

Deuteronomy 21 • Various Laws and their meanings

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Deuteronomy chapter 21. Think about all of the challenges that go along with starting a country. You've got a people who've been living for 400 years in Egypt. And then they wander in the wilderness for another 40 years. And they're about to take the land that God had promised their forefathers many, many years before. And these people have picked up all of the ways of living of the people around them. They had been living in Egypt for... Although they'd kept to themselves in terms of their culture of their race. Their religious practices, their just ways of doing things were probably, pretty Egyptian.

And God has been speaking through Moses, for the course, and will through the course of this book, to talk to them about just how to deal with things. And I want to show you on the screen here, the topics that we're going to be dealing with tonight. There are five of them.

Chapter 21 Outline

- Dealing with unsolved murders: 1-9
- Marrying female captives: 10-14
- Respecting the right of the firstborn: 15-17
- A rebellious son: 18-21
- The curse of being hung on a tree: 22-23

And verses 1 through 9, Moses is going to speak to the people about what to do in the case of an unsolved murder. And you might say, well, if a murder is unsolved, what's the big deal? It's just unsolved, I suppose. And you just, well, God's got something else to say. There needed to be some direction on how to treat women who had been taken from captive nations. Not talking about the Canaanites. Talking about city states or nations outside of Canaan, where the women were available to be taken as wives. The Lord had some important things to say there.

In verses 15 through 17, he's going to deal with the issue of the firstborn and the right of the firstborn to receive a double portion. And the Lord's going to speak about that. We'll get into that.

Then, he's going to talk about what to do in the case of a rebellious son. There's a challenge. And then finally, the curse of being hung on a tree. Which is referenced several times in the New Testament. This passage in Deuteronomy will give you some insight into why they said, what they said in the New Testament. And we will even reference some of those passages.

Let's get started here. Follow along as I begin reading here. Let me just read verse one here. And then give you a little bit of background.

It says, “*1 In the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess someone is found slain, (meaning murdered) lying in the open country, and it is not known who killed him,...*” (ESV) And then he's going to give them some direction related to that but let me just set this up a little bit for you just a moment.

Today when we hear about things like this, the word that is passed around is getting closure. People talk a lot about getting closure on a matter. Especially, when it involves a loss of life. And when a murder has taken place, closure usually means, first of all, I suppose, figuring out who committed the crime. And then second of all, prosecuting the guilty party- them getting what they deserve related to it. And then people will say, I've got closure. The rest of us say, justice has been done.

But even today, with all of the crime fighting methods that we have. And crime solving methods at our disposal today, including DNA evidence, and all kinds of other incredible things. There are times when murders still go unsolved. And they call them cold cases these days. Well, God needed to give the Israelites direction on what happens if they have a cold case. A situation where there's been a murder and nobody has been accused of it.

And we learn something about... First of all, when a murder is committed, back in our study of the Book of Numbers. I won't make you turn there. But I will remind you of the fact that the Lord told the people in the Book of Numbers, that when a murder takes place, the shedding of blood actually defiles the land. Or, if you will, pollutes the land.

By the way, that's what describes the difference between what you and I might consider to be the result of a cold case. Which to us is just a mystery. If it happens and there's a murder and nobody's ever figured it out. And it goes 20, 30 years, even longer and nobody knows who committed the murder. We say, well I'm sure there's even been books written, and probably shows made about famous cold cases. But we just say, well, yeah, it's an interesting mystery.

Well, it's more than a mystery in Israel. Why? Because the Lord lives in their midst. And we can't ever forget, that when we are reading through the Old Testament and how they're to deal with things, we cannot forget the fact that many of the things that are said to the Israelites, are because the Lord is living in their midst. Okay, the holiness of God is there.

God said to the nation of Israel in the Book of Numbers, listen when innocent blood is shed, it pollutes the land - it defiles the land. Things need to be done. What is going to be following here in these passages Because there's no person to punish. Right, Because we don't know who committed the murder.

What is going to follow in this passage, is the ritual that God is giving the Israelites related to purging or cleansing the land so, that the land doesn't come under a curse because of the defilement of the shedding of innocent blood. What does He say?

