

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-
Presbyterian Church, 10 Downing St.
Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 12

DEUTERONOMY

CHAPTERS 21 & 22

INTRODUCTION

Since God desires the best for His people, He has laws and ordinances which affect every aspect of our relationship with one another and with the natural environment. From the present Chapter up to Chapter 26, God gave laws that touch on specific areas of the life of the Israelites when they entered and settled in the Promised Land. These laws are also for our learning. While some of them may not be directly applicable in the post New Testament period, nevertheless the principles that can be drawn from them are still valid.

Chapter 21 continues with the matter of murder and holiness in the family. Chapter 22 touches on social and sexual problems in the community. The laws given by God to the Israelites to govern daily living of the individual Israelite as well as a community are very instructive and valuable to us today.

OUTLINE

A. A Man Slain by an Unknown Assailant (21:1-9)

1. A man slain by unknown persons in the land (21:1).
2. The elders and judges should ascertain the nearest city to the slain man (21:2).
3. Sacrifice of a heifer to put away the guilt of killing a man (21:3-9).
 - a) The elders of the nearest city should sacrifice a heifer, which had not been put to work (3).
 - b) The sacrifice would be done in a valley by the priests (4-5).
 - c) The elders of the city should wash their hands over the heifer and confess their innocence (6-8).
 - d) The guilt of killing a man would be forgiven them (9).

B. Holiness Within the Family Must be Upheld (21:10-21)

1. A man marrying a captive Gentile woman (21:10-14).
 - a) An Israelite man might marry a captive Gentile woman (10-11).
 - b) She must be brought to the man's home (12a).
 - c) She should mourn the death of her parents (12b-13a).
 - d) After the period of mourning, he could take her to be his wife (13b).
 - e) If he had no more delight in her, she should be set free (14).

2. A man having two wives (21:15-17).
 - a) He loved one and hated the other (15).
 - b) If his very firstborn son was from the wife he hated, this son was entitled to the rights of the firstborn (16-17).
3. A man having a rebellious son (21:18-21)
 - a) A man's son was stubborn, rebellious and disobedient to him and his mother (18).
 - b) His parents should bring him to the elders and charge him (19-20).
 - c) The son would be sentenced to death in order to remove the evil away from the community (21).
4. Death by hanging (21:22-23)
 - a) The body of a man sentenced to death by hanging must not be left hanging overnight (22-23a).
 - b) His body must be brought down and be buried on that day (23b).
 - c) The land must not be defiled (23c).

C. Social Laws (22:1-12)

1. Restoring a neighbour's lost things (22:1-4).
 - a) A person must not hide when he sees his neighbour's ox or sheep stray away (1a).
 - b) He must retrieve the animal and return it to his neighbour (1b).
 - c) He must keep the animal if his neighbour could not

- be found until his neighbour looks for it (2).
- d) He should help his neighbour in all his lost things (3).
- e) He must help his neighbour whose ass or ox fall by the way (4).

2. Wearing appropriate clothes (22:5).
A man and woman must wear clothes designed for them.
3. Hunting for birds (22:6-7).
 - a) Seeing a mother-bird nestles her young or eggs (6).
 - b) Let the mother-bird go free, and take the young (7a).
 - c) Promise of long life (7b).
4. Building a new house (22:8).
He should erect a parapet to prevent someone from falling ,
5. Sowing in the vineyard (22:9).
He should not sow different kinds of seeds together.
6. Yoking two animals for plowing (22:10).
He must not yoke the ox and the ass together for plowing.
7. Wearing clothes (22:11-12).
 - a) Not to wear clothes made of wool and linen together.
 - b) Make fringes to the four corners of the clothes.

D. Sexual Laws (22:13-30)

1. Accusing a wife of pre-marital sex (22:13-22).

COMMENTARY

Dealing with Unsolved Murder

The first matter concerns a person who was killed and his body was discovered in the field (21:1-9). His assailant was not found. In such a case, the elders and judges of the cities near to the dead man had a responsibility and duty. Firstly, they must ascertain which is the city located nearest to the dead man. Secondly, the elders of that city must offer a heifer (a young cow) which had never been put to work. The elders would bring the heifer to a valley which had a running stream and sever the head of the young cow (v.4). After that the priests, the sons of Levi, would participate by witnessing the washing of the hands of the elders of the city over the heifer that was beheaded in the valley. And the elders should declare that they were innocent of the killing of the man who was slain, and pray that the LORD would be merciful to them. Moses assured them that if they performed this, they would be forgiven.

