

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 17.9%

Weekly Readings will cover: Deuteronomy 15 through Deuteronomy 21

Sunday: Deuteronomy 15

Monday: Deuteronomy 16

Tuesday: Deuteronomy 17

Wednesday: Deuteronomy 18

Thursday: Deuteronomy 19

Friday: Deuteronomy 20

Saturday: Deuteronomy 21

Current # of email addresses in the group: 588

Hopefully, your week has gone well and your study of Deuteronomy has been great as well. We are now nearing the midpoint of the book. Hope your next week goes well.

Website archive location for audio files & PDFs:

<https://www.ucg.org/congregations/san-francisco-bay-area-ca/posts/audio-links-re-three-year-chronological-deep-dive-reading-program-circa-2022-2025-903711>

3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 32

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

Day 197 - SUNDAY: July 2nd

Deuteronomy 15

Daily Deep Dive:

As we very often do, I would like to first use the UCG reading plan to begin this chapter: "The New King James Version does not provide the best translation of verse 4, as it could be read to say that the law regarding the year of release would sometimes not be in effect because of periods when no one was poor. Perhaps it should read, "...that there be no poor among you," meaning this law would help prevent extreme poverty by preventing debts being exacted from those unable to fully repay them. The Living Bible translates the verse as, "No one will become poor because of this"—indicating that the year of release would not impoverish lenders. And the Revised Standard Version

renders verses 4-5 this way: "But there will be no poor among you...if only you will obey the voice of the Lord your God...."

Although there should have been no poverty within the nation of Israel, since God promised to bless everyone among His people (Deuteronomy 15:4)—which will be the case throughout the whole world during the future millennial reign of Christ (Micah 4:4)—God's promise to the Israelites was conditional upon their obedience (Deuteronomy 15:5). And since He knew the kind of people they would be (compare Deuteronomy 5:29), He also knew that there would be poverty (Deuteronomy 15:11; compare Matthew 26:11). Therefore, He devised a system to deal with the poor in a merciful and compassionate way unlike any social system known in this world today.

At the end of every seven years, a total release of all debts had to be granted (Deuteronomy 15:1). If there is any modern parallel at all, it is that of declaring bankruptcy—except that, in ancient Israel, the seven-year release was mandatory, and it did not matter whether creditor or debtor wanted such a release or not. Further, this procedure also required that a poor Hebrew person, who had "sold" himself to his creditor to pay off his debts, had to be released as well. But more than that, since the poor Hebrew servant had diligently worked for his master, he was to be given a generous bonus on his departure (verses 12-15, 18) to enable him to make a new start. The servant was permitted, however, to continue working for his master if he so wished (verses 16-17), yet *without* being subject to a continued obligation for repayment of prior debts. In all of this, especially in recalling Israel's deliverance from Egypt, God stresses that His way is the way of liberation and freedom." [END]

Verse 3 – Part of what should have drawn the world to want to join and become a part of the nation of Israel were the wonderful laws and ways of conducting affairs among the people that were just and fair. People

didn't get all these benefits if they didn't join the nation and become obedient in following God. This release of debts was part of the system that you only received by becoming a part of this nation and being obedient to God's laws.

Verse 6 – God wants all of us to learn to live within the blessings that He has given us. Debt is not something that God wanted for His nation or His people.

Verse 8 – Notice how God expects those who have their needs covered to be toward those who are struggling. Notice it says to “open wide” your hand. This is a picture of giving completely and without reservation. Then it uses the Hebrew literary design of using the same word “lend” two times. The Hebrew says “lend lend” which is translated with the added emphasis of “willingly lend” (NKJV). When God inspires this added emphasis, it should make us stop and consider the importance of the principle He wants us to learn.

Verse 9 – In our evil human nature, it could be easy to say to ourselves, I know I won't see any of this money I lend my poor brother back, because the year of release is almost here and I'll have to simply forgive the debt at that time, so I won't give to him at all. God commanded in verse 8 that we should be generous and quick to help, so this would violate God's clear command. God understood this would be a tempting thought for us but warns against this kind of thinking. God is the giver of all good gifts (compare James 1:17) and He is also able to make abundant blessings pour out in our lives (compare 2 Corinthians 9:8). We should do what is right and what pleases our great God, even if we can't see how it's beneficial for us. Let God worry about the details. If we have the capacity to do good, we should do it (compare Galatians 6:10). We see in the next verse the promise from God that He will bless us for doing right.

