

Deuteronomy 21:10-23

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Date: 20 February 2022

[0 : 00] I wasn't going to the book of Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy chapter 21, Deuteronomy chapter 21. We will pick up where we left off Wednesday night, which will be verse 10, Deuteronomy 21, verses 10 through 23, which should get us to the end of the chapter there in Deuteronomy 21.

This is one of those passages I do not mind saying that if I had not said, well, I'm preaching through the Old Testament that it had come to this passage, I probably would have skimmed over the top of it if not skipped it altogether.

It's one of those passages which can be at least a little bit difficult, and then even difficult in its reading, a little bit harder in its interpretation, especially in application for the life we live in today and life as we know it, because we completely understand that our historical setting is so much different than the historical setting of the original audience.

As Moses is here declaring, I think somewhere around 1400 BC, these truths to the people of Israel in what they call the ancient Near Eastern area and region, and life was just a little bit different at that time, right?

Behavior patterns, activities, those things, it was just really different. This is one of those classic examples of why you want to take Scripture in its historical setting, look at the truth that it contains, and then try to bring it to its modern application to who we are today.

[1 : 30] So that is one of those passages which we have come to, and hopefully the Lord will lead us to an understanding of it, and as we come to an understanding of it, to a greater understanding of Him. But let's pray.

Lord, we thank You for this day. God, we thank You for allowing us to gather together once again. We thank You for the truth of Scripture, and we thank You for every part and portion of it.

We realize as we come to Your Word, we come with expectation. We expect to hear a word from You. We expect to hear truth about who You are.

We expect to grow in our likeness towards Christ. We expect to be enlightened by the presence of the Holy Spirit. And Lord, we expect these things in easy passages and hard passages.

So tonight, we ask that You lead and guide us. Lord, that ultimately You'd be glorified and honored through our reading of Your Word, and Lord, through the declaration of the truth that it contains.

[2 : 32] Would it be so much more than just the thoughts or the opinions of man, but it be, as always, the very Word of God which captivates us and draws us closer to You.

Lord, we love You, and we praise You, and we thank You for all You are and all You do, and we ask it in Christ's name. Amen. Deuteronomy 21, starting in verse 10, reading down to verse 23.

Now, before I read the text, I need to go ahead and declare these truths, because if we don't declare these truths in our present-day setting, and we read these texts, we have the danger of letting the Bible say things that it does not say, or letting the Bible imply things that it does not imply. And as we begin this passage, we need to understand that there are some things which, as Jesus says, God allowed because of the weakness of man, but it was never God's intended purpose. In particular, when Jesus gave that answer to the Pharisees, it was concerning the law of divorce, and said that this was permissible by the Lord because of man's weakness, man's failures, and ultimately sin, because all perfect things are damaged as a result of sin.

[3 : 52] And we understand that. Another one that we would be confronted with in this passage is polygamy. And we need to understand once again in its historical setting that this is because of the weakness of man.

If anyone ever tells you that polygamy is biblical, and that polygamy has its place, then go ahead and go to the law of first mention. I know I'm not into the text, but just so that we can understand the text.

The law of first mention, the very first time a man is mentioned with multiple wives, is Lamech in the early pages of Genesis. Lamech was of the descendants of Cain, that is, he was the wicked people. He was of the descendants that they were not, they did not live their life and was not, they were the descendants that died, right? That showed they departed. Lamech also destroyed a number of cities and lived under the curse of Cain.

So if we go to the law of first mention, from the very onset of polygamy, those who were involved in it had a rough time. We don't have to go very far, even in the righteous lineage, and we see Jacob. [5 : 01] And we see even the struggles that are there. So what we understand is that God's intended purpose was for one man, one woman to be united forever. We need to understand that.

But God meets man where man is at. And he meets us in all of our messes, and all of our weaknesses, and all of our struggles, and all of our problems, and all those things. And these are just one area, right? I mean, every one of us have those areas. And I'm thankful that the Bible has direct application because God meets us where we're at. And when he meets us there, he calls us to a higher standard there. So that's the first thing we must put in our mind when we read text such as this.