Verse 2. Here's the instructions. He says, *“then your elders and your judges shall come out, and they shall measure the distance to the surrounding cities. 3 And the elders of (that) city that is nearest to the slain man shall take a heifer that has never been worked and that has not pulled in a yoke. 4 And the elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with running water, which is neither plowed nor sown, and shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley.”*

Wow. We read this today with our American kind of sensibilities, and it all sounds rather violent. And maybe even a little bit unnecessary. But remember what's going on here, is God is giving the Israelites a ritual related to the purging or the cleansing of the land.

And it begins by saying, that the city nearest to the dead body is responsible for carrying out or performing this cleansing ritual. And they were to procure a heifer, bring it... And by the way, the heifer had to have never been worked before, or yoked to a wagon, or another animal. And then they were to locate the nearest valley to that town, which had never been sown or plowed. And then they had to make sure that the valley had running water. And there, they were to kill the heifer by breaking its neck.

And you'll noticed in these verses, that it doesn't say anything about building an altar. It doesn't say anything about offering that heifer as a burnt offering.

There's no fire involved here. There's no offering involved here. There's no altar. They simply kill the heifer. In fact, we read nothing even of the blood of the heifer being used in this ritual.

And it's a rather graphic picture. But it's also a clear one, to a declaration that is given to you and I, in the New Testament. And that is “the wages of sin is death” And this being one of the most heinous sins that is listed in the Scriptures, related to the things that we can do wrong. We see this rather graphic and rather violent sort of a thing that they go through in order to cleanse the land.

And the Jews are reminded here of the fact, again, that when there is sin, there must be a death. The death of one in the place of another. And remember, there's no culprit that has been caught for this crime. And this animal stands in, if you will. But there's more to this ritual than just the death of the animal.

Read on with me. Verse 5. It says, and “*Then the priests the sons of Levi, shall come forward, (And then he just talks again about, why and how the priests have been specially chosen. He said,) for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister to him and to bless in the name of the LORD, and by their word every dispute and every assault shall be settled.*” And therefore they are the judges, if you will, in the land.

And also it says in verse 6, “*All (of) the elders of that city nearest to the slain man (Look at this) shall wash their hands over the heifer (Here's the need of the running water, they will wash their hands over the heifer) whose neck was broken in the valley.*”

They literally will take some of the water that is running through the valley. And pour it over their hands, as the elders wash their hands. And we're going to see here in a moment, that while they're doing it, they actually recite something speaking of their own innocence. But by the way, this is what's behind the idea of what we say today, I wash my hands of you, or I wash my hands of this situation.

It comes from this basic idea to say, I am free of all responsibility related to this crime. And that's what they're doing. By washing their hands over the carcass of this animal, they are declaring - the elders of the city, since they represent the city - that they're saying, we are innocent of this crime and any involvement, or, in this crime or knowledge of it at all.

And then it says they were to recite the following. Look at verse 7, “*and they shall testify, 'Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it shed. 8 Accept atonement, O LORD, for your people Israel, whom you have redeemed, and give them do not set the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of your people Israel, so that their blood guilt be atoned for.'*”

And then Moses says, “*9 So you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from your midst, when you do what is right in the sight of the LORD.*”

Now, although this ritual for purification may sound strange to our ears today, we need to be careful not to lose the meaning that is behind this idea. And at its root is the sanctity of human life. Because this murder is not just ignored. They don't just simply go out and do an investigation and say, ell, is there any evidence here? Do we know... We're assuming that the people around there would probably do some kind of an investigation. But nothing comes of it; there's no culprit.

Instead of just saying, well, there's one for the cold case file and closing it. And putting it on the shelf, and saying, well, maybe someday something will come to light. Somebody will make a confession on their deathbed, or somebody will come forward with some eyewitness testimony, or something. Until then, all right, we'll just move on with life. God doesn't let him do that. Because there are issues related to the sin and the violation that this sin presents to a holy and righteous God. And there's also the issue of the sanctity of human life.

I think one other thing, I guess before we move on that we need to understand about this ritual is, that the death of the heifer is not meant to exonerate or excuse the guilty party. In other words, the heifer didn't die for the perpetrator of the crime. You with me? The ritual was meant for the atonement of the land. That was the main point. The guilty person is still going to stand before God. Because even though there was no one who apparently saw this crime, God saw it. And God sees everything. And we have to remember that. God sees everything. And if we thought more about the fact that God sees everything, it would probably stop us from doing some of the dumb things we do from time to time. Let alone, some of the big things that we do that are really dumb.

