

## **DEUTERONOMY 20-23**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Deuteronomy chapter 20 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

We are currently in the second of three sermons that Moses gave to the children of Israel as they are preparing to enter the Promise Land under the leadership of Joshua.

This sermon began back in Deuteronomy 4:44 and will continue through Deuteronomy 26:19.

And as we begin our study in Deuteronomy chapter 20, we will see Moses instruct the children of Israel, this generation who will be entering into the Promise Land under the leadership of Joshua, what warfare is all about.

Again, they are going to be entering into this land of Canaan, the Promise Land very soon.

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Deuteronomy chapter 20, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word.

## **DEUTERONOMY 20**

### **VERSE 1**

Make no mistake about it, this was a reality. When they enter the land, the enemy will be bigger, stronger and have more weapons than the children of Israel will have.

Thus, the Lord tells them “**... do not be afraid.**”

How could they not be afraid?

This seems like a blind faith!

It is not. The Lord not only told them that He would be with them but to remember what He did for them when He brought them out of Egypt!

They could trust Him as they went into battle because He had proven Himself mighty and faithful before. He had a track record which could be trusted.

Also, I want you to see that it does not say, *“If you go out to battle”* but it does say, **“When you go out to battle.”**

They were going to face battles in the Promise Land and God is encouraging them not to look at the strength of the enemy but look to Him.

Do not fear the enemy because the battle belongs to the Lord.

The same is true for us. God calls us out and He tells us not to fear but to remember what He has done in our life to give us the confidence to move forward in the present battles we are facing!

Too often we forget about the Lord, and we try to do it on our own or look to the world for our help. But remember the warning in Isaiah 31:1-3 about going to the world for help.

Isaiah tells us, **“Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, And rely on horses, Who trust in chariots because they are many, And in horsemen because they are very strong, But who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, Nor seek the Lord! Yet He also is wise and will bring disaster, And will not call back His words, But will arise against the house of evildoers, And against the help of those who work iniquity. Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; And their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When the Lord stretches out His hand, Both he who helps will fall, And he who is helped will fall down; They all will perish together.”**

Again, Egypt is a type of the world, and we are not to put our trust in the world but in the Lord!

Paul reminds us, “**. . . If God is for us, who can be against us?**” Romans 8:31b.

Something for us to remember!

#### VERSES 2-4

Notice what the priest’s responsibility was. He was to encourage the soldiers with the Words of God.

You see, if they trusted in the Lord, were obedient to Him, they could never lose.

But, if they did not trust in the Lord, if they did not obey His commands, they could never win no matter how strong they thought they were!

Remember what Paul said in Ephesians 6:10-13, “**Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.**”

You see, not only pastors, but all of us need to encourage each other with God’s Word because it is not “*if*” we will face these battles, but “*when*” we face them.

And thus, we need to be strong in the Lord, especially in the days we are living in as the battle against our faith continues to grow!

As we move into these next several verses, look at what the Lord is doing. He is not increasing the number of soldiers in Israel, but He is thinning them out, He is shrinking the army of Israel!

Not a great military strategy from a human perspective, but when you see what God is doing, it truly is brilliant and again, the battle belongs to the Lord. May we not forget that!

### VERSES 5-9

If you had a new home, you didn't have to go to war.

If you had a vineyard that was not harvested yet, you didn't have to go to war.

If you were newly married, you didn't have to go to war.

And if you were fearful, guess what, you didn't have to go to war!

I wonder how many were excluded because of these exceptions.

Why did God do this?

God didn't want soldiers who were going to be distracted by various things. He wanted them to be focused upon Him, committed to Him. He didn't want men who feared, but men of faith!

And thus, He could do more through a smaller army who was committed to Him than a huge army that wasn't!

I would agree. I would rather have men that were faithful, focused by my side in this battle we are in, than those who are easily distracted by things or fearful and don't engage in the battle!

Now we will see the Lord give them instructions on how to do war, they were not to go in and do whatever they wanted!

VERSES 10-15

God is going to speak of the nations that are to be destroyed, but right now He is speaking of those cities that could have been spared if they received the offer of peace from Israel. But, if they rejected it, they were to be wiped out and the males killed. And the plunder taken would be divided up, kind of wages paid for the warfare.

