

APRIL 2

This is just a word of encouragement to keep up in reading your one-year Bible. It is only April in the States and we are already into the dog-days of summer. It's hot and the air is full of pollen; my scale is being very peevish and making things up. I feel like I missed winter, skipped spring and now I'm in summer. Thankfully the Lord remains the same and in spite of how I feel, I feel better when I am sitting quietly with Him, reading His Word and praying every day. Don't worry about the Reading Notes. They are not the Word. And, they will be online until the web is shut down and they are for you to use, or not use, as you please. Keeping up with God in His Word is your life and health as a disciple every day.

Deuteronomy 21-22

Some of the laws given from here on seem random and unconnected. They are interesting as they stand, especially when you think that God thought them up. The laws show something about Him and they make you think of what the point was behind these laws. Even if the laws were only binding for Israel, and then, only for Israel as they were ruled by God (for example, under Roman law the Jews couldn't kill people for adultery or not keeping the Sabbath), there was still a lesson involved in God thinking up that particular law. With some of these laws it could also be there is something going on culturally that we don't get because we weren't there.

One thing you notice is that every now and then, there is a purpose statement given which explains the reason behind the law, or maybe it is a block summary for many laws that have been given to that point. In our reading today, the end of Deuteronomy 21:23 is one of those purpose statements. This is why v. 23 was chosen as a good place for a chapter division. These laws gave order and a sense of respectability and propriety to the customs of the people so that they wouldn't defile the land. (If God were making a nation today; for example, I don't think He would allow people to leave their shopping carts out in the middle of the parking lot, that being a sign of the decay of Western civilization.) They emphasize the reality that the nation is set apart wholly and holy for God.

There might be a connection between the order of these laws and it's fun to try to find it, but even that can be overdone. We'll just have to ask God in heaven why they were given like this. I have a feeling that when we get to heaven we won't care anymore. It is important to remember that these laws were not meant to answer every question and contingency, but rather to give a general rule or judgment from which other rules and judgments could be made for situations not mentioned.

Deuteronomy 21

Vs. 1-9 This was in the days before "CSI" and "Bones." Notice v. 9. The issue of *innocent blood* was/is no small thing with God. Notice that the priest was involved in this, and since he had the Urim and Thummim, the issue probably could have been solved. We have no proof that this was ever done in Israel. Once we are in Judges we'll see why.

Vs. 10-14 This was definitely a different time and a different culture. Note that this was future oriented, because none of the women in Canaan would have qualified for this. This woman did not have to be a virgin. The occasion would have been after the conquest of Canaan. Some nation would have picked a fight with Israel, been defeated by Israel on the field, and then Israel would have pursued them to their land and taken their cities.

Even though this might seem kind of barbaric to our cultured sensitivities, there was order here. There was no raping and pillaging. This event was totally legislated. They had to be married, man and wife, before anything could happen. The act of the woman having to shave her head and trim her nails sounds similar to the Levites having to cut their hair almost as if to enter their new life/service as newborns. In a way, this was also a "cooling" down period for the man. It could be

in those 30 days he decided it was a bad idea. Notice also, there was no sexual relationship until the month had passed. The man went into her as her husband, meaning the social customs had been acknowledged and fulfilled and they were legally married.

There is a sense, too, in which there is mercy in this custom. Worse things could happen to a person, and actually, this could be a very good thing. Becoming a part of Israel worked out pretty good for Ruth. But Ruth wasn't taken in war. She came with Naomi. However, there is another example of a foreign woman who was taken in war and married one of the soldiers, Rahab, from Jericho. It turned out pretty good for Rahab. Her husband Salmon was from a leading family of Judah, and some think Salmon might have been one of the spies who went into Jericho. Rahab gets some good press in Hebrews and in James, but her biggest claim to fame, along with Ruth, is in Matthew 1:5. Rahab shouldn't have been saved because she was a Canaanite, but in God's mercy she was not only saved and not only married a cool dude, but she became the great^{29th power} grandmother of Jesus.

Vs. 15-17 It is interesting here that God never commanded that a man should only have one wife. God could have nipped it in the bud right here. The model of creation is one man and one woman, and the best marriages you find in the Bible are just one man and one woman. When God says, "the two become one flesh," it's apparent that that is His model. Why He even allowed polygamy to exist is beyond me. He not only allowed it, but when David messed up, God implied that He would have given David more wives (2 Sam. 12:8). It's clear that monogamy was the rule and having more than one wife was the exception. By Roman times the Jews were totally monogamous, and Christianity never made a provision for more than one wife.

