

Deuteronomy 21:1-9

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[0 : 00] Amen. Deuteronomy chapter 21, starting in verse 1. Just nine verses this evening. It says this. If a slain person is found lying in the open country and the land, which the Lord your God gives you to possess, and it is not known who has struck him, then your elders and your judges shall go out and measure the distance of the cities which are around the slain one.

It shall be that the city which is nearest to the slain man, that is, the elders of that city, shall take the heifer of the herd, which has not been worked, and which has not pulled any oak. And the elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with running water, which has not been plowed or sown, and shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley.

Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come here, for the Lord your God has chosen them to serve them and to bless them in the name of the Lord. And every dispute and every assault shall be settled by them.

All the elders of that city which is nearest to the slain man shall wash their hands over the heifer, whose neck was broken in the valley, and they shall answer and say, Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it.

Forgive your people Israel, whom you have redeemed, O Lord. And do not place the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of your people Israel, and the blood-guiltiness shall be forgiven them.

[1 : 19] So you shall remove the guilt of innocent blood from your midst when you do what is right in the eyes of the Lord. It seems like a pretty obscure passage, and it's a passage that deals with an individual who has not just died of natural causes, but has died to death of murder or homicide.

Here's the individual who has been found lying in the field. No one witnessed the crime. We have already read the laws as regards to doing this type of crime. We know that there were cities of refuge if someone accidentally killed a friend or a neighbor.

The illustration is that you go out in the woods and you cut it out of a tree, and their accent flies off. And there's a city of refuge which you can run through, and then never forget. And if you intentionally did, or if you lay in wait, and you sought an opportunity to what we would call murder or kill an individual, then that, of course, was the death penalty.

But here we don't know who caused it. We don't know who did it, yet the matter has happened. And now we're running upon an issue which God says is one of the things which defiled the land.

Now the land is very important. The land is really connected with the nation of Israel because this land is a promised land. It is because of the sins of the Canaanites and the Gentiles and the Hittites.

[2 : 43] It is because of their sin that the land was defiled and polluted and therefore they were cast out. We are told with the story of Cain and Abel that Abel's blood cried out from the land.

The book of Romans tells us that all of creation groans. The Bible tells us another place that God will hold accountable every cry and despair that the land calls out of the innocence that has been shed.

And yet here we see one of those issues which defiles the land. We will come upon another one later on in this chapter that is immorality. Now we know idolatry does it because idolatry is worshipping with false gods and we know that that surely defiles the land and that defiles the people and the land.

This here the shedding of innocent blood is the defilement of the land which will lead to the defilement of the people. Immorality defiles the land as well. Makes one unclean. But see, what God is concerned about is not that we look right on the outside but that where we live is right too. Right? He has connected the people with the land and the promise. Land is the promise or the blessing. And he's concerned that neither one of them are made unclean or defiled.

[3 : 55] Another matter which we see happening in this chapter, if we would really flesh it out, is that the people are really connected to one another. The sins of an individual influence the entire body.

Now this is something that is a very consistent theme throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament. It's that the individual's actions has the ability to defile the community for the corporate problem.

That what the individual does has direct ramifications on everyone else. Think of Achan. The sin of Achan.

Achan's sin led to the death of a number of people that did not include him. Achan's sin of Achan's sin led to his own death after it was discovered.

But initially it was those who went and fought the battle. Right? A number of them died. We see this throughout Scripture that one man's actions influence so many others.

[5 : 08] And here, when the land is a problem from the shedding of the innocent blood, though no one knows who did it, the land is defiled. And therefore, since the land is defiled, the entire nation of Israel is defiled.

It influences everyone. Now, before we really get into it, we're running one of those dangers here in our own country. Other countries, missionaries speak of the reality that if you, you don't try to win individuals to Christ.

And a number of other countries, missionaries are not seeking to win individuals, they're seeking to win families. And depending on where you're at, you can reach the man and reach the family, or, like the mom, for instance, which is typically more matriarchal, if you reach the lady, you can reach the family.

But they seek to find the influence for all the whole. Think of the children of Philippi, the Philippian children. Remember when Paul, singing, the earthquake came down, and everything happened from the Philippian children when it filled themselves in Acts chapter 16, I believe it is.