Again, keep in mind that this does not apply to the upcoming invasion of the Promised Land. You see, the Canaanites were so corrupt – so steeped in demonic and occult activities – they were to be totally annihilated – men, women, children, cattle, everything!

And we will see that as we read on.

VERSES 16-18

Here, in the land of Canaan they were to destroy the enemy completely, but why?

First of all, these people were wicked, immoral and they were ripe for the judgment of God. They had passed the point of no return. God was going to judge them for their actions.

Also, if they were not completely destroyed then their idolatry, their sin would infect the children of Israel and that is exactly what happened down the road because they did not fully obey the Lord.

And we will see that as we get to the book of Joshua and then we will see the ramifications of not destroying the enemy played out for us in the book of Judges!

VERSES 19-20

When you fought against these walled cities you would cut down trees for battering rams and other things.

Here God tells them not to destroy those fruit bearing trees because they were to be food for them.

That just makes sense to me.

## **DEUTERONOMY 21**

### **VERSES 1-6**

This was not a death by natural causes, but the person was murdered, and no one knew who did it.

Once the body was found the elders and judges would see what city was closest to this dead body and the elders of that city would offer a sacrifice and the elders would wash their hands over this animal.

Why would they do this?

Back in Numbers 35:33-34 we see that blood that was shed, murder, if it was not dealt with, would defile the land.

But here they did not know who did it and thus, they offered the sacrifice and the elders, by washing their hands over this animal, were showing that they were innocent of this man's murder.

Pilate tried to do that with Jesus by washing his hands of what was about to take place, but he was guilty of putting Jesus to death.

VERSES 7-9

The removal of the guilt was always based upon the blood sacrifice.

And we can see how that applies in our lives today. The removal of our guilt, our sin is also based upon the blood sacrifice, the shedding of the blood of Jesus.

It is as Paul wrote in Romans 3:23-26, **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”**

VERSES 10-14

Moses is instructing them what to do if they wanted to marry a woman that they had taken captive in one of their battles.

First of all, they needed to have this woman shave her head and trim her nails, and I think the idea here is that of purity and humbleness.

Next, she was to take off her clothes of captivity, which showed she was breaking away from the old life.

Next, she was to mourn for her parents for a full month and I believe the idea here is that she had to cut off her past associations, even family, she was starting a new life!

Now, after a full month he could marry her or let her go if he didn't want to marry her.

But if he let her go, she could not be sold, she was free.

Why would he change his mind?

Maybe it was a rash decision on his part and the months' time brought him to his senses.

Or, maybe after that month she could not cut herself away from her past and thus, he was not to marry her.

But notice the protection for this woman who was taken captive in battle! God knows the heart of man and thus, He put this there for protection!

#### VERSES 15-17

Please understand that God is not condoning polygamy, He is trying to resolve some of the conflicts that arise because of polygamy.

God's desire is for a monogamous relationship between one man and one woman. But man's heart is evil, and these are the consequences of his actions.

Here, if he had two wives and loves one more than the other, if the unloved one has a firstborn son in this family, he is not to be passed over because his mother is unloved.

You see, the firstborn was to receive a double portion of the inheritance and God was protecting the rights of the firstborn.

#### VERSES 18-21

Here we see the penalty for a rebellious son, and it is death.

Before you freak out here, you need to understand we are not talking about a child or even a teenager but a rebellious adult.

And it was not their parents' fault, they tried to train him up, they disciplined him, but now, he is rebellious, a drunkard and-so-on.



And what would happen is that his parents would bring him to the elders of the city, and they would then decide if he should be put to death or not for his rebellion.

It may seem harsh, but a rebellious child will not only disobey his parents but will be trouble in society also.

We don't have any record in the Bible that this was ever carried out and the rabbis say that throughout their history this law was never put into practice, but it was for them to hear and fear the consequences of their actions!

Yes, this law, the Old Covenant provided an external standard to control a person's behavior, but keep in mind that it never had the power to change a person's heart.

But, under the New Covenant we see that Jesus can take a heart of stone and replace it with a soft heart! He changes us inwardly and that affects our outward actions!

#### VERSES 22-23

This is not saying that they were hung on a tree, but they were placed on a tree after they were dead to humiliate his memory and to be a deterrent so that others don't go down that path.