V. 17 It is also interesting that God says the firstborn son is the *firstfruits of his* (the man's) *strength*.

Even though God chose to go around this with Esau and Jacob and with Manasseh and Ephraim, for society, this rule kept things fair and in order.

Vs. 18-21 The Swedes (no spankings) would have freaked out about this one. Obviously this is referring to an older teen. The main issue was his rebelliousness, which probably would have shown up in his gluttony and drunkenness. Also, this was done in court; therefore, the elders and the gates of the city are mentioned. It was a very public matter. This wasn't shooting him behind the barn.

So what about the rebellious daughter? Probably the same held true.

Notice the purpose statement at the end of v. 21. Later we will see what happens when there is no punishment or enforcement for these violations. The people became disheartened by the lawlessness and gave up following God's order. A case in point is in 1 Samuel 2:22-36. Because Eli didn't have his sons put to death, as they deserved, people gave up on worshipping or following God.

Vs. 22-23 Death by hanging was usually for public warning. Joshua will do this to the kings of Canaan, to alert the other kings in Canaan and to encourage Israel that God is with them. Also, David will do this to allay a curse brought on Israel for King Saul's extermination of the Gibeonites. In that case the bodies were a public demonstration of payment and restitution for violating a covenant. The most notable case of hanging is referred to by Paul in Galatians 3:13, where he is talking about Jesus being cursed by God for us. God hung His own son as a testimony that payment for sin was made for mankind.

Deuteronomy 22

Vs. 1-4 This is not for the animal; it is for the neighbor. I did this today walking. This huge dog ran up to me. Thankfully I was wearing so many layers that the dog couldn't smell the fear that I'm sure was pouring out of me. But it was just a big fierce looking, slobbery, shedding, loving

dog. Yet it kept following me, so I was in a pickle. If I had kept walking, it would have followed me over a busy road. And besides, Rover didn't look intelligent enough to find its way home. So there I stood, until about five minutes later someone missed him. A woman, about half the size of the dog, walked out on the sidewalk, down the block, in her pjs. The last I saw, the dog ran down to her, (picked her up in his mouth and took her into the house, for breakfast, I think. JUST KIDDING!!!!!!) Anyway, I guess I fulfilled this command today. How funny.

V. 5 This is not Halloween. This is real cross-dressing. God doesn't think it's funny. He considers it to be perverted sexuality.

Vs. 6-7 I guess you could call this a law of propriety or forced wisdom. For the sake of preserving God's blessing, the people were to curb their desires, act wisely, and to think of the future of the land. Again, from a little case like this, you could probably apply the principle to many other situations where similar wisdom and self control were necessary.

V. 8 Even accidental death because of carelessness was to be avoided by acting wisely. I'm sure this was applied to a lot of other situations, like open wells, for example.

Vs. 9-11 Now these might have had some tie to the culture and to superstition. Even if this was just something that had to do with order and keeping things separate, it would have created a mindset for doing things orderly.

Notice v. 10. Paul quotes this in 2 Corinthians 6:14, *Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?*

V. 12 refers to the tassels God commanded to be sown on all of their garments in Numbers 15:37-41. The reason was to make them remember always to obey the Lord. How could you forget what those conspicuous little, dangly things meant? They weren't jewelry. They also would have started some conversations with foreigners.

Vs. 13-21 Note that this law is to keep a man from unjustly getting rid of his wife by insisting she was sexually impure before they were married. This law is a protection for the woman. That is the focus. If the husband was dishonest, he was trying to get back the 50 shekels of silver he gave for the bride price.

Premarital sexual purity was to have been the expected norm. Parents were to testify to their daughter's virginity, and a man expected to marry a virgin. The proof the parents were to bring was the sheet from the wedding night that showed that as the girl had intercourse for the first time, she bled.

On the other hand, if the girl had been a prostitute or the girl and her parents had used prostitution to increase the family income, or if she/they had been involved in Baal worship, these would have all had serious consequences.

The only way the father could have gotten 50 shekels of silver for his daughter in marriage was that she was a virgin. I'm sure the finances of this tempted people to lie. I'm sure there were allowances and the appropriate disclosures for accidents or even rape. The important thing is that the father couldn't say she was a virgin if she wasn't.

Looking at the punishment for the man or the woman, this law would have made premarital sex a very serious and dangerous event. In v. 28, rape meant forced marriage without provision for divorce. In Exodus 22:16 there is a variation of this for seduction, where the girl's father could refuse to have his daughter marry that man. The end result was that premarital sex was not acceptable.

Vs. 22-29 From all of these laws you understand that adultery was punishable by death. An engaged woman was legally married, just not yet married.