Is this God declaring these things must be? No, this is God saying, I'm going to meet you where you're at. When I meet you there, this is what I'm calling you to do.

[6 : 04] Deuteronomy 21, verse 10. When you go out to battle against your enemies, and the Lord your God delivers them into your hands, and you take them away captive, and see among the captives a beautiful woman, and have a desire for her, and would take her as a wife for yourself, then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails.

She shall also remove the clothes of her captivity, and shall remain in your house, and mourn her father and mother a full month. After that, you may go into her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife.

It shall be if you are not pleased with her, then you shall let her go wherever she wishes. But you shall certainly not sell her for money. You shall not mistreat her, because you have humbled her. If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other unloved, and both the loved and the unloved have borne him sons, if the firstborn son belongs to the unloved, then it shall be in the day that he wills what he has to his sons.

He cannot make the son of the loved the firstborn before the son of the unloved, who is the firstborn. 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 beginning of his strength.

[7 : 16] To him belongs the right of the firstborn. If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, then his father and mother shall seize him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown.

They shall say to the elders of his city, This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a glutton and a drunkard. Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death, so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear of it and fear.

If a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day, for he who is hanged is accursed of God, so that you do not defile your land, which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance.

Deuteronomy 21, verses 10 through 23. Told you it was difficult. I want you to see the relational impact of holiness. The relational impact of holiness.

How holiness impacts us as individuals, it impacts the home, and it impacts the community. How it has a progression.

[8 : 40] How really to change the community, you have to change the home, but to change the home, you have to change the individual. Because as goes the individual, so goes the home, and as goes the home, so goes the community.

And this is something that has, the home is not just the building blocks of society, it is the individual who is the building block of the home, who is the building block of society, which is the building block of the state, which eventually is the thing that determines the course of the nation.

And holiness, or living right in the presence of a holy God, has a direct impact on each of these.

And we see it here in this text, though it may be a little bit difficult to see, but we see this relational

impact of holiness, how it influences our relationships individually, it influences the relationships within the family structure, it influences the relationship inside of our community, and how it has this great impact as it resonates, because everything about us is different.

And this is what God has called his people to be, is to be different. God chose Abram out of the land of the earth, the Chaldeans, and through the course of time in history, rose up a great nation out of Abraham, and Israelite people, and the nation of Israel.

And he is going to plant them in the middle of Canaan, in the middle of the promised land, smack dab in the middle of ancient Near Eastern culture, with all these city-states and small kingdoms, and these reigning monarchs, and there would be this one nation that was to occupy land, and even to expand and to take more land, according to the promises of God.

[10:22] And yet they would be surrounded by people who did things differently, not only worshipped gods differently, but just lived life different. Right?

They behaved differently in warfare. They treated their families differently. Everything about them was different. God's people were set apart in how they behaved as individuals.

They are radically set apart in how they function as a family. And because their families are so different, their communities are different as well.

Neither one is seen as more important than the other, because each one has a direct impact upon the other. Every individual affects the family. You would have up to four generations of families living under the same roof.

So each individual's actions would have an impact upon the family unit, or the family structure, and the family structure is uniquely connected to the community, or to the state, or the city in which it resides, and that is connected to the nation.

[11:30] And as we've looked at recently, the sins of the individual have a direct impact upon the blessed or cursed condition of the nation. So we begin to see the relational impact that each one has.

The first thing we see in this living a life of holiness, though we may have to really concentrate and think about it, is that God calls his people to protect dignity.

Number one, there is a protected dignity. And it is protected in the most unlikely of places. He says, When you go out to battle, and you defeat a city, and you capture that city, and you look among the captives of that city.