This requirement of the inhabitants of the city indicates that they have a responsibility and a duty to perform in respect of the man who is slain and whose murderer is not found. As human beings, we are responsible for the welfare and well-being of one another. Of course, later if the manslayer is found, he would be appropriately punished. The offering of the heifer is not a sacrificial offering for the atonement for sin since it is not done at the Tabernacle.

- a) A husband accuses his wife of having pre-marital sex (13-14).
 - b) The parents of the wife shall present proof of her virginity to the elders of the city (15-17).
 - c) If the wife is vindicated, the elders will punish the husband with a heavy fine to be given to the parents of his wife (18-19).
 - d) If the accusation is true, his wife will be stoned to death because she played the prostitute in her father's family (20-21).
2. Committing adultery (22:22). Death to both man and woman for committing adultery.
 3. Committing sexual intercourse (22:23-29).
 - a) A man and a betrothed woman found committing consensual sexual intercourse will be put to death (23-24).
 - b) A man forces a betrothed woman to commit sexual intercourse, the man only will be put to death (25-27).
 - c) A single man and a single woman engaged in pre-marital sex, the man must compensate the woman's father, and marry the woman (28-29).
 4. Incest is condemned (22:30).

Holiness in the Family

Marrying a Foreigner (21:10-14). Israel went out to war against a foreign country. God delivered the enemies into her hands. An Israelite soldier saw a beautiful female prisoner and desired to have her to be his wife. He was permitted to do so but there were conditions by which he had to abide. He must “bring her home into thine house”. In other words, he must accept her as a member of the family. The woman then was required to shave her head and cut her nails, and change to a new garment. This probably was meant to signify her complete break from her past and accept the beliefs and ways of her Israelite husband. This was like a cleansing process for the Gentile woman. However, she must mourn her parents’ deaths for a full month. After these things, the Israelite man could take her to be his wife.

We see that the woman is treated with dignity, while on the other hand she had to renounce her pagan beliefs and practices. The phrase, “And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her” can cause some misunderstanding. It seems that the man can divorce his wife simply because he dislikes her or for some trivial reasons. That cannot be. God is never in favour of divorce. It is more probable, as one commentator suggests that this could refer to his wife’s refusal to accept the spiritual values of her husband. In putting her away, the husband could not sell her for money, nor use her for his own benefit. The woman was free to go wherever she willed. She is protected by God.

The Rights of the Firstborn (21:15-17). For man in those days to have more than one wife is not

uncommon. God allows it for the hardness of man’s heart but that is not God’s pattern—one man one wife. In this case, a man had two wives, he loved one and hated the other. Both of his wives bore him children. The wife whom he hated gave birth to his firstborn son. When the time came for him to divide his inheritance, he might not deprive the firstborn son of the wife whom he hated, of his right. He must allot to him his rightful share, a double portion of his inheritance.

This ordinance protects any discrimination or favouritism by the father. This will prevent any feud and strife in the family. The patriarch Jacob provides the perfect example of what favouritism within the family might result.

A Stubborn & Rebellious Son (21:18-21). A father and mother had a son who was incorrigibly stubborn and rebellious. His father and mother had tried every way to discipline him, but to no avail. The parents brought their son to the elders of the city and informed them that their son was a “glutton” (worthless) and a drunkard. The elders could then order the inhabitants of the city to stone the stubborn and rebellious son to death. The purpose was to “put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear and fear.”

There is no biblical record of such case. The fear of the death penalty for such rebellious children probably deterred them. The punishment seems to be very harsh. However, we must consider the effects for condoning or allowing such behaviour. God’s holy commandment is that children must honour their believing parents for they represent God. It is the first commandment to have a promise of long life. Conversely, to

dishonour his parents is to have his life cut short. Secondly, his stubborn and rebellious conduct undermines the stability of the family. The family unit is the basic religious and economic strength of Israel. He does not recognise authority. This evil will affect others and if unchecked, will bring disorder, chaos and harm to others in the community.

