



Deuteronomy 21

(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 21.

(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 21 (ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION)

- **Deuteronomy 21:1-23** “If in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess someone is found slain, lying in the open country, and it is not known who killed him,² then your elders and your judges shall come out, and they shall measure the distance to the surrounding cities.³ And the elders of the city that is nearest to the slain man shall take a heifer that has never been worked and that has not pulled in a yoke.⁴ And the elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with running water, which is neither plowed nor sown, and shall break the heifer’s neck there in the valley.⁵ Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come forward, for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister to him and to bless in the name of the LORD, and by their word every dispute 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 and they shall testify, ‘Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it shed.’⁸ Accept atonement, O LORD, for your people Israel, whom you have redeemed, and do not set the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of your people Israel, so that their blood guilt be atoned for.’⁹ So you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from your midst, when you do what is right in the sight of the LORD.¹⁰ “When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God gives them into your hand and you take them captive,¹¹ and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and you desire to take her to be your wife,¹² and you bring her home to your house, she shall shave her head and pare her nails.¹³ And she shall take off the clothes in which she was captured and shall remain in your house and lament 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.¹⁴ But if you no longer delight in her, you shall let her go where she wants. But you shall not sell her for money, nor shall you treat her as a slave, since you have humiliated her.¹⁵ “If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other unloved, and both the loved and the unloved have borne him children, and if the firstborn son belongs to the unloved,¹⁶ then on the day when he assigns his possessions as an inheritance to his sons, he may not treat the son of the loved as the firstborn in preference to the son of the unloved, who is the firstborn,¹⁷ but he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the firstfruits of his strength. The right of the firstborn is his.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, though they discipline him, will not listen to them,¹⁹ then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives,²⁰ and they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’²¹ Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear.²² “And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree,²³ his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.

If the people of Israel found someone slain in the open country of the Promised Land and it is not known who killed him. Then the elders and the judges were to go out and measure the distance to the surrounding cities. The elders of the city that was nearest to the slain man were to take a heifer that had never been worked or pulled a yoke and take the heifer down to a valley with running water that had not been plowed or sown. In that valley the elders were to break the heifer's neck. Then all the elders of the city nearest to the slain man were to stand before the LORD (meaning before the Levitical priests because the LORD had chosen them to settle every dispute by their word) and wash their hands over the heifer that had been killed to testify that the people of that city did not shed the blood and that they did not see it shed.

Then the Levites were to say to the LORD, "Accept atonement, O LORD, for your people Israel, whom you have redeemed, and do not set the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of your people Israel so that their blood guilt is atoned for. When Israel did what is right in the sight of the LORD they would purge the guilt of innocent blood from their midst, if they kept these rules the bloodshed in their city and the guilt associated with it would be atoned for and the city would be purged of the guilt of innocent blood from among Israel.

Laws for taking a wife from Israel's defeated enemy

When Israel went to war against their enemies and Israel takes them captive, if the men see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire to take her to be their wife the man was to bring her home to his house and the woman was to shave her head and pare her nails and take off the clothes in which she was captured. She was to remain in the man's house and lament her father and her mother a full month and after that the man could go in to her and be her husband and she would be his wife. If the man no longer delighted in the woman, he was to let her go where she wants, he was not to sell the woman for money or treat her as a slave, since he had humiliated her.

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Laws for a man with two wives

If a man had two wives and one was loved and the other was not and if both the loved wife and the unloved wife have borne the man children and the firstborn son belongs to the wife that is unloved, then on the day the husband assigns his possessions as an inheritance to his sons he was not to treat the son of the loved wife as the firstborn and give her son preference over the firstborn. He was to give preference to the son of the unloved wife whose child was the firstborn.

The husband was to acknowledge the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, because the firstborn is the first-fruits of the man's strength and the right of the firstborn belongs to the child that is firstborn.

Laws for a stubborn and rebellious son

If a man had a stubborn and rebellious son who would not obey his father or his mother even though they have disciplined him, then his father and his mother were to take the rebellious son to the elders of his city and tell the elders that their son is stubborn, rebellious a glutton and a drunkard and will not obey their voice, then all the men of the city were to stone the rebellious son to death with stones.

Punishment for capital crimes

If a man had committed a crime punishable by death he was to be put to death by hanging him on a tree, the dead man's body was not to remain all night on the tree, he was to be buried the same day because God curses any man that is hanged.

CONCLUSION

If Israel kept these rules the land would be purged of the evil from among them and all Israel would hear and fear and from this fear be motivated to obey the laws of God. Keeping these rules would stop the Promised Land from being defiled before the LORD.

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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