Now, all of a sudden, we need to imply here, or we need to understand, that this city is very far away from their borders. Because remember, we only go back a chapter or two, and they could not take captives from any cities within the borders of the promised land.

And those had to be completely annihilated and destroyed as an instrument of God's judgment upon them for their false worship, and a removal of any hindrance that would lead them to that false worship.

[12:43] No one inside their parameters of the Holy Land, and the Canaanites, the Hittite, Perizzite, Jebusites, none of those could be allowed. But those, when they fought battles outside the city, remember, if they went offered a term of peace, and the city surrendered, then they would take them captive.

So this is some distance away. He says, when you go, and you're there, and you have the captives, don't ever lose that word. That word captive, captive, captive keeps resonating as we see this passage.

And you look among the captives, right, the slaves, those who are now your subjects, those who can serve you, and you see someone that you would like to have as your wife among the captives. And you can take her. Now, now this makes no sense in the world, to us at all. But stay with me. Because more than just pillage and plunder, and all the atrocities, for lack of going into too much detail, with the young ones we have in the room, that would happen when men would go to warfare, which was very common in that area.

When they would look among the captives, and see that beautiful woman, then things would take place. Among God's people, things behave differently. Because that woman could be your wife, but before she could be your wife, you had to take her to your house.

[14:08] She had to shave her head, trim her nails, and remove her prison clothes, which means you had to dress her up. And this more than likely was a sign, and symbolic of her leaving her old faith, and converting to Judaism.

And there's one more thing. You were to give her a month of mourning, which means that you could not enter into this relationship, in haste, or in the passion of the moment.

You had a month to think about it. She had a month to live with you, and you had a month to live with her, before it was ever made official. And this was not cohabitation, because the act is what entailed marriage.

It wasn't a ceremony so much, it was the act of coming together, is what caused them to be married. So you waited a month.

And after a month, you could take her to be your wife. So from the very onset, we see these are captives, right? Captives. But God is preserving the dignity, even of the captive, and saying that you can't go in the passion, or the heat of the moment, and just do whatever you want.

[15 : 25] You can take her lawfully, but you're going to take her respectfully as well. And you're going to respect her dignity as an individual.

Think about this. This is the only God who calls his warriors to treat even their captives with dignity. If you want to put it in comparison, read the history of the spread of Islam.

Islam worships a God who is a God of warfare as well. And theirs is very much a pillage and plunder and decapitation, because you spread through chaos, and passion, and heat, and moments.

Yet Yahweh, God, calls his people to treat them with dignity. And then he says, because of man's weakness, not because of man's permission.

Okay? Big difference here. Because of man's weakness, God knows man's tendencies. God knows, by the way, men, the blame is always with us.

[16 : 40] God knows man's failures. He said, and if you decide, you don't want to be married to her anymore. Now, I'll tell you what happened in every other society around them. If you decide that this captive was no longer fit to be your wife, then you would put her on the auction block, and you would sell her to the highest bidder.

So she could be somebody else's wife. God says, no, she's no longer a captive. She's your wife. So you can send her away with a certificate of divorce, but she's a free woman.

You can't sell her. She can go wherever she wants to go. She wants to go back home. She can go back home because she's no longer a captive because, see, marriage changes everything.

Just because she used to be a captive, she's no longer a captive. You've brought her into your home. And now, if you desire no longer to be married to her and to fulfill the responsibilities of a husband, then you have that right in your weaknesses and in your shortcomings to do that, and God's permitting that, but you're going to do it in a respectful manner.

She's going to leave a free woman because, see, God calls his people to protect the dignity of all. If there was someone in society that probably would have been the least protected, it would have been this woman.

[18 : 04] But this is the very woman that God calls his people, his men, to protect the dignity of. You can't treat her however you want to treat her.

You can't dismiss her whenever you want to dismiss her. You're going to do it properly. God calls his people to protect the dignity of others. And friend, listen, if so for this woman, so too for all people.

