

Day 203 - SATURDAY: July 8th

Deuteronomy 21

Deuteronomy 21:1-23 NKJV

"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, then your elders and your judges shall go out and measure the distance from the slain man to the surrounding cities. 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. 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. 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. 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. Then they shall answer and say, 'Our hands have not shed this blood, nor have our eyes seen it. 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. 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. "When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God delivers them into your hand, and you take them captive, and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her and would take her for your wife, then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails. 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. 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 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, 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. 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 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, 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. 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.' 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. "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 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.

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]