And Paul cried and said, no, don't do that, we're all here. That's just Paul in silence. Everybody's here. And he comes, and he doesn't ask him, he says, what must I do to be saved?

[6 : 32] And he says, trust in Jesus Christ and you and your whole household will be saved. He reached the influence. Right? Here in our own part of the world, we're so me-focused.

We're so individual, isolated, that we would love to think that my individual sins have no impact on anyone else.

But the reality, all of the church, even in particular with the church, why would Paul put a sinner in Corinth out of the church?

Why would Paul say, we're reading through some of you first Corinthians right now, we haven't got to it yet, but you will get to it there in first Corinthians where Paul says, I handed this one over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh.

That's a church memory. Right? And first Corinthians when he goes to the saints, to the saints which are in Corinth. And he says, I've given this one over the saint for the destruction of his flesh. Why did Paul do that?

[7 : 36] Because he said, he is a blight or a spot in your midst. For the betterment of the body, I can get rid of this one. Sins have been visible always in back for the bodies.

Even in America, when you might not face it. So what we see in particular in this passage, Deuteronomy 21 verse 29, I want you to see maintaining a pure standing.

Maintaining a pure standing. Because it took everybody to maintain a pure standing before a holy God. And if one person messed up, it tainted the entire community, it tainted the entire society, and therefore no one really was worthy of standing before a holy God.

The first thing you see is the appearance of sin is the following that we've already been talking about it. But it says, now if a man who has been slain is found, God deals with realities.

God is on a pond of sky. He does not think things will ever go wrong. God deals with man. He knows the heart of man, as John chapter 3 tells us. The Nicodemus named Jesus by night.

[8 : 51] Right before that, at the end of John chapter 2, going into John chapter 3, they said that Jesus needed no one to tell him about everything he is the heart of every man. And as God knows the heart of every man, he also understands that there's going to come from a time where there's going to be a man and a slave found lying in the face.

And at that moment, everyone is the God. Sin's appearance in the land all of a sudden defiles the people.

It puts a hindrance or a block between them and fellowship and commune with Yahweh, the Lord that are God. Because of the appearance of sin, the land is evolved, and not only the land is

evolved, but some of the people are now there, worship is hindered, and when worship is hindered, everything is hindered, because everything flows from worship, not flowing to worship.

And that's a big difference. Rather than life pointing to worship, life comes from worship. Worship is the central issue. It is the big issue. It is the primary task, right?

Everything else comes as a result of that worship. How we live socially is a result of our worship.

How we live politically is a result of our worship. How we live economically is a result of our worship within the nation of Israel.

[10:09] But that's why they were every seventh year, they gave the land of sabbatical. That's why they were on the harvest and edges of their field, because they worshiped Yahweh. That's why they were to give to those who went behind them and picked the Boaz, because they worshiped Yahweh, everything flows from worship.

And now when sin has appeared and the land is defiled, the people's worship is hindered, and therefore life is suffering. It had to be dealt with. It had to be addressed.

And the moment sin appears and the fowl becomes, everything stops. It was still. It says, then the elders and the rulers will come.

Lord, I think, is correct here, in that surely this means the temple elders and temple rulers, those who are in the presence of the Lord God, because it could not be the elders and rulers from a particular city, because we don't know which city is to take part in this yet.

They're the ones venturing, right? They literally go venture and see which city is the closest. So this doesn't just call for local authorities, this calls for national authorities.

[11:23] Because the elders and rulers at the temple or the tabernacle or the presence of God, those were the ones who made the hard decisions, right? When there was a decision and you couldn't come to an answer, you went to them.

They stood in the presence of God. God, and when sin revealed itself and therefore defiled the land, it called for the highest level of importance. And they would come and the appearance of sin has defiled the land and it must be addressed.

Of course, when we live at that time, now I'm just going on this side of the cross, right? And he is a personal savior. He saves the individual. He saves the individual and unites into the important body of the bride of Christ.

He unites us and puts us together. Ephesians chapter 4, every one of us are essential. Every one of us are important. Every one of us, first we are connected to one another.

Take a rock out of a building, if you were going to take one of the stones out of the foundation of this building, you would have a rock. Pretty cool looking rock, still a rock. It's only a foundation, it's only important when you connect with everything else.