Because if this was how they were to treat the captives of their enemies, how much more were they to treat their fellow brothers and sisters in the community?

See, God often uses the greatest illustration to be a demonstration of what should be a daily application in your life. When Jesus says, when your enemy strikes you on one cheek, turn to him to the other.

There also, if we should do that to our enemies, how much more to our brothers and sisters in Christ? It is the protection of dignity.

[19 : 09] To see people as people and not to see them as possessions and to see people as valuable in the sight of God because God is here declaring there is value and worth with this lady just as much as any other Jewish lady.

And he calls his people to be people of protected dignity. To ensuring that all people are treated as God sees them.

And we understand this as the impact of holiness. That's one of the things that turned the Roman world upside down is how followers of Christ saw dignity in every human life.

When children were being cast aside and sat on the hill and left to die or when the sick were being left behind when plagues started ravaging the Roman Empire and people didn't want to be near them because they were unclean and what they had could be caught and people were fleeing from them.

It was the Christians who saw the dignity in the helpless and it was the Christians who saw the dignity in the sick. It was the Christians who saw the dignity in those that society cast out.

[20 : 27] And everybody else said there must be something to that way called Christianity. God's always called his people to be protectors of others' dignity.

Number two, we also read in this text of a preserved order. Of a preserved order. He moves on to the individual who has two wives.

Now we don't know if the first wife, that relationship ended in a divorce and he had another wife or if he had both wives at the same time. We don't know. More than likely both of these wives are at the same time and it would be a polygamous relationship.

Something very, very common. We find it even among God's people in the Old Testament. We don't find it so much so in the New Testament even though some Jewish scholars believe that even in the days of Christ, polygamy was something that was practiced by even Jews which would be why we get 1 Timothy 3 and the book of Titus.

We get the qualifications for an elder and a deacon to be a one-woman man and how there to be, that literally means that, to be a one-woman man, not to be involved in multitude of relationships and all these things but we see here this calling to this individual because he says, suppose a man has two wives.

[21 : 48] One, he doesn't like very much. She's unloved. Actually, the wording there is she's hated and the other one is loved. And suppose that each of these women have sons for him and yet the unloved woman's son is the true firstborn.

He was born first. Think Leah and Rachel, right? Leah and Rachel. And God says, the man does not have the right to count the son of the loved woman as firstborn and to overlook the one who is his true firstborn.

Now to us, this seems foreign. To us, this seems strange and I know that automatically you're thinking in your mind, well, God does that very thing in scripture, right? How many times has God overlooked the true firstborn and choose the secondborn?

How many times has God, but he's not talking about what he decrees here as the law of inheritance. He's not talking about that. In our spiritual blessing, God overrules a lot of times.

Esau I have hated, but Jacob I have loved. Right? He moves beyond. He goes to the secondborn and he moves ahead and it seems like God is always doing that.

[23 : 05] Well, there is a great biblical interpretation around this is because a lot of times with God, the way we're born first is not good enough. We must be born again. But even then, we just surrender to God's sovereignty, but not so with man.

With man, the firstborn was to be redeemed. The firstborn had a place of spiritual blessing in the nation of Israel. Now, this is a very Jewish and Israelite community and the firstborn was to be redeemed because of the Passover and the firstborn was dedicated to the Lord and there's this position and because of that blessing, he was to have a double blessing.

He was to have a double inheritance. So, if you had two sons, like the prodigal son that we see in the Gospels, he was the secondborn, right?

Well, the firstborn gets two-thirds of the inheritance and the secondborn gets a third of the inheritance. So, the prodigal son took a third of the inheritance while his older brother was home pouting and mad because everything the father had was his.

He already had the double blessing. He had two-thirds of it, but this was the standard among Jewish people. And what God is saying here is you don't get the right to choose who gets your blessing.

[24 : 24] You don't get the right to choose who will be firstborn based upon your preferences because your firstborn is your firstborn. You don't get to say, well, I like this one's mother better based upon your likes and dislikes and these things.

