



Deuteronomy 20

(2019)

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Deuteronomy 20.

(A brief overview of the main topics).

INTRODUCTION: this is a continuation of the previous chapter; Israel is soon to cross over the River Jordan and enter into the Promised Land. The primary focus of all the following chapters is upon Moses re-telling to the new generation about to cross the River Jordan all the covenant laws the LORD originally gave to Israel at Mount Sinai so that the new generation would renew the covenant with the LORD before they enter the Promised Land. The final chapter finishes with the LORD burying Moses and Joshua being ready to lead Israel over the River Jordan and into the Promised Land (see also the introduction to chapter one).

NOTE: for information of people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

DEUTERONOMY 20 (ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION)

- **Deuteronomy 20:1-20** “When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.² And when you draw near to the battle, the priest shall come forward and speak to the people³ and shall say to them, ‘Hear, O Israel, today you are drawing near for battle against your enemies: let not your heart faint. Do not fear or panic or be in dread of them,⁴ for the LORD your God is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.’⁵ Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying, ‘Is there any man who has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it.’⁶ And is there any man who has planted a vineyard and has not enjoyed its fruit? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man enjoy its fruit.’⁷ And is there any man who has betrothed a wife and has not taken her? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man take her.’⁸ And the officers shall speak further to the people, and say, ‘Is there any man who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go back to his house, lest he make the heart of his fellows melt like his own.’⁹ And when the officers have finished speaking to the people, then commanders shall be appointed at the head of the people.¹⁰ “When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it.¹¹ And if it responds to you peaceably and it opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall do forced labor for you and shall serve you.¹² But if it makes no peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it.¹³ And when the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall put all its males to the sword,¹⁴ but the women and the little ones, the livestock, and everything else in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as plunder for yourselves. And you shall enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the LORD your God has given you.¹⁵ Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not cities of the nations here.¹⁶ But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes,¹⁷ but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the LORD your God has commanded,¹⁸ that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God.¹⁹ “When you besiege a city for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them. You may eat from them, but you shall not cut them down. Are the trees in the field human, that they should be besieged by you?²⁰ Only the trees that you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, that you may build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you, until it falls.

Encouragement for when Israel goes into battle

When Israel went out to war against their enemies and see horses and chariots and an army larger than their own, they were not to be afraid because the LORD who brought them up from Egypt was with them. When they drew near to battle, the priest was to go forward and say: “Hear, O

Israel, today you are drawing near for battle against your enemies, do not let your heart be faint, do not fear or panic or be in dread of the enemy, it is the LORD your God who goes with Israel to fight for you against your enemies, to give Israel the victory.”

After the Priest, spoke the officers would say:

- Is there any man who has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go back to his house, lest he dies in the battle and another man dedicates it.
- Is there any man who has planted a vineyard and has not enjoyed its fruit? Let him go back to his house, lest he dies in the battle and another man enjoys its fruit.
- Is there any man who has betrothed a wife and has not taken her? Let him go back to his house, lest he dies in the battle and another man takes her.
- Is there any man who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go back to his house, lest he make the heart of his fellow's melt like his own.

When the officers finished speaking to the people, then commanders would be appointed at the head of the people.

Laws for cities that were not nations the LORD was giving Israel

Israel was to do the following to all the cities that are very far from them, which were not cities of the nations in the Promised Land (v15). When Israel came near to a city outside the Promised Land to fight against it they were to offer terms of peace to it, if the city responded to Israel peaceably, then all the people in it were to do forced labour for Israel and serve them, but if it did not make peace with Israel and made war with them Israel was to besiege the city. When the LORD gives that land into Israel's hand, they were to put all its males to the sword, but the women and the little ones they could let live. The livestock and everything else in the city Israel could take as plunder and enjoy the spoil of their enemies that the LORD their God had given them. These were the rules for all the cities that are very far from the Promised Land and are cities of the nations in it.

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Laws for the cities the LORD is giving Israel for an Inheritance

Israel was to leave nothing that breaths alive in the cities that were in the Promised Land that the LORD was giving them everything was to be devoted to complete destruction.

The following six nations:

1. The Hittites.
2. The Amorites.
3. The Canaanites.
4. The Perizzites.
5. The Hivites.
6. The Jebusites.

Were to be devoted to complete destruction they were to be completely destroyed, so they could not teach Israel to do the abominable things that they have done for their gods and cause Israel to sin against the LORD.

When Israel besieged a city for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, they were not to cut down its fruit trees by wielding an axe against them because these trees produced food for them to eat, but they could cut down the trees they knew did not produce food and use them for building siegeworks against the city that makes war with them until it falls.

NOTICE: Moses makes a humorous comment, "Are the fruit trees in the field human, that they should be besieged by you?" (v19).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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