Death by Hanging from a Tree (21:22-23). If a person committed a sin worthy of death by being hung from a tree, his body must not be left hanging overnight. It must be brought down and buried on the same day. He that is hung on a tree is “accursed of God.” The apostle Paul must have this verse in mind when he spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ when he was hung from the cross. He was accursed of God, though He had no sin, because He was made sin for us, bearing our sins. And that same day the body of Jesus was brought down and buried in the tomb.

Social Laws

Helping Your Neighbour (22:1-4). An Israelite must not “hide” himself after he had seen his brother’s or neighbour’s ox or sheep which had gone astray. He should bring the animal to his brother. And if his brother was not around, he should look after the animal well until his brother came to look for it. This gesture of assisting his brother or neighbour was applied to all other belongings too.

Who then is our neighbour? A lawyer had once posed this question to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus related the parable of the Good Samaritan. Our neighbour is the one who is in need. James also teaches us that we should part our clothes to one who is in need of

garments to keep warm. Our Lord Jesus Christ in His sermon on the mount teaches that we ought to help those who are in need. What a wonderful community it will be if every child of God remembers and practises this commandment of the Lord!

Transvestism (22:5). This injunction that woman should not wear “that which pertaineth unto a man” does not mean that a woman may not wear slacks, shoes, hats, gloves or other items that are worn by the other sex. During the time of Moses, the Israelite men and women wore similar clothes. But what made the difference between the clothes of a man and a woman was the trappings or ornaments on the clothes, so that at a glance, one could identify without difficulty a man and a woman. That is what it means.

Protecting Food Source (22:6, 7). When an Israelite found a bird’s nest and the “dam” (the mother bird) was nestling her young ones or eggs, he was allowed to take the young ones or eggs, but let the dam free. The reason for this is simply that the adult female bird can reproduce more young ones and eggs. A promise is attached to the obedience of this command: “that thou mayest prolong thy days.”

Home Safety (22:8). When an Israelite built a house, he must erect a “battlement” (parapet) round the roof of his house so that his guests might not fall from it and might die. Israelite houses had flat roofs. There was an external side stairway leading to the roof. The roof was a place for the family to sleep in the summer. It was also for entertaining guests or for family gathering. A low wall round the roof would prevent any one from falling

from it and seriously injuring himself. God teaches us to take positive actions first to prevent injury to others. When God gives a commandment not to kill or steal, we should not remain passive and do nothing. Rather we ought to take appropriate action to prevent someone from being killed or tempted to steal.

Prohibition of Co-Mingling (22:9,10). God forbids the farmer to mix and sow different seeds together in his vineyard because the resulting fruit would be defiled. Similarly a farmer should not yoke an ox with an ass together to plough the field. This is good sense. Sowing by co-mingling different kinds of seeds will not only corrupt the plants but will make harvesting more difficult that might result in destroying the other plants. The ass and the ox have different features and characteristics. Half the time the farmer will be spending his time to get the two beasts move and work together! However, there may be a symbolic function of this injunction. It is to remind the people of God that they are different from the other nations. They are a holy and peculiar people of God. They must separate themselves from unbelievers and their beliefs and practices. And this applies with the injunction on clothes (v.11). The instruction to make fringes or tassels on the four corners of their clothes was to remind them of the law of God and to obey it (Numbers 15:37-41).

Sexual Laws

Slandering for Divorce (22:13-19). An Israelite married a woman and accused her of not being a virgin. The father and mother of the woman were responsible for

refuting the accusation against their daughter. They were obliged to bring proof of their daughter's virginity when they gave her for marriage to the man. They would appear before the elders of the city. The proof was "the cloth" which they should spread before the elders. This cloth was the blood-stained cloth from the wedding night. Once this evidence was produced, the woman was vindicated and the man found to be a liar and a cheat in order to obtain a divorce. The man would be "chastized" which would probably be whipping. He had to pay a fine of 100 shekels of silver, which was a great sum of money to the father of the woman, and he might not divorce the woman all the days of his life.