[12:39] Every other rock that's around us is building and that's what Peter says, we are like spiritual stones being built up and connected one to another to spiritual house. And when one of those stones, one of those stones was to fail, we would need to address the problem because it was run to the risk of messing up every other stone.

And this is why on our 150th celebration, some came and told me, hey, Pastor Calvert, I believe that they put a time capsule in the cornerstone of the building.

I said, that's amazing. When they built this church 150 years ago, they put a time capsule and that's amazing. They said, you should get it out. I said, not going to do it. They said, why? I said, for one, nobody here was alive and they told me for sure that it's in there.

And number two, I'm not going to get the guy who knocks the cornerstone out messes up the building. Last I checked, one of those were pretty important. They said, well, I think he's got this and this and this and this in it.

I said, that's great. If you were so sure of it, I will get you a slant tower. And they weren't that sure of it. And the other was I. Because I know if you mess with someone up, you mess all of them up.

[13:50] And now all of a sudden, it calls for the highest of caring concern. The sin has defiled the land which has led to an interest of worship among the people.

Unfortunately, in our time, a lot of sin defiles around us and we ignore it. Because we think that the object of life is to try to get to worship rather than life only from worship.

We're not trying to get to worship. We should live because we do worship. Everything we do should be an outflow or a display of our worship.

We should not be pressing through things and try to go in worship. Rather, we should be removing entrances that are going to keep us from worship. And this is exactly what's going on. And the appearance of sin is defile, but it calls for action.

In our own land, the appearance of sin is defile, but it's around us. It calls for action. Secondly, we see the appointed men of intercession. The appointed men of intercession.

[14 : 54] One thing I love about Scripture, in particular that I love about the Old Testament, because in the New Testament it's clear, and we live in the day where it's clear, but in the Old Testament things don't look good at all.

As a matter of fact, things look bleak often. You read the book of Judges, you read all those passages, and it looks bleak, and it's dark, and it's just not right.

But this is something we must admit, right? History is not progressing, it is digressing. That's an easy way of saying things aren't getting better, they're getting worse. So when we read the book of Judges, the reality is that we are worse today than they were then.

Because contrary to man's opinion, we're not advancing. We're not getting further on. We're going backwards.

We're decaying. I like how we talk about the advancement of man and how man has progressed yet. In our grand state, we cannot figure out how man built things that they did hundreds of years ago.

[15 : 57] And all of our technology and all of our advancement and all of our sophistication, we still have to figure out how that happens to have the things they did. We really don't know how here in the poor BC developed underwater concrete.

Or why an aqueduct were put in and the BC carried water to Jerusalem until 1942 from the Mediterranean Sea. In all of our advancements, in all of our progression, it seems that we may can accomplish what we call more.

And we may have it in our favor. If it's more information, we'll be doing a lot less. That's because man is on the downward spiral. And when we're in the Old Testament, we see how things look dark. What I love about the Old Testament, because in the New Testament, it's clear. God always has his man. When all of man was defiled and their hearts were set away, that's how they don't.

When the nation of Israel was in despair, crying out, God had Moses. When Moses was about to depart to find out this is like the end of Joshua.

[17 : 13] When Joshua passed away, various judges. All of the book of Judges, God always has his man. Then there's Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel.

Keep going, keep going, keep going. God always has his man. When the kings were wicked and things were awful, God has a man. A king would find in the temple, a scroll of the book written. God always has his man. God, in the New Testament, we see God is man. We see Jesus. We see a man in the world. He always has his man.

And it is the appointed men of intercession. When things are bad and everything's defiled and everything's falling apart and the ability to worship is hindered, God always has someone to stand in the gap.

He always has someone to close the gap on it. And here it is, the priest. Now this amazes me. I just want to make some of you have done your daily reading today.

[18 : 25] And you've read Genesis 49. Israel, the man, is about to die. And he's blessing his children. Remember.

He blesses his children and calls them out. Keep that in mind. The man of God's appointment, is a trial. The trial of Levi.

And it says here that the priest would come. But now listen to this. It says that the priest would come, in verse 5, the sons of Levi shall come here.

For the Lord your God has chosen them to serve them and to bless in the name of the Lord. That's grace, by the way. I'll show you one just a moment.

And every dispute and every assault shall be settled by them. One of the things that Levi was responsible for, even though they were priests. Now these are men, not men singular. But they are only through one man who was from the order of Melchizedek, not from the order of Aaron, right?