That is another reason why Jews reject Jesus as the Messiah because He was hung on a tree.

But Paul, an expert in the Law, tells us in Galatians 3:10-14 regarding what was spoken of here in Deuteronomy.

This is what he wrote, **“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for ‘the just shall live by faith.’ Yet the law is not of faith, but ‘the man who does them shall live by them.’ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”**

The curse that Jesus bore was not His own. It was our curse. He was cursed, so we could be blessed.

All that was due us, He received, Jesus took our sins, our humiliation, that wrath that was due us and in return we received the redemption from the curse of the Law because His blood has made atonement for our sins.

He hung on a tree so that we could one day live with Him!

## **DEUTERONOMY 22**

### **VERSES 1-4**

What is God against here?

It is the sin of doing nothing, the sin of omission!

Yes, it may take some of your time to get involved, maybe even some of your resources, but God wants you to help another person who is in need. If you find their possessions then you need to give it back to them.

It is as James tells us, **“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”**

In other words, good works don't save us, but they are the fruit that is born out of our faith.

Thus, if you don't have works, that fruit, your faith is death, it is non-existent and are you really saved?

#### VERSE 5

Believe it or not, there are some Christians that will use this verse as proof text showing that women are to wear dresses and not pants because that is dressing up as a man.

That is not what this verse is saying.

Keep in mind that all the men and woman dressed fairly similar back in those days. But you could tell the difference between the way a man dressed and the way that a woman dressed.

Today those lines are blurred and that is the idea. You are not to dress in such a way that you *deceive* people into thinking you are the opposite sex. You make people believe you are a woman when you are a man or a man when you are a woman.

It has nothing to do with women wearing pants, not at all. Ladies, if you want to wear dresses all the time, that is fine, but it is not a command against you wearing pants, not at all!

VERSES 6-7

God is kind and concerned for all of His creation. And what we see here is this mother bird just had her un-hatched babies taken away and she is to be left alone.

What is that all about?

I think the idea here is that if you take both the mother and her eggs then you will take away any chance of this group from reproducing.

Thus, by sparing the mother she could go on and reproduce and have young, and in the long run, that would provide for you.

VERSE 8

Roofs back then and even today in Israel were functional. You could sit up on the roof and relax; they were flat obviously and not peaked.

And God is saying that you need to put up a railing around the roof area to protect people from falling off.

For us today, and for our families, our friends, we need to have railings of protection in a sense.

What do I mean by that?

I mean that we are to have protection in our homes from sin so you don't fall prey to them, so your family does not fall prey to them, so your guests won't fall prey to them.

You don't want to push anyone to the edge so they fall off!

What are these railings of protection?

It is the Word of God that will guide us in all truth!

VERSES 9-12

Here we see four laws of separation, that may seem strange but there is a lesson that God is showing us in these laws, as we will see.

You are not to sow a vineyard with different kinds of seed.

The idea here is not to take the seed of God's Word and mix it with any other seed for it will defile God's Word! That just makes sense although we see this happening in many churches today!

You are not to plow with an ox and a donkey.

From a farming perspective, that just makes sense. They would not move together but they would be pulling in different directions you might say.

For us, the idea is who are we yoking ourselves with, be it a friend, a girlfriend or boyfriend. If they are not believers, they will pull you away from God, you are moving in different directions. You are unequally yoked!

That is not to say you can't talk to unbelievers, but they can't be a close friend, one you confide in or seek direction from.

You were not to mix wool and linen together not because it is a fashion faux pas!

The idea here is that wool was used in work, you would sweat but linen is used in worship, there is no sweat you might say. It is the difference between fleshly driven or Spirit led!

And you were to make tassels and place them in the four corners of your robe.

Why did God instruct them to put these blue tassels on the four corners of their robes?

Blue speaks of heaven and thus, it was to remind them who they belonged to – **GOD!** It reminded them of where they were headed – **HEAVEN!** Thus, it reminded them to live lives that were pleasing to God because they belonged to Him and one day they would be with Him!

It was to separate them from the people around them, from the pagan influence that surrounded them!

And this should just make sense for us as Christians. We too are to be separated from this world and unto the Lord and that can be difficult at times, but that is what God desires of us. We are not to be yoked together with the world.