Verse 11 – Jesus Christ, maybe thinking of this verse, says in John 12:8, “For the poor you have with you always”. There will always be those who struggle and have financial needs. As we have the opportunity and blessings to share, we should.

Verse 14 – This is another verse with the Hebrew repeated word pattern to add emphasis. After someone had served for their six years and had fulfilled their time constraint, the master of that person was to “furnish him liberally”. The Hebrew word here that is repeated twice means “to adorn with a neck ornament” (BDB). It figuratively means “to fit out with supplies” (Strongs). God inspired this to be used twice in a row to add the level and the certainty that this must be done. They were to be generous and ensure this command was followed fully.

Verse 15 – When Israel left Egypt, God created a situation where they “plundered” the Egyptians and went out with great wealth. God expected the people to remember this and be generous to someone who had served them for these six years.

Verse 17 – In Exodus 21:6, we are given the added detail that this was done before a “the judges”. Gill’s commentary states: “and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; or with a needle, as the Targum of Jonathan, which also says it was the right ear; and so Jarchi; and the upper part of it, as says Maimonides, who likewise observes, that that with which it is bored must be of metal; and moreover, that it is the master himself that must do it, and not his son, nor his messenger, nor a messenger of the sanhedrim (m): the ear is an hieroglyphic of obedience, and the boring of it through to the doorpost denotes the strict and close obedience of such a servant to his master, and how he is, and ought to be, addicted to his service, and be constantly employed in it, and never stir from it, nor so much as go over the threshold of his master's house.” [END]

Verse 18 – The JFB commentary states: “that is, he is entitled to double wages because his service was more advantageous to you, being both without wages and for a length of time, whereas hired servants were engaged yearly (Lev 25:53), or at most for three years (Isa 16:14).”

Verse 20 – The John Gill commentary states: “Which, if understood of male firstlings, as in connection with the preceding verse, only priests might eat of them, being devoted to the Lord; so Jarchi says, to the priest he speaks; but if this respects the Israelites in common, then they must be understood either of female firstlings or second firstlings, which the people voluntarily separated and which they were not to eat in their own houses:” [END]

Day 198 - MONDAY: July 3rd

Deuteronomy 16

Daily Deep Dive:

Here is the UCG reading plan for this chapter: “Here, some of God’s seven annual festivals are listed and reviewed. The sacrifices that God later added to accompany these feasts are no longer in effect. The festivals themselves, however, are still to be observed. Following the Passover, God commanded that the Israelites were not to eat leavened bread for seven days, but were to instead eat unleavened bread during that time (verses 3, 8). No leaven was to be seen among them in all their territory for those seven days (verse 4)—the Days of Unleavened Bread. Seven weeks later, the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, was to be kept (verse 9). Next would be the Feast of Trumpets followed by the Day of Atonement, but neither are mentioned here—nor is the Last Great Day. However, the Feast of Tabernacles is specifically reviewed (verses 13-15). This does not mean that Trumpets, Atonement and the Last Great Day are no longer holy. Rather, God is listing here only the three seasons of His annual festivals, as can be seen in verse 16. The first season, early spring, includes Passover and Unleavened Bread; the next season, late spring approaching summer, refers to Pentecost, and

the third season, late summer and fall, includes Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles and the Last Great Day (these feasts are all to be kept within a period of less than a month).

As part of the instructions for keeping His festivals, God also commanded that we come before Him with an offering during each of the three festival seasons (verse 16). Generally, the Israelites made three trips in order to worship together in the three festival seasons. Many of the offerings were produce or animals, so it may have been practical for families to turn over their offerings as soon as they arrived at the place of worship. However, since offerings today are usually in the form of money (checks, cash, etc.), and since God does command that we are not to “appear before Him” empty-handed, the Church of God in modern times has instituted a tradition of taking up offerings on each Holy Day, the days on which God specifically commands us to appear before Him in assembly for worship services. Why did God specify only the males? It was assumed that each family was headed by a man, and the man presented the family’s offering. Even today, there is often just one offering from each family—though many parents encourage their children to each give a small amount in order to teach them the habit of giving to God. Finally, it should be mentioned that God does not set any amount for us to give except that it be “according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you” (verse 17). Of course, this cannot mean that we are to put a “price tag” on all that God has given us and try to pay Him that—for we could never in a million lifetimes pay that much. Rather, it must refer to the clause in the first part of the same verse, that we are to give as we are able—or, more to the point, as God has enabled us.