You will say, well, what difference does this matter? Well, it matters because to God, order is very important. He is a God of order.

Paul says, let all things be done decently and in order. All of creation works according to a perfect order. Your body works or should work according to a perfect order.

God is a God of order. He is not a God of confusion. A lot of times when our life is confusing and things seem to be out of control, we can almost guarantee that we are not walking as we should because God is a God of order.

Even what the world may count as chaos, if God is in the midst of it, to us, it is order. It is an ordered chaos. But God has a way about things and that way matters.

[25 : 39] Right? Right? God has clearly, order does not necessarily mean greater importance. It just means order. Right?

God has a perfect order. He has an order for the home. He has an order for society. He has an order for the church. He has an order for all these things. And it does not mean He is choosing favors.

That just means that God is a God of order. and He has a way that things matter to Him. But man doesn't get to decide if he wants to overstep that order.

So, we see here that God calls His people in this difficult season to preserve the order of things. for things to behave and to move exactly as God has declared to them to maintain that life.

Why? Because an individual whose life is in disorder will lead to a family that is in disorder which will begin to lead to a community that is in disorder which will lead to a world that is in disorder.

[26 : 46] in the ordered life of the individual. I'm not saying listen, I'm not the best organized individual. Right?

Not at all. But the order of making what God says is priority is priority of making the main thing the main thing. When those things in my life get out of order then my life is out of order it begins to affect everyone around me.

And we're looking at the relational impact of holiness. God calls for a preserved order. Number three he calls for a prioritized community.

This one strikes us as kind of harsh but in reality it is everything God is pointing to. He calls us to a prioritized community. We move now from the man who has two sons to the man and wife who have one son.

Notice first of all that both mother and father are involved in this disciplinary action of this son. It's not that mom just takes a passive role. It's not.

[27 : 55] But the mother and father both are involved. If a man has a son who won't listen he's a rebellious son and the mother and father have disciplined him and chastised him and still he won't listen and he keeps doing all these things and he'll never listen and he won't stop doing and they've warned him and they've corrected him and they're doing the best that they can and they've went as far as they can and yet he still won't listen and again notice this it is the mother and father who take the initiative.

Right? Then the father and the mother shall take their son to the elders of that city. That is the men of his city. The father and mother shall take that son to the elders of his city to the men of that city at the gate and say this our son is a rebellious son he will not listen and man is this not convicting because there are two words put here one of them we kind of discount as being not that big of a deal the other one we see it as a big deal he is both a glutton that means he eats too much and a drunk.

Those two words that we think shouldn't have the same weight here all of a sudden they do have the same weight he is glutton and a drunkard and he won't stop not only is he over drinking he is also over eating and for this reason we bring him before you because he won't listen to us now first and foremost before we think this is too radical he is breaking the very law of God that says honor your father and mother so the first affront that this son is doing is he is looking at God saying I don't care what you say I'm going to do it my way he is an affront to a holy God secondly he is a risk and a danger to the community of God's people because that which he is doing is a very public spectacle and everybody has seen it now a private problem has become a public issue and when it became a concern for the public the preservation of the community superseded the rights of the individual because the holiness of God's people was of greater importance than the freedom of that individual to behave however he wanted you talk about something that just butts heads with what we call the American way

Paul said I am free to do whatever I want this is Billy Joe's paraphrase I am free to do whatever I want but I'm not going to do anything that would cause a harm to a brother or sister in Christ while I

am free to do and behave however I want to do and in Christ I have a liberty to live as I so want and in Christ I have a freedom to eat and drink whatever I want to do I will not do anything which causes harm to the body of Christ because the concern of the corporate body supersedes the freedom of the individual and this is exactly what was going on here this individual's choices was beginning to have an influence upon the society and now the priority of the community is going to supersede or overcome the freedoms of this individual let's just put it this way and I know this isn't popular and it's not going to make me popular and I know