[19 : 31] Not from the tribe of Levi, but the order of Melchizedek who is Jesus Christ. But here the priests are to intercede on behalf of man. And they are to be the ones who settle the disputes of disorder and assaults, murderers.

Now when the man is or blesses his children, Genesis 49, do you remember what he says about his son of Levi? It's actually about his two sons singing to Levi.

He calls them wild. And that the sword will never leave their hands. And that they were murderers. But do you remember they had a sister? And their sister was taking advantage of them. And Simeon and Levi had this great idea. Let's tell the men of that city over there we're intermarrying with, and with all he's circumcised.

So they all got circumcised. The Bible says, Simeon and Levi waited until the third day. That is, all the men were very sore. And they went in and killed every month. And for that reason their dad did not give them a blessing, whether he gave them a curse.

[20 : 42] But God in his grace chose them. The ones who had committed murder in their father Levi. The ones who had been vengeful in Levi, God chose them to be the ones who settled in that way.

Sometimes it amazes me the man God uses. Sometimes it amazes me his grace and mercy. He could have used any number of the tribes.

Right? He could have used any other. But he chose the tribe of Levi. The ones who had that problem in the past. That would be the ones who had settled in the streets of the present life. Because your past struggles are often very thoughtful that God will give you in the present. And they help the people around you when they need you. Sometimes you're that man and God is put it in the camp.

God always has a man. And well, I don't want to discount you though, you know. I don't mean this to be, but I'm trying to be politically incorrect here.

[21 : 50] I do know that there are female judges as well, right? You know, prophet. That's this as well. The Old Testament. God always has his person. And here is the appointed child of Levi that was standing in the gap.

Issues need to be set. Number three. There is the accepted responsibility of action. Because the judges and the leaders are coming in and measure.

This man was found lying in the field. Foul claims was definitely involved. No one knows who did it. So we're going to measure. It would be as if this individual was on a go-off or a trace road there. The leaders came and they measured the distance of a go-off and they measured the distance towards race and they're going to tell you where you're supposed to do it now. We need to get this clear. They're not measuring the distance to determine which city is at fault.

No one knows who did it. There's no proof that they had to dump the body closer to where they live. That's not what's going on.

[23 : 01] They're not trying to say, well, he must live here because it's closer to there. No, there has been a defilement in the land because of sin. Everybody has been impacted because of this sin.

Somebody needs to take action because of this sin. Not just that somebody needs to pay. Somebody needs to be told for this sin.

So when they measure the distance, they find the city is closest and then it says, and the elders of that city in the land of that city, the elders of that city are not responsible.

They have to accept the reality that it is their problem. It is their issue to be addressed. They don't have the right or the freedom to say, well, we would rather not deal with this because the answer is it's closer to you than anyone else.

We don't have time for this right now. We have other things going on. I'm sure that whoever did it doesn't know. A lot of us, that really doesn't matter. It is your issue because you are the ones close.

[24 : 13] You are there. The defilement is closer to you than anyone else. And something needs to be done and you are responsible for it because you are the city which is closer.

And they have to accept that reality and take action upon us. Because the very nearness to the sin is what's calling them to take action as a result of the sin.

The fact that God had put them near it now makes them responsible for it. And they couldn't overlook it. They couldn't overshadow it.

They couldn't miss it. They said it. They said it. They said it. They said it. Because the land, that is all of the nation of Israel, is waiting in the land. One of the things, historically, that has always bothered me is not only the atrocities that happened during World War II in Germany and concentration camps as atrocious as they were and horrendous of what was going on.

But as a pastor, one of the things that always bothered me is the reality that some of these concentration camps were just across the tree line from churches. And literally, men and women would be yelling together ringing the bells on Sunday morning and worship.

[25 : 39] But on the other side of the tree line, was a concentration camp. And reported it and confessedly, people in the church never knew.

And I've always wrestled with how could you not know? How could you not know? The only way to not know is not being concerned about what's near.

because the same answer lies within us. There are things that go on in our community or our area right across the tree line that we don't know about.

The biblical reality is those who are closest are responsible. Those who are closest are the ones who must take action.

It's not enough to say, well, we'll let someone else do it. It's those who are closest. So, the issues that happen in our own community, the things that are around us, the things that are near us, those are our responsibilities.