In this section of Deuteronomy, Moses explains how justice is to be administered—and who is to do so. He begins by explaining that judges and officers are to be appointed in every city. If a matter proved too difficult at this level, it was to be taken to the place of God's tabernacle,

to "the priests, the Levites, and to the judge there in those days"—who, together, constituted a sort of "supreme court," whose decisions were binding (Deuteronomy 17:9-11). However, it was not, like the U.S. Supreme Court, a court of appeals wherein either side in a dispute could ask that the matter be judged again—for only the judges at the lower level could determine whether the case needed to come before the higher authorities. Later, the chief seat of judgment on the human level will be occupied by a king. None of these judges are to pervert justice by accepting bribes or showing partiality to anyone (Deuteronomy 16:18-20)." [END]

Verse 19 – Imagine for a moment a world where politicians, companies, CEOs, leaders, safety and oversight boards/members did not take any money from others in order to influence their thoughts, decisions, and opinions. God understood that people don't make the right decisions once money has been given to them by others. This will not happen anymore in God's Kingdom.

Verse 21 – Barnes Notes on the Bible states: "A grove ... - Render, Thou shalt not plant for thee any tree as an idol: literally as an Asherah," "i. e." an image of Astarte or Ashtaroth, the Phoenician goddess (compare Deuteronomy 7:5 note, Deuteronomy 7:13 note). The word is rendered "grove" by the King James Version also in Deuteronomy 7:5; Deuteronomy 12:3; Exodus 34:13; Judges 6:25, but cannot be maintained, for the word is connected with various verbs which are quite inapplicable to a grove. The wooden idol in question was the stem of a tree, stripped of its boughs, set upright in the ground, and rudely carved with emblems." [END]

Verse 22 – JFB commentary states: "Neither shalt thou set thee up any image—erroneously rendered so for "pillar"; pillars of various kinds, and materials of wood or stone were erected in the neighborhood of altars. Sometimes they were conical or oblong, at other times they

served as pedestals for the statues of idols. A superstitious reverence was attached to them, and hence they were forbidden.” [END]

Day 199 - TUESDAY: July 4th

Deuteronomy 17

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Moses continues by stating the criminality of idolatry and describing right and just proceedings regarding the execution of its perpetrators—through stoning (verse 21-17:7). To ensure that an allegation of idolatry could be substantiated, the matter had to be diligently looked into, and two or three witnesses had to be found confirming the sin. If only one person saw and reported the transgression, the perpetrator could not be killed. Furthermore, the witnesses who reported the transgression had to be the first to cast the stones (verses 1-7). This procedure for a carnal nation was to ensure that the stoned person was in fact guilty of the alleged crime, and that such evil conduct would not be repeated. Indeed, the same principles had to be applied for *any* capital offense (compare Numbers 35:30). Moreover, no conviction of *any* crime, whether worthy of death or not, could be established without the testimony of at least two witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15).

After explaining the role of the appointed judges and the people's responsibility to heed them, God moves on to the matter of human kingship. At this time, God was Israel's King (Exodus 15:18; Numbers 23:21). But knowing human nature, He already foresaw and knew that Israel would eventually ask for a human king as in other nations, although this request would constitute a rejection of God's direct rule and therefore be sinful (1 Samuel 8:7; 1 Samuel 12:19). Nevertheless, God would give them a human king, as He had earlier prophesied that He would (compare Genesis 17:16; Genesis 49:10). But Israel's future king was not to be just like other rulers of the day. For, in placing certain restrictions and requirements on Israel's king, God essentially

decreed that the nation would be a limited constitutional monarchy under His own supreme theocracy. "These regulations limited the power and splendor of the future king. He would not be dependent on military power and riches. He was exhorted not to entangle the nation in political alliances that would expose Israel to pagan worship. Instead, he was exhorted to guide the nation into obedience to God's laws" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 17:15-17). In requiring the king to read and govern according to God's law, "the true king of Israel would be bound to God's instructions. He would not be a tyrant, but a king who ruled in accordance with God's revealed will" (note on Deuteronomy 17:18). Sadly, few Israelite kings would fulfill their responsibilities in these regards.