Next is the issue of taking a wife from a conquered enemy.

Verse 10, “*When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God gives them into your hand and you take them captive, 11 and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and you desire to take her to be your wife, 12 and you bring her home to your house, she shall shave her head and pare her nails*”

Alright, stop there for just a moment. First of all, in the ancient world it was a fairly common thing for, first of all, men, to go to war. Second of all, within the context of defeating an enemy, to see a beautiful woman among the aftermath of

that particular military campaign. And for somebody to probably desire her. Curse of being beautiful, I suppose.

God laid out specific guidelines for the Israelites to follow, that we're largely going to see in these verses, is meant to protect the woman. Which is pretty crazy because women weren't much to be protected back in those days. They were more of a commodity than anything else. And you're going to see here what the Lord says, related to this.

First of all, notice in verse 12 that the man was to bring her home - to his home. There he was to shave her head, trim her nails, which, we don't know exactly what that was all about. It probably had a significant meaning back in those days. Who knows. Maybe it just was talking about starting over again. But in all the commentaries that I read about this, everyone just basically, took a stab at it. But we honestly don't know.

But we do know that this man was to bring her to his home. And that may not sound like much. But he's supposed to bring her there and care for her. And he's to marry her. Bringing her into his home, means that she's not to be used. She is to be actually married. To bring a woman into your home is essentially to express the desire to make her your wife.

And furthermore, in verse 13, it says, *“And (that) she shall take off the clothes in which she was captured and shall remain in your house and lament her father and her mother a full month.”*

And, of course, we don't know whether this assumes that the woman's parents died in the battle. Or simply the fact, that she was taken away from her people and most likely won't get to see them again. But however, or whatever the reason was the woman was to be given a full month before the marriage was finally consummated or finalized, if you will. The man would bring her into his home but that would be tantamount to betrothal.

Marriage, back in those days, it wasn't a marriage until they consummated the relationship. And the man who brought this woman in, was to take a full month to let her mourn for her family, and the loss of her culture, and everything else. And to acquiesce to this new family and lifestyle that goes along with it. And it's a full month to do these things. And he wasn't to just insist that she just, become his wife immediately, and so forth.

And then it goes on to say, here in the middle of verse 13, *“After that (meaning after that period of one month) you may go into her and be her husband, (And*

that is a euphemism for consummating the relationship) *and she shall be your wife.*” And again, I want to just remind you, that in the Old Testament, again, the act of consummating a relationship is what constituted marriage. That was the marriage ceremony.

In fact, it's interesting. We know in the New Testament that there were marriage ceremonies. We don't actually ever get any information about the ceremony. In fact, really all we hear about is the feast. Because it's the feast that lasted a long time. What kind of a ceremony they had, we don't know.

Do you guys understand that what we do in marriage ceremonies is all traditional? I mean, people think that it's probably biblical. But do you know... And this - maybe I'm ranting a little bit off the page here. But it's just really interesting that how much we do.

The Bible doesn't say to have pastors perform marriages. There's nothing in the Word about that. Nothing. In the Old Testament, you want to make somebody your wife, you bring her into your tent and you consummate the relationship. And that constitutes basically saying, you are my wife, I've married you, we're done, Let's go. What's for dinner... or whatever the thing is. And it was just like... It was, again, we know that Jesus- in the New Testament - we know Jesus attended a marriage feast. The feast would last like seven days. But there is nothing in the Word of God about ceremonies. Nothing.

How do we do marriage there? We just do it. We do it the way we think we should. And, we just, it's just really interesting. We assume that because it's happening in a church, this is the way it probably says it in the Word of God. But it doesn't. So, yeah, interesting, isn't it?

Now, the Lord needed to bring some further rules into play here for the possibility of a failed relationship. Because not every woman who's taken away from her home, her own people, her family, is going to be even willing to acclimate to a new culture, a new family, a new society.

Some women are probably going to dig their heels in and just say, you took me here against my will, and I'm never going to act like your wife, or something like that. Well, that's a pretty dangerous response for a woman to have back in those days. Because a man could do just about anything he wanted with her. And that would really put her at some pretty, serious risk.

The Lord gives some interesting guidelines. Look at this. Verse 14, *“But if you no longer delight in her,* (And again, this could be for any number of reasons.

