible has to say on the crime of murder as we look at God's provisions of refuge cities. Num. 35:9-34

There are three things that our text provides for us.

- I. The provisions for the case of murder. vs. 9-15
- II. The particular cases involving murder. vs. 16-28
- III. The principles for the cases of murder. vs. 29-34

**I. The provisions for the cases of murder. vs. 9-15**

A. The provision was given by God Himself not Moses. vs. 9-10

1. The phrase "The Lord spoke to Moses" is found throughout the Pentateuch as well as the entire bible showing the authority of the revelation and insspiration of the Scriptures.

\* The phrase appears 52x's in the book of Numbers!

2. The provision was for the time after they crossed over the Jordan and occupied the land. vs. 10

- B.** The purpose is stated by God. vs. 11-12
1. The cities of refuge were in order that the person who killed someone accidentally could flee there for safety. vs. 11
  2. The cities were a temporary sanction in two ways. vs. 12
    - a. To protect the slayer from the avenger of blood who had the duty and right to pursue and kill the slayer.
    - b. To ensure a legal and just trial for the accused.
- C.** The particular number of cities is decided by God. vs. 13-15
1. The total number is six. vs. 13
  2. The geographical location was three on the east side of the Jordan and three on the west side of the Jordan in Canaan. vs. 14
  3. The cities were for the children of Israel, the stranger and for the sojourner among them, if they killed a person accidentally. vs. 15

*These are the provisions for the cases of murder!*

## **II. The particular cases involving murder. vs. 16-28**

- A.** The case of murder was punishable by death. vs. 16-18
1. If he strikes the individual with an iron implement and he die. vs. 16
  2. If he strike the individual with a stone in his hand and he die. vs. 17
  3. If he strike the individual with a wooden hand weapon and he die. vs. 18

- B.** The one to execute the capital punishment was to be the avenger of blood. vs. 19, 21d
1. The elders would turn him over to the avenger of blood and they were warned of not pitying the guilty person. Deut. 19:11-13
  2. The elders of the nearest city to the body of the deceased would be required to take an oath of their lack of knowledge about the guilty party, if there was no person caught, and then purify the crime by the ashes of the red heifer. Deut. 21:1-9
- C.** The case of premeditated murder was punishable by death. vs. 20-21
1. If he pushes the individual out of hatred, while lying in wait and he dies. vs. 20
  2. If he in enmity strikes the individual with his hand and dies. vs. 21
- D.** The case of unintentional manslaughter was to be tried and judged by the evidence. vs. 22-25
1. The particulars to qualify for unintentional manslaughter are clearly stated. vs. 22-23
  2. The persons judging the case would consider, examine and bring a verdict based on the body of evidence. vs. 24
  3. The persons judging the case after finding the person innocent of any premeditated or intentional wrong doing to murder the individual would not allow the avenger of blood to kill him in revenge but would deliver the acquitted person to the city of refuge from which he sought refuge from and he would have to remain there till the death of the High Priest, at which time he or she was free to return home. vs. 25

- E.** The case of unintentional manslaughter had limited protection for the acquitted person. vs. 26-28
1. The individual was not protected outside the walls of the city of refuge to which he was confined to and if he went out and was slain by the avenger of blood it would be just and legal. vs. 26-27  
\* All the factors were to detour people from committing murder!
  2. The person in refuge was aware of the conditions of the law and the chances he took going outside the city. vs. 28  
\* The interesting parallel is that we are all guilty before God and having fled for refuge to Jesus who is our High Priest, we must abide permanently for He will never die again!

*These are the particular cases involving murder!*

**III. The principles for the cases of murder. vs. 29-34**

- A.** The statutes were absolute and binding. vs. 29
1. For all their generations.
  2. For all their dwelling places.
- B.** The sentence of death required two witnesses. vs. 30
1. The witness of one was to tempt for one who desired vengeance.
  2. The witness of two established a matter. Deut. 17:6, 19:15
- C.** The setting of a man free for money was not permitted. vs. 31-32

1. The murderer could not be ransomed from his or her guilt but they were to be put to death. vs. 31
  2. The person in refuge could not be ransomed in order to be set free prior to the death of the High Priest. vs. 32
- D.** The Scriptural reasons for capital punishment. vs. 33-34
1. The shedding of a persons blood defiled the land. vs. 33a-b
  2. The defilement of the land by blood can not be atoned, except by the blood of the guilty party. vs. 33c-e  
\* The reason was given to Noah after the flood. Gen. 9:6
  3. The Lord dwelt in the midst of the children of Israel. vs. 34
    - a. He was a witness to the murders.
    - b. He was a witness to their execution of justice or the failure of it.  
\* The 6th commandment "You shall not kill" regards murder not capital punishment!
- E.** The New Testament perspective regarding capital punishment.
1. The words of Jesus are important.
    - a. Jesus said that man is not to fear the who can kill the body and afterwards have no power over the soul and spirit of man.
      - 1) Jesus could of been referring to man in general who would kill another.
      - 2) Jesus could of been referring to the governmental powers at hand who had power to execute capital punishment.
    - b. Jesus did not contest or object to the killing of some Galileans by Pilate who was in

- authority but declared, "Do you suppose they were worst sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such a thing? I say to you, no; but unless you repent you will likewise perish." Lk. 13:1-3
- c. Jesus warned the disciples in a prophetic way of physical persecution that would result in death, as capital punishment for being a Christian. Math. 24:9
  - d. Jesus Himself was put to death by the authorities of the land, both religious and civil being found innocent of any crime. Jn. 18:38
2. Paul's writings are also important.
- a. Paul acknowledged the ruling authorities of the land as those ordained by God which the believer is to be subject to even though they are not Christian. Rom. 13:1-7  
\* The only reason for disobeying the authorities is when they very clearly violated God's word as a command to the believer. Acts 5:29
  - b. Paul points out that the government in authority *does not bear the sword in vain*; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. vs. 4  
\* Yet Paul and the others were aware that injustices, abuses and horrible crimes were committed by the ruling powers of Rome because they are fallen and in darkness!
  - c. Peter's words are in accord with Paul focusing on the believers obedience to the ruling authorities as a witness of Christ and that in fact if we do suffer being innocent it

is commendable before God, using Christ as our example. 1Pet. 2:13-25  
\* Those who suffer according to the will of God are to commit their souls to Him in doing good, as a faithful Creator. 1Pet. 4:19

*These are the principles for the cases of murder!*

### Conclusion

Think about what the bible has taught us this morning about murder, the way it is to be handled and how it produced a safe and orderly society. Now think of what our laws teach today, how we handle murders and the type of society it has produced!

\* Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Eccl. 8:11

- I. The provisions for the case of murder have the innocent in mind. vs. 9-15
- II. The particular cases involving murder are clearly stated. vs. 16-28
- III. The principles for the cases of murder are for today. vs. 29-34