But the instructions here can serve as a lesson for us. True Christians, the saints of God serving in His spiritual administration of life, do not administer civil judgment over the governments of this world (see 2 Corinthians 3:6-7). But they *are* to eventually serve as kings in the coming Kingdom of God, which will soon reign over the entire earth (Revelation 5:10; Revelation 20:4, Revelation 29:6; Revelation 2:26-28). Daniel 7:18 says that "the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever." And verse 22 reveals, "Judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (KJV). Psalm 149 elaborates: "Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud on their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute on them the written judgment—this honor have all His saints" (verses 5-9). So even though Christians are not to judge in the governments of the world today, they will, when glorified as immortal kings, both judge and carry out judgment on the nations according to the "written judgment." Therefore, if the kings of Israel had a responsibility to read and

meditate upon the Book of the Law, Christians, as future kings in God's Kingdom, have an even greater responsibility to do so—yet by studying not only the civil law of Israel, but the full exposition of God's judgments as found throughout the entire Bible. Glorified Christians will, of course, rule with great mercy—just as God's great mercy has been shown to *them* throughout *their* human lives.” [END]

Verse 12 – Notice how seriously God takes us following those that He places in authority. In Romans 13:1-2 it states: “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.”

God doesn't tolerate people rejecting the authority that He either directly puts in place or allows. This kind of mindset was to be eliminated and eradicated from the nation. We see this rejection of authority all around us. People always have justification for why it's okay for them to rebel (they weren't treated right, the leader did something wrong, etc...), but God only gives us the out when authority tries to force us to not obey God (compare Acts 5:29). This is a sin we should strive to avoid in our lives.

Verse 17 – The JFB commentary states: “There were the strongest reasons for recording an express prohibition on this point, founded on the practice of neighboring countries in which polygamy prevailed, and whose kings had numerous harems; besides, the monarch of Israel was to be absolutely independent of the people and had nothing but the divine law to restrain his passions. The mischievous effects resulting from the breach of this condition were exemplified in the history of Solomon and other princes, who, by trampling on the restrictive law, corrupted themselves as well as the nation.” [END]

Verse 18 – Not only was a king to read, know and understand the law, but God also required that this king was to write “this law” down himself. This would have taken time and effort and greatly increased the retention of these laws. I wonder how many of the kings of Israel ever did this as we see many of God’s laws were either never practiced or rarely practiced.

Verse 20 – In zeal and sincerity, sometimes someone can go further than God requires in His law. God wants us to obey exactly as He instructs. Not more, not less, not to the right, or to the left, not to add to or take away, but exactly as He commands.

How nice it would be to live in a society where those in leadership positions and authority didn’t elevate themselves above others. Human nature has done this since the beginning and certainly since Nimrod. It will not be so in God’s Kingdom!

Day 200 - WEDNESDAY: July 5th

Deuteronomy 18

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Israel is again cautioned against learning "to follow the abominations" of the people living in the land, including the practices of witchcraft, sorcery or divination (verses 9-14). In contrast to pagan soothsayers, Moses prophesies that God would eventually raise up a Prophet like himself, referring to the coming of Jesus Christ (verses Deuteronomy 18:15-19; see John 1:45; Acts 3:22-23). He makes clear that just as the words from God that he proclaimed were to be obeyed, so it would be with this future Prophet. And indeed, like Moses, Jesus came as an Announcer of God's law and as a Mediator of a covenant based on that law. In short, Christ's words were to be followed—whereas others who would falsely *claim* to be prophets would have to be rejected (Deuteronomy 18:20).

Christ would later confirm that many *false* prophets would come to *deceive* the many (compare Matthew 24:4-5, 11). Sadly, this problem has always persisted among God's people (2 Peter 2:1-3). Moses gives a clue as to how to determine whether a person is a prophet of God or not: "When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously" (Deuteronomy 18:22). But one word of caution here: Sometimes, false prophets will foretell the future accurately (see Deuteronomy 13:1-5)—and God Himself may even be behind it (see Numbers 22:20, Numbers 22:38; Numbers 23:12). Yet even if someone relays many correct prophecies, the verse quoted above basically tells us that if there is just one instance where he claims that God has, apart from Scripture, specially and directly communicated to his mind regarding some event that will happen and the event does not come to pass as he proclaimed it would, that alone would make him a false prophet—that is, unless the proclamation is a warning of divine punishment and those to whom it is directed repent, as all such prophecies are contingent upon whether the recipients repent or not (compare Jeremiah 18:6-8; Jonah 3:1-10). And, of course, as explained in the highlights for Deuteronomy 13, someone's fulfilled prophecies are to be measured against his teachings and deeds. We are never to follow anyone's anti-biblical teachings or evil practices." [END]