Paul, in II Corinthians 6:14 reminds us of this as he wrote, **“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?”**

#### VERSES 13-21

Here we see what was to be done if a man accuses his new wife of not being a virgin when they were married.

Obviously, this was made apparent on their wedding night when the marriage was consummated.

If it was true, it not only disgraced the husband, but virginity was highly valued in Israel and thus, a woman who was not a virgin would find it very difficult to get married.

Today, I am sorry to say, it seems the exact opposite is true, where finding someone who has not had premarital sex is a rarity, it is not valued like it was in Israel!

Now what was this evidence of her virginity?

According to Jewish customs, a Jewish woman would be intimate with her husband on a special cloth when they were consummating their marriage.

Thus, this evidence was drops of blood left on the cloth and then the cloth was given to the woman's father as evidence that she was a virgin, and her husband could never hold this against her.

Kalland makes these comments, *“The proofs of virginity, the blood-spotted bedclothes or garments, which, though not infallible, were widely accepted in the ancient Near East as indications of prior virginity, are still accepted among some peoples today.”*

If the husband was lying and his new wife was a virgin, as the elders of the city looked at the evidence and made their judgment, he would have to pay 100 shekels of silver to his father-in-law and then he still had to stay married to her and he could never divorce her!

But if what he said were true, then they would take her and stone her to death.

Don't say premarital sex is no big deal to God.

## VERSE 22

How was adultery dealt with in Israel?

Both parties involved were put to death!

Why was God so strict with this?

Because of the consequences that resulted from this sin! Look at our society today and see the devastating affects adultery and premarital sex has upon it!

VERSES 23-29

These are laws concerning rape.

First, if a man has intimate relations with a virgin who was betrothed to a husband, married but the marriage not consummated yet, and this occurs in the city, and she does not cry out. Then both of them are stoned to death.

Why is that?

Because, by not crying out she was saying that she was a willing party in this.

But, if she is in the countryside and a man has intimate relations with her, she is not to be stoned to death, only the man.

Why is that?

Because no one can hear her, and it was presumed that she was a victim of rape!

And, if a man has intimate relations with a woman who is not betrothed, then he has to pay her father 50 shekels and he has to marry her, and he forfeits his right to divorce her in the future.

VERSE 30

This is a law against incest, or having sex with your stepmom, which we see was going on in Corinth and Paul had to address it. (I Corinthians 5)

And yes, not a blood relative but it was considered such as she was married to the son's father. And in Leviticus chapter 18 we once again see God forbid this kind of relationship!



**DEUTERONOMY 23****VERSE 1**

Many men became eunuchs to serve pagan deities, and obviously God is against that.

But what if it was a birth defect or some kind of accident that made you like this? Would that mean you were cut off from worshiping the Lord?

I don't believe that is what Moses is saying here.

In Isaiah 56:3-5 we are told, **“Do not let the son of the foreigner Who has joined himself to the Lord Speak, saying, ‘The Lord has utterly separated me from His people’; Nor let the eunuch say, ‘Here I am, a dry tree.’ For thus says the Lord: ‘To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant, Even to them I will give in My house And within My walls a place and a name Better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name That shall not be cut off.’”**

Poole, I believe, rightly suggests that the idea of **the assembly of the LORD** is the leadership, or the rulers of Israel. These people were barred not from the religious life of Israel, but from the political life of the nation.

Also, Trapp agrees, as he tells us regarding that phrase, **shall not enter the assembly of the LORD**: “Shall not go in and out before the people as a public officer.”

I think that is how this verse should be viewed in light of what we have read in Isaiah 56.

How does this even relate to us as Christians today? I believe the point or the lesson for us today is that God wants us to reproduce, that a healthy church will grow. You see, if it becomes emasculated, if there is no seed in the church, it is dead! Thus, a healthy church will reproduce as they share their faith, the church will grow!

VERSE 2

Some feel that this is speaking of mixed marriages, a Jew and a pagan or Gentile.

Others feel it speaks of someone who was born out of an incestuous relationship!

Both may apply here.

Today I think this means that you must be born again.

In John 1:12-13 we are told, **“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”**

You see, God does not have any grandchildren, you are either a son or daughter or you are illegitimate.