V. 24 Note that a woman had to cry for help. The guy couldn't say, "If you yell, I'll kill you," because if she didn't yell she'd die anyway.

All of these laws set a standard by which other situations could be evaluated. In our day, you know that if adultery meant death, fewer people would be willing to do it and it wouldn't be glamorized on TV. And if premarital sex meant a forced marriage, I wonder if people wouldn't take things more seriously. We understand what is allowed in society, and we know that God forgives and gives grace and love; but still, here we see what God's opinion on all this stuff is. And actually, it comes out of His love for us, wanting the best for us.

V. 30 God is simply saying that a son shouldn't marry his stepmother, even if his father dies. That is not only propriety, but it is God's command. Interestingly enough, Paul mentions that someone in Corinth was doing this very thing and that the church approved of it. O Weh!

Luke 9:51-10:12

Luke 9:51-62

Vs. 51-56 This wasn't Jesus' final trip to Jerusalem, but the reality of His death and the rejection of His offer to the Jews added more definition to His training of the Twelve and to His agenda. Actually, Jesus was going up to the Feast of the Tabernacles in John 7; in fact, John 7:2-10 would come right before this.

Before, Jesus had been willing to spend time with the Samaritans. Now, He was given direction via the Spirit, to get to Jerusalem for this very important showdown.

V. 54 It appears that only this Samaritan village reacted this way. This is one time we see James and John earning the nickname Jesus gave them, *The Sons of Thunder*. There were probably lots of other examples. Notice that when Jesus rebuked them, He turned from them. Jesus did this with Peter also. The next village responded better.

Vs. 57-62 How do you categorize these three men? Try to put these objections in your own words.

Vs. 57-58 This was a scribe, a Pharisee who was well studied in the law. These were usually rich, well-to-do people. Apparently the lack of security and proper accommodations were too much for him.

Vs. 59-60 Notice that Jesus initiated this. He must have noticed one disciple who had potential and had gone up to him and told him to follow Him. Particularly in this case where Jesus selected the man, the man's love for father and family won the day. Jesus said that a person had to "hate father and mother" to follow Him. Notice too that Jesus wasn't put off by this man's objection, but commanded him to *go and proclaim the kingdom of God*.

Vs. 61-62 This guy declared his willingness but wasn't ready. So why did he say this? For others? To be recognized by Jesus? Interestingly, Jesus says that the person would not be *fit*. In the Greek that word actually can mean, "to fit" to something. This kind of commitment doesn't fit to the life and call of a disciple in the harvest.

(Just for your information, you can insert John 7-10:21 here.)

Luke 10:1-12

After the massive rejection Jesus received in John 7-10:21, He was stepping up His discipleship training and also preparing His itinerary for visiting towns on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. If they found towns that were open, Jesus would visit the town, if not, too bad. Much of this looks similar to sending out the Twelve. Jesus still had a lot of disciples. One interesting thought is that the guy who took Judas' place, to fill up the "twelve" in Acts, must have been part of the 70.

Psalm 74

The family of Asaph were singers in the temple from the reign of David to the restoration of the temple after the exile under Ezra and Nehemiah. It looks like this writer wrote after the people returned to Israel following the Babylonian exile.

Vs. 1-3 You notice the appeal for God to remember His promises. Even after Israel returned under Zerubbabel, the people experienced great opposition in rebuilding the temple. It seems that the psalmist is lamenting this.

Vs. 4-8 It seems that the writer is asking God to look at the wanton devastation and to remember their acts of violence.

Vs. 9-11 This is interesting that they are asking for God to reveal His hand by giving them a prophet. God would send both Haggai and Zechariah to motivate the people to continue building

the temple. I wonder if this is the outpouring of heart, repeated and sung in their worship that motivated God to send those two men.

Vs. 12-17 This declaration of God as creator is the source of their faith and strength. They might not see God's hand in what was happening in Jerusalem, but in all of the created world they could still draw strength from the fact that God was both there, and able to help them.

Vs. 18-21 God is asked to remember Israel, the dove. And He is asked to remember the covenant with Abraham and the poor and needy.

Vs. 22-23 What cause should God defend? I would think it might be more than Israel. His cause is the redemption of mankind.

Proverbs 12:11

What if *works his land* simply meant "worthwhile, God-honoring pursuits?" What would happen here if *bread* meant "nourishment for your spiritual life as a disciple?" Since most people are not farmers, some thinking about the sense of the proverb helps. Also, we know from Deuteronomy that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God. The abundance of our hearts as followers of Christ comes from our diligence in working the soil of our hearts with His Word.