Verse 8 – The John Gill commentary states: “for though the priests and Levites had no inheritance divided to them in the land, yet they might buy houses and fields, and leave them to their children, and this may be called their patrimony; now it was not reasonable that they should wholly live upon this, or spend what their fathers left them; but, besides the income of that, were to have their part and portion with their brethren in the sacrifices of the sanctuary.” [END]

Day 201 - THURSDAY: July 6th

Deuteronomy 19

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Moses commands Israel to set aside three cities of refuge in the land west of the Jordan just as three cities had already been set aside in the land east of the Jordan for any manslayer—one who killed another person accidentally (see Numbers 35:9-29; Deuteronomy 4:41-43). Such a person could flee to any of these cities to escape a possible execution by an avenger of blood (a close relative of the victim), but he had to stay there until the high priest died (Deuteronomy 19:1-13; Numbers 35:25). Further, as Numbers 35:12 shows, the cities of refuge were established so that the manslayer could flee there in order to be tried fairly.

Several points should be considered here:

The perpetrator was only saved from death if he was a "manslayer," that is, if the death of the victim was caused accidentally (compare Numbers 35:15). Several examples are given throughout scripture to illustrate accidental conduct (which might not be the same as man's understanding of an "accident.") This would include unintentional or ignorant or unknowing conduct (Deuteronomy 19:4; compare margin in King James Version)—for example, the perpetrator kills a person by throwing a stone without *knowing* that the victim is there (compare Numbers 35:23). It would also include unintentional conduct—the perpetrator kills a person without *wanting* to do it (compare Deuteronomy 19:5; Numbers 35:22). On the other hand, if the perpetrator *hated* the victim in the past, he had to be executed (Deuteronomy 19:4, 6, 11; Numbers 35:20-21). Also, if he struck the victim *intentionally* with a stone, an iron implement, or a wooden hand weapon, even though he might *not* have *hated* the victim (Numbers 35:16-18), he was still considered deserving of death.

In addition, the accidental manslayer was not considered innocent, as his conduct, albeit unintentional or unknowing, led to the death of a person. The real sin here appears to be negligence because, with proper precautions, it would seem that such a death could have been avoided. The manslayer still had to flee to a city of refuge and stay there until the high priest died. If he left the city before the death of the high priest, the avenger of blood was permitted to kill him. Thus, the awareness that careless actions could lead to an extended period of confinement within a city would tend to make people more careful.

A manslayer would undoubtedly have been given refuge in any of the cities of refuge. However, he would most likely flee to the respective city assigned to the territory in which he happened to be, since it would almost always be the closest one and the most accessible. This is because each city of refuge was located in the center of its respective territory—and, within that territory, roads (with bridges and signs) were built that led to that city (Deuteronomy 19:2-4).

Moses next cautions the people not to remove their neighbor's landmarks (Deuteronomy 19:14). This was not a simple matter of moving a rock. Landmarks were stones that marked property boundaries. This law prohibited manipulating boundaries so as to rob someone of part of his property—his rightful inheritance. Moses next warned against testifying as a false witness (verses 16-17). If a witness was found to have brought up a false accusation, "then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother...life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (verses 18-21)—that is, punishment to fit the *intended* harm. Moreover, the purpose for severe penalties is also given here—to serve as a deterrent to others against committing similar crimes (verse 20). And when rightly administered, such laws do act as a deterrent.

Under the New Testament dispensation, a Christian is not to kill or harm anyone (Romans 13:9-10) or seek vengeance in any manner (Matthew 5:38-39; Romans 12:19). This does not mean we must desist from righting a wrong, such as taking disciplinary action or requiring restitution.” [END]

I don't have anything additional to add to this chapter.