If the accusation was true, proof of her virginity could not be produced, the woman would be stoned to death outside her father's house. The reason was that she had done evil, and played the prostitute, and this evil must be put away.

Once again, no sin is private and isolated. It contaminates and corrupts the community in which the sinner is a member. The punishment serves as a deterrent to others that they should not commit such sins. We also observe again that God is against divorce.

Adultery (22:22-24). If a man was found to commit adultery, that is, having consensual sexual intercourse with a married woman, both of them would receive the death penalty. Evil must be put away from the community.

If a man had sexual intercourse with a young girl who was betrothed to "an husband" in the city where there were people, both

of them would be stoned to death. Since the young girl did not scream, it was ascertained that she agreed to the act.

Rape (22:25-29). But if a man found a woman in the field, where there was no one, and raped her, the man would be put to death. Nothing should be done to the woman as she was innocent for she screamed and there was no one to hear her. We observe here that the rapist deserves death. The death penalty is imposed as a deterrent. Sexual sin is not a casual affair. If it is not checked, it spreads like wildfire. We need only read the statistics of diseases that are transmitted by illicit sex in today's society—the abortions, venereal diseases, Aids and the amount of public funds that are needed to assist unwed mothers!

Now, if a man found a young woman who is a virgin and who is not betrothed, and they engage in sexual intercourse, and they are found, the man must give 50 shekels to her father, and he must marry her and she shall be his wife for the rest of his life.

Incest (22:30). A man is prohibited from having sex with his father's wife or "discover his father's skirt" (that is, uncover his father's nakedness). Ham discovered his father's nakedness and was cursed. In the New Testament, a man had sexual relationship with his father's wife. He was excommunicated. But he repented and was restored to the church (1 Corinthians 5:1-8).

SUMMARY

We find that many of these laws are an extension of the Ten

Commandments. The apodictic Ten Commandments are general in nature, but these casuistic commandments are specific. We learn that God desires that His people be holy and different from all the other people of the world. These commandments as we can see are for the good of the community even the world. In order to ensure that men keep these commandments for their own good, honour and glorify God our Creator, God must impose appropriate punishment upon the people so that it will achieve the purpose for which it is intended. God shows that He is loving, righteous and holy.

We also learn how important it is to remove the evil in the family. A family can only remain strong and happy together if parents know God's commandments and obey them. The church needs discipline. The people of God must learn to love (not being romantic) God and fear Him, and do what is needed to be done in the church. How often a leader of the church fails in his responsibility and duty to discipline the disorderly and the disobedient at the expense of the spiritual growth and joy of fellowship of the whole church. All Christians must actively promote the welfare of others, especially those who belong to the family of God. AMEN

DAILY READING & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Deuteronomy 21:1-9; John 19:31; Hebrews 9:22

TUESDAY: Deuteronomy 21:10-23; Ephesians 5:22-6:4

WEDNESDAY: Deuteronomy 22:1-12; Matthew 5:43-48; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

THURSDAY: Deuteronomy 22:13-22; Matthew 5:31-32

FRIDAY: Deuteronomy 22:23-30; Psalm 139:1-5; 23-24

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think is God's intent in requiring the people of the nearest city to carry out the instructions He gave to them?

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2. Why could the Israelites marry foreign women, but not Canaanite women?

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3. What was the significance of the things she had to do before the man could marry her?

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4. What misunderstanding can arise from the phrase: "if thou have no delight in her"? What should be a right understanding?

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5. How was the right of the firstborn protected in 21:15-17?

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6. Why the harsh punishment upon a stubborn and rebellious son?

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7. What application do the writers of the New Testament make of 21:22, 23? (John 19:31; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24)

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8. Can a divorcee be a deacon, elder or pastor today?

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9. What was the benefit of:

a) distinguishing between the mother-bird and her young;

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b) building a parapet round the roof;

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c) not co-mingling seeds, beasts, and cloth?

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10. What punishment was meted out on the husband who falsely charged his wife of not being a virgin?

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11. Why does the rapist deserve death?

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12. Why do you think the penalty for improper sexual and social behaviour was so harsh?

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