We have been adopted into the family of God by faith in Christ, that is what makes us legitimate sons and daughters of God!

VERSES 3-6

Moab and Ammon were two sons of Lot that were born out of an incestuous relationship with his two daughters. (Genesis 19:30-38)

And their descendants were pagan; they worshiped Baal besides other false gods. And God is saying that His children are not to let them in because they will infect His children with their poison, with their doctrines of demons!

What a great lesson for us to learn, to not get involved with activities that would dishonor God and never let an unsaved person speak from the pulpit!

But what about Ruth, she was a Moabite?

It seems like the permanent restrictions on Moabites applied only to the men. Moabite women were allowed to marry Israeli men and become citizens. Thus, Ruth was able to marry a Jewish man by the name of Boaz and she became the great-grandmother of King David!

We also see mentioned here Balaam, who was from Mesopotamia, and he was hired by Balak to curse the children of Israel.

And I love what God did, He turned those cursings into blessings! It is as we are told in Isaiah 54:17, **“No weapon formed against you shall prosper, And every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, And their righteousness is from Me,’ Says the Lord.”**

You see, no matter what the enemy may throw at us, God will see us through and in the end, He will give us the victory!

#### VERSES 7-8

The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob and God tells the children of Israel not to abhor them or detest them.

The same with the Egyptians because Israel was truly born as a nation in Egypt, from 70 people to well over 2 to 3 million people in just around 400 years!

The next few laws address cleanliness and sanitation.

#### VERSES 9-14

God not only wants His people to be ceremonially clean, but also their out-houses you might say, were to be outside the camp. And when they finished their business, they were to cover it up.

Keep in mind that the camp of Israel had some 2 to 3 million people and without these sanitation laws it would have been a mess and of course, the spread of disease!

And God looks at the camp like this, **“For the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy, that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you.”** Deuteronomy 23:14.

How does that apply to us.

We are to keep our lives clean, not put garbage in them for the Spirit of God dwells in us and we are to be a holy people!

#### VERSES 15-16

This must be speaking of a foreign slave, someone from another land because if the slave came from the children of Israel, they would have to return them to their owner, their master.

#### VERSES 17-18

Moses is saying that there should be no female prostitutes or male prostitutes, which were homosexuals, and they are called the **“perverted one”** in Israel.

This was a common practice in the pagan religions, as these female and male prostitutes would give the money they made to their gods.

And Moses tells them not to take any of their money, not of a harlot or even a dog, which speaks of a male prostitute. This is an abomination before the Lord!

VERSES 19-20

It seems that you were not to charge interest on loans made to the poor for their basic needs.

In Exodus 22:25 we see this spoken of, **“If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest.”**

You could charge interest on loans made not to the poor and to the foreigner, and again I see this as some kind of business transaction.

VERSES 21-23

Today oaths are given and broken; it seems to be the standard business practice.

But God says that if we make any vow to Him, we need to keep it. Don't make a vow in haste and when we do make one, have the integrity of fulfilling it or it is a sin!

It is as Ecclesiastes 5:5 puts it, **“Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.”**

Now some have come to the conclusion that we are not to make a vow, but that is not true. Let me explain it like this,

Some think not, because of what Jesus said in Matthew 5:34-37, ***But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.*** (See also James 5:12)

But, in context of the rest of Scripture, we see that Jesus was not forbidding oaths, as much as telling us that we should be so filled with integrity in our words that an oath is unnecessary.

Jesus answered under oath in a court (Matthew 26:63-64), and God Himself swears oaths (Luke 1:73, Acts 2:30, Hebrews 3:18, 6:13, 17).

- David Guzik

Thus, the idea is that if you make a vow to someone, you need to keep it.

#### VERSES 24-25

You were not to harvest from your neighbors' fields but if you were traveling you could pick a few grapes, pluck some heads of grain to eat along the way.

Think about it, when you traveled back then you couldn't stop at a mini mart to get food along the way and thus, God provided a way for them to eat as they traveled.

We see this played out in the New Testament as the disciples of Jesus plucked some heads of grain to eat as they traveled!

As I close, keep in mind that the next generation that were to enter into the Promise Land are given instructions by the Lord through Moses on how they were to live.

And He has also given us instructions on how we are to live our lives in this world. May we listen and obey!