

## Deuteronomy 21:10-23 Miscellaneous Expansions of Law

Introduction: God gave ten basic laws which set forth a perfect standard of righteousness. Those laws were explained in Leviticus and Numbers. The generation of Israelites to whom the law was first given died out during the wilderness wanderings. A new generation of Israelites were about to enter Canaan and take the land.

Moses gathered them together and taught the law to them just prior to their entry into Canaan. Most of what he said was just repetition of the laws already given. Some of the things he said were expanding on the laws already given. Such is the case in this text. Most of these expansions deal with home life. The original ten commandments had given two basic rules pertaining to the home; (1) "Honor thy father and thy mother" and (2) "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

### I. Regulations for taking a prisoner of war to be one's wife, v. 10-14.

- A. These regulations do not apply to their conquest of Canaan.
  - 1. They were not at all permitted to marry a Canaanite woman, Deuteronomy 7:3.
  - 2. These regulations apply to their later wars with others nations.
- B. Ordinarily the women and girls of such nations would be taken as slaves, but if an Israelite man was attracted to one and wanted her for his wife, he must follow certain rules, V. 10-11.
- C. She was to be brought to his home where her hair would all be shaved off and her nails cut. (This was symbolic of her putting off all the ways and customs of her life among her heathen people, in preparation for her new life among the people of God), v. 12.
- D. She was also to discard the clothing from the nation from which she was captured, v. 13a. (This, too, was designed to help her discard all of the customs of her former country so that she could adapt to the new people among whom she now would live.)
- E. Prior to her marriage to the Israelite man, she was to be given one month in which to mourn the loss of her father and mother and begin to learn to adapt to the idea of living among her new people, v. 13b. (After that month passed, the man was permitted to marry her and take her to be his wife.)
- F. If, however, after he married her he decided that he did not want her for his wife, he could not then keep her as a slave, v. 14.
  - 1. He must set her free to go wherever she may choose to go. (He could divorce her, but not keep her on as a slave.)
  - 2. Neither could he sell her as a slave.

### II. Regulations involving a potential problem when one is married to two wives at the same time, v. 15-17.

- A. God's plan for marriage from the beginning involved only one wife at a time, but apparently because multiple wives was a custom of the nations around Israel, He did not forbid multiple marriages among the Israelites.
- B. A multiple marriage could potentially have many problems.
  - 1. One of the potential problems was that the man may grow to love one of them and despise the other, v. 15a.
  - 2. The problem is complicated if there are children born to the two wives, v. 15b.
  - 3. The problem is especially complicated when the first born son is of the wife who is despised.

- C. The man is forbidden to take the double portion which was due to the first born away from the actual first born just because he was born to the despised wife and give it to the son of the loved wife, v. 16-17.

### III. Regulations regarding a son whom his parents cannot control, v. 18-21

- A. If parents had a son who would not obey, their first means of dealing with him should be discipline, (punishment and teaching.) v. 18a.
- B. But if all effort to control him is in vain then the parents are to carry him to the elders of the city, v. 18b-21.
  - 1. Presumably, the elders of the city would investigate to see if the charges were true.
  - 2. Then the elders would call the men of the city together and stone him to death.
  - 3. Apparently the accusing parents would not be required to cast the first stones. (Ordinarily the accusers would be required to cast the first stones, but it is presumed that this would be too difficult for a parent to do.)
- C. This whole regulation may seem too difficult to do, but it was necessary in order to keep the uncontrollable son from bringing worse things upon the city and the whole area.

### IV. Regulations regarding one being hung on a tree, v. 22-23

- A. Ordinarily the death penalty in Israel would be carried out by one of four ways: (1) stoning, (2) sword, (3) burning, or (4) strangulation (which could include hanging).
- B. Sometimes even after one was put to death by some other means, he would be hung in order to make him an example to the people in general.
- C. The new regulation was that the body of the dead was not to be left on the tree during the night. (It was to be buried during the same day he was put to death.)
- D. The reason was that God considered that one who had done such a terrible thing that he would be hung on a tree, should be disposed of as quickly as possible so as to help keep the nation free from evil.

### Conclusion:

- 1. Concerning the home, we are to learn that it is a sacred institution and that the husband and wife should do all within their power to treat one another fairly and to live in keeping with the will of God so as to have His blessings upon the home.
- 2. As for the person who lives uncontrollable, he is a danger and a threat to the family and to the whole community. Laws must be used to control him for the good of all.
- 3. As for the person who has been hung on a tree — we should see in this person our own unworthiness. For when Jesus took upon Himself our sin, He was hung on a tree (a cross made with the wood of the tree). We were the unworthy ones, but He took our unworthiness upon Himself that we might go free.