Day 202 - FRIDAY: July 7th

Deuteronomy 20

Daily Deep Dive:

Today's UCG reading plan for this chapter states: "Moses now discusses the principles governing warfare. These principles show that, despite the use of physical armaments, Israel was still to look to God for victory (Deuteronomy 20:1-9). One of the threats that Israel would face in war mentioned in verse 1 is "horses and chariots." Armies equipped in this manner were particularly intimidating to foot soldiers. The commandment was given in Deuteronomy 17:16 that Israel's kings not "multiply horses." And there is no evidence that Israel utilized horses for war before Solomon's time (1 Kings 4:26; 1 Kings 10:26). If this is the case, it is particularly fitting that Moses assured Israel they need not fear even when armies came against them with chariots.

With Almighty God as commander, there was no room for fear in the ranks—and those who were fearful were to be excused (verse 8). Others excused from warfare—at least on a temporary basis—included a person who had just built a new house, one who had planted a new vineyard, and one who was betrothed to a woman to marry her (verses 5-7). Deuteronomy 24:5 adds the further exception of a man who had just gotten married—he was permitted to stay with his wife for one year without having to go out to war. One of the reasons for these excuses from participation in battle seems to be that persons in such conditions would likely be thinking about what they were leaving

behind rather than concentrating on the battle. No doubt, God's mercy and compassion are also shown in these regulations. Furthermore, in these "excused absences," God was showing that it is not necessary to rely on numbers. With God fighting for His people (verse 4), very few people could easily overcome a force of many times their number (see Leviticus 26:8), as often happened during the Israelites' history when they were obedient to God.

Before the Israelites attacked a city "very far" from them (Deuteronomy 20:15), they had to offer peace to it (verses 10-11). It is interesting that the offer was of peace—not enslavement. Such cities were to pay tribute, essentially a tax, and "serve" Israel—not in slavery but to remain in peace and harmony with Israel, thus promoting the safety, security and well-being of God's people. Moreover, in agreeing to keep Israel's laws and way of life, such cities would in fact enter into a much better way of life than they had ever known. If a city refused the offer and chose war instead, Israel was to "strike every male in it with the edge of the sword" (verses 12-13), while leaving the women and children alive (verse 14). In regard to the cities that were located within the Promised Land, however, Israel was to "let nothing that breathes remain alive" (verse 16), so that the evil inhabitants could not influence Israel with "their abominations...and you sin against the Lord your God" (verse 18).

Finally, God told Israel not to cut down fruit trees in a siege against a city. They were only allowed to destroy those trees that were not "trees for food" (verses 19-20). This would especially make sense in a longer siege where food supplies could become an issue." [END]

Verse 5 – John Gill's commentary states a number of possible reasons for this command: "or perfected it, as the Targum of Jonathan, not quite finished it, has not, as that paraphrast says, fixed in it the door posts, or rather perhaps he means the Mezuzah, or writing, which the

Jews thought themselves obliged to fasten to the door posts of their houses; see Deu 11:20 until this was done, an house was not thought to be completed; though Jarchi interprets this of inhabitation; of a man's having built a house, but has not yet dwelt in it; see Deu 28:30, so Josephus explains it, of its not having been used and enjoyed by a man a full year; but there seems to be something more than all this in dedication; for though it does not signify a consecration or dedication of it to holy uses, as the dedication of the tabernacle and temple, yet there was something done, some ceremony used at entrance into a new house; a good man entered into it, no doubt, with prayer and praise, as the thirtieth psalm was composed by David at the dedication of his house; see Neh 12:27 and perhaps it was usual to have their friends together, and make a cheerful entertainment on the occasion. Ben Melech on the place, assures us it was a custom to make a feast and merriment at eating the first meal in a new house:" [END]

Verse 6 – In verse 5 and 6, the principle seems to be that God understands when someone has worked very hard on something and would like to see them receive some joy from their hard work. God gives them a time to enjoy the fruit of their labor before serving in the military.