I'm on Sunday night and I'm preaching to the choir so to say but this is where we have to say it and I know if I was on a Sunday morning I'd probably be getting all kinds of phone calls and you may go home and tell somebody about it and I still may get more phone calls but if you call me I'm going to tell you the same thing is it in the scripture if it's in the scripture then yes we're going to stay to it okay so this is it the purity and the holiness of the church is more important than your personal freedoms that's biblical it's more important than my freedoms because the community always takes priority over the individual you say well who are you to judge me Paul says who am I to judge the world I don't judge those outside the church did you read the rest of that text Paul says who am I I can't judge those outside the church but I do judge and it doesn't mean like to judge the condemnation but it means I hold to account those inside the church because their lives impact my life their holiness impacts my standing and we see this this is what's going on when the parents bring this kid now we have no record of this ever taking place there's no biblical record there's no historical record of any son ever being stoned primarily because the fear of such matters probably was at least discouraging enough if mom and dad looked at you and said

[33 : 31] I'm about to take you to the elders of the city then that means I'm going to get stoned right but here is a standard that God is setting and by the way that meant when the problems at home got too hard to handle the men of society stepped up and helped men the onus is on us oak cliff bible fellowship tony evans i know that's one of the things they do one of the things they do for single parents or even parents of rebellious children i love this principle by the way if your kids giving you problems at home bring them to the church the elders of the church will sit down with them some of you say oh that's that's that's biblical that's what that is and the elders of the church will look at them and be like son let me tell you something here because here would be men of dignity that have lived their life in front of these people and men of dignity who would have the willingness to stand up and say your mama is important your daddy is important your home is important your family is important because what the home is this is what this church is and we see this priority over the community by the way this also has application with that man who was condemned to death whether by stoning or he created a capital offense and he died and they hung him on a tree they would hang him on a tree to be a display for the community to see this is what happens if you do this sin right this is what happened you would die and he would be there but the community was seen as so important

God says don't leave him hanging there overnight take him down he's got to be buried the same day why because it is a disgrace it's a disgrace to his extended family his family shouldn't have to suffer it's a disgrace to all the community the community doesn't need to have it the next day as well they don't need to see that so we see the prioritized community because God's holiness is permeating every aspect now we would really do a severe injustice to the passage if we didn't see this last and final thing we see a perfect picture we see a perfect picture if a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death and you hang him on a tree his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree but you shall surely bury him on the same day here's the picture for he who is hanged is accursed of God so that you do not defile your land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance the reason we would do a great disservice to the scripture and even an injustice to ourselves if we did not see this picture is because

Paul quotes this in Galatians chapter 3 Galatians chapter 3 starting in verse 10 Paul makes this statement Paul says the law leads us to being cursed we are cursed by the law that according to the law all men are cursed we've said it before jokingly but in all seriousness most of us don't get past the fifth chapter of the book of Leviticus the law leads us to a position of being cursed every one of us have created a capital offense every one of us have committed grievous sins which are deserving of death we've open handedly rebelled against a holy God and Paul says in Galatians 3 starting in verse 10 that the law brings us to a cursing but it says in Galatians 3 verse 13 Jesus became our curse by hanging on a cross and then Paul quotes this because the scripture says

cursed is every man who hangs on a tree the law leads us to a position of being cursed but the perfect picture is Jesus became our curse by hanging on a tree and they buried him the same day by the way he became our curse

Galatians 3 13 and 14 so that we would be able to live in the blessing of Abraham Gentiles who come not according to the law but by the spirit through faith cursed is every man who hangs on a tree Jesus had no curse he fulfilled the law but he became our curse and hung on a tree and was buried the same day so that we could take his glory and we could stand in his holiness and that that holiness would impact every area of our life let's pray Lord we thank you we thank you for this day thank you for this opportunity we pray that your word would continue to speak and resonate within our lives throughout the week we ask it in Christ's name amen so