[26 : 50] Those are our responsibilities. Right? Those are our charges because we're near. We need to own that.

Here, they accept responsibility because they realize since they're closest to anyone else, they alone must be the ones who take action upon it. They alone must be the ones who work it.

They alone must be the ones who do what everybody else needs them to do because they are the ones who are near. And they must accept the responsibility for the action that has to be paid.

Because if they don't, the land is still defiled and the worship of the nations is still hindered and the blood cries out and the cries out long enough to unruly to open the land.

We see this reality. And the fourth, the final thing we see is the passage to see. is the atoning sacrifice and confession.

[28 : 10] because the action is to atone for the sin which has to follow the next. The action that the people must accept is that they're going to atone for the sin so the worship can be restored and purity can be maintained or renewed because they're trying to maintain a pure standard.

So what needs to happen is the blood that has been shed though no one knows who did it and those surely those taking part in this ceremony didn't do it yet they have to atone for the sin because the blood has been shed it's already happened.

It's not just whoever committed his fault now all of a sudden we are all a part of that we have to atone for that we have to cleanse our land from that so there's a very particular sacrifice they have to get they have to get a young heifer which never works it's never been put up to the yoke and it's never pulled with the yoke it's never tilled the land this is not going to be a burnt offering this is not even going to be it's not the red heifer that you burn the ashes and you use it for cleansing this is going to be one that has broken assets literally means they're going to slay it that way so they get this very specific offering of a young heifer which has done no work and they take it to a valley that has running water and in this valley the land cannot be tilled and nothing can be planted so I hope you see the picture no work is involved at all the animal hasn't worked and the lamb hasn't worked and nobody can do any work and by the way the priests don't do a thing the elders put it down and go because the men of intercession have told them what is required and therefore they are to do it the priests don't break the neck the priests don't get the effort but the priests don't choose to spot the elders in the land and they take over running water and they break its neck and wash their hands of running water over that and I know to us it doesn't make a lot of physical sense that they're doing this and as they're doing it they make this confession and each of the elders who are representatives of every person of that city and every person of that town and they're sending up as representatives and they're washing their hands and saying

I am innocent of this man's blood I did not do this and I do not know who did this that's their confession right I did not do it and I don't know who did it and then they pray Lord pardon me and forgive your people and restore your land so it is the elders who are now interceding to the land very specific very deep and in this matter it says they will be restored but their prayer is a cry of Lord forgive your people whom you have redeemed we are your people we remember who we are we know that we must be pure in understanding and we know that this causes a hindrance between us and you and that will forgive us and Lord restore us and it says there in verse 9 as it closes the section so you shall remove the guilt of innocent blood from your midst when you do what is right in the eyes of the Lord as much as it doesn't make sense nobody was free to go about restoration

however they wanted to you could have said well a burnt offering of a ram seems to make a lot more sins because that's not what God said you could have said well what about a bull or a bull no it has to be a young heifer that has never done any work because no work is involved in restoring those who have been defined no work ultimately what we see here every type every picture every author wants to

Christ no work is involved in our part he did all we wash our hands in his blood not in water everything points to Christ and the reason it points to Christ is because since God gave very specific clear details as to how they can maintain their purity what must take place for restoration and God says when you do what I say then you will remove the guilt friend listen to me you can't remove the guilt however you want to man is guilty of shed blood man is guilty of sin and violence all and we don't get to choose how we remove that guilt we can only remove the guilt how God says so and for us that has come to the cross of power and cry out to the Savior and hang on the cross by the way this chapter will end with that very puritan curse is everyone and hang on the truth come to the one who was cursed for us so that we don't have to be cursed in this time we can only come as it says when we do what is right in the eyes of the

[33 : 53] Lord we don't need to choose how where to win very clearly there's one place one person one sacrifice one savior and when we come to him and do what is right then we remove the guilt of love when we seek to maintain a pure standing before him good and pull away verses one between nine thank you guys i've been a long time so sorry for that okay we'll take some time to pray and then we will go to paradise first and then we'll pray together hey did you obey kerry base gail beach gay and lynn voice i think you should take the okay

Kyle Brown christie mckinnon can rupert joelle mutter shirley carter and ken but sean chance ken churchill so Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[38 : 27] Thank you.