Day 203 - SATURDAY: July 8th

Deuteronomy 21

Daily Deep Dive:

Here is the UCG reading plan as we finish with our final chapter of the week: "In cases where a murder was committed that could not be solved, it was first necessary to determine which town's jurisdiction the crime fell in—as it would be that town's responsibility to do all it could to investigate the matter. Yet upon finding no answer, there still had to be some type of atonement to avoid defilement of the land (compare Numbers 35:33). Thus, in lieu of executing the perpetrator, the elders of the closest city had to take a heifer that had not yet been used for

work down to a running stream and break its neck—though a few translations say it was beheaded. The elders then had to wash their hands over the heifer's neck, thereby indicating their innocence and obtaining atonement (verses 1-9). Another specific type of heifer, i.e., a red heifer, was also used for certain purifications (compare Numbers 19:2). And demonstrating how pervasive in the ancient world was the public washing of one's hands to indicate innocence, Pontius Pilate would later wash his hands to declare himself innocent of the murder of Jesus (Matthew 27:24). The running stream may also symbolize the defilement of the land being carried away.

Deuteronomy 21:10-14 allows for an Israelite to marry a foreign woman among the war prisoners. Note the requirement that she "shave her head and trim her nails." According to *The Nelson Study Bible*: "this ritual was intended to give the woman time to adjust to the new culture and to mourn over the forceful separation from her family. It was also a symbol of cleansing. She was preparing to become part of a new community" (note on 21:12). Inasmuch as God clearly prohibited an Israelite from marrying pagans who engaged in idol worship, this woman had to have accepted the true God of Israel (as verses 12-13 somewhat imply, showing that the woman had come under the authority of the husband).

Verses 15-18 discuss the undesired situation in which a husband had two wives, the one loved more than the other, and the consequences for the firstborn son of the unloved wife. God still required that the firstborn son was to receive the double portion of his father's inheritance allotted to him. People have wondered why men were permitted to marry more than one wife in ancient times. The answer is that this was *not* God's original intent. Jesus said that in the beginning, when He created Adam and Eve, "the two" were to become "one flesh," and "the two" were not to be divorced. Because of the hardness of man's heart, God allowed men to have more than one wife, as He

also allowed men to divorce their wives (compare Matthew 19:1-9). The biblical record shows, however, that having more than one wife brought about many problems for the family. The difficulties, in this respect, of Abraham, Jacob and Solomon are telling examples.

Verses 18-21 dealt with a rebellious son given over to drunkenness and gluttony, who stubbornly refused to obey his parents—obviously referring to an older adolescent son and not a young child. Yet this was not just "typical" adolescent rebelliousness. Rather, it denoted one who had established a reputation as a "good for nothing" over a lengthy period. To prevent others from emulating the son's abominable lifestyle—and to prevent the son's flagrant disregard of parental authority from growing into disregard for all authority, including God's, to the point of him eventually posing a danger to society—his parents had to report him to the elders, and he had to be executed.

Such a punishment may sound harsh to our ears today. But keep in mind that God's laws were designed to create a peaceful, productive, safe society for all people. This particular punishment, though severe, was designed to safeguard others. Knowing human nature, God realized that when a young man showed a rebellious, stubborn attitude over an extended period of time, if he dishonored and rejected the authority of his parents and others, if he showed little or no self-control or willingness to take responsibility for his actions, it would be only a matter of time before his defiant attitude would lead him to injure or even kill someone else. So if over time he showed no inclination to change, the problem was taken care of before he had the opportunity to hurt or kill others. This punishment would "put away the evil from among" Israel and cause others to "hear and fear" (verse 21).

How different would our societies be today if young men knew they were subject to such a penalty at a relatively early age if they chose to reject all authority and decent standards of behavior? Many problems

that plague our societies, such as career criminals, gangs and teenage mass murderers, would be snuffed out before they had a chance to get started. All of society would be much safer and better off, and innocent people would not have to live in fear of criminal thugs. Keep in mind, too, that this wasn't the absolute end for such people. God knew that he would ultimately resurrect them in a future world in which they will be able to better understand the consequences of their behavior and repent (see Revelation 20:5, Revelation 20:11-12; Ezekiel 37:1-14; "The Eighth Day: Eternal Life Offered to All," *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*, 1999, pp. 46-51). God truly is a god of justice, mercy and loving concern for the well-being of all." [END]

Verse 23 – John Gill's commentary states: "plainly appears to be so, having committed some foul sin which has brought the curse of God upon him, and which being hanged on a tree was a plain proof and declaration of; and therefore having hereby suffered the rigour of the law, the curse of it, his body was ordered to be taken down; for the words are not a reason of his being hanged, but a reason why being hanged, and so openly accursed, he should not remain hanging, but be taken down and buried:" [END]