Not the least of which is, the woman just simply not desiring to be this man's wife. And her ability to integrate into Jewish society. He says,) *you shall let her go where she wants. (Wow) But you shall not sell her for money, nor shall you treat her as a slave, since you have humiliated her.*” Your Bible may say, *“since you have humbled her.”*

It's clear from this passage that if a man takes a woman, and then rejects that woman for whatever reason, it is an act of humiliation toward the woman. And interestingly enough, I looked up this Hebrew word in my Hebrew dictionary. And it literally means, to be bowed down or afflicted. This word humiliated or humbled - to be bowed down or afflicted.

The Lord is giving some very specific directions to the man. He says, listen, if for some reason you decide this just isn't working, you need to let her go where she wants to go. You may not... You can't say to her, alright, you don't want to be my wife, you'll be my servant. Can't do that. Because you already treated her as your wife. You already brought her into your home. You acted like she was your wife. And now because it didn't work out, you can't treat her like a servant. You can't sell her. Darn! No, you got to let her go where she wants to go.

These are pretty amazing things to read in the context of the day, as far as the rights of a woman, and so forth, and the protection of a woman. It's unfortunate that God has to talk about these things. But He does. He talks about it because God deals with reality. It'd be great, I suppose, if God just said, by the way, once you get married, stay married. That's all there is to it. Boom. But God deals with reality. And the reality of sin is, that sometimes marriages end for whatever reason. And a broken marriage always leaves an ugly scar. And they had to know how to deal with these kinds of situations.

Now, beginning in verse 15, this next section deals with the rights of the firstborn. And this isn't something that we typically do. But there is some interesting stuff in here. Again, it deals with a bad situation in marriage. And we're specifically talking about polygamy, which is of course, the taking of multiple wives.

And it says here, in verse 15, *“If a man has two wives,...”* And this is another one of those situations. It's like, why didn't God just come out and just say, guys, one wife, just take one wife. Then we don't have to deal with all this stuff. And it causes people to answer, why did God allow this? Why did he bear with polygamy for a period of time? And the answer is, I don't really know. I wish I did. I know that it wasn't His design, originally, for marriage.

I also know something else. I also know that in Scripture, polygamy is almost universally portrayed as a bad idea. It is shown to be a very negative situation and it causes all kinds of problems. And one of the things that... One of the problems that he's going to talk about here, is what I suppose, is a natural outcome of somebody having more than one wife. And that is he favors one over the other.

It happens. Happened to Jacob He loved Rachel; he didn't love Leah. But again, I want to just reiterate the fact, that everything we read in the Bible concerning polygamy, speaks of the challenges of taking multiple wives. Which shouldn't surprise us because whenever we violate God's design, we invite challenges into our lives. Right? So, that shouldn't surprise us.

Here, we talk about another negative element. It says, *"¹⁵ If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other unloved,"* (He favors one and not the other.) *and both the loved and the unloved have borne him children, and if the firstborn son belongs to the unloved,* (meaning born of the unloved wife,) *¹⁶ then on the day when he assigns his possessions as an inheritance to his sons, he may not treat the son of the loved as the firstborn in preference to the son of the unloved, who is the firstborn, ¹⁷ 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 firstfruits of his strength. The right of the first borne is his."*

What's interesting about this passage... And again, we don't deal with this thing. We don't deal with multiple wives, thankfully. We don't deal with the issue even of firstborn sons getting a double portion. If you raise multiple sons in your family, and you actually come to the point one day of giving them an inheritance, we just don't do this. We don't say, well, you're my firstborn, so you get double. But that's what they did.

In fact, the Jews weren't the only ones that did it. If a man had four sons, or five sons... If a man had five sons and he got to the point of divvying up his inheritance, he would actually break it up into six portions. And he'd give the oldest son a double portion. And then dole out a single portion to the rest of his sons. That's just the way it worked. And that's what God is telling the people to do here.

But what's really interesting about this is, the Lord is telling them to obey this guideline, which is being put into the law, apart from emotion. Notice here that the Lord is saying, you can't do this just because you feel like it, or just because you favor this individual more than the other. In other words, emotion is not to rule your decision-making in this thing. You're to do this according to the

guidelines that I've established. Right? It's an important statement: Emotions are not to be the ruling factor in this case.

Verse 18, *“If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son, (And we're going to see here in just a minute, that it even goes beyond that.) who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, (In other words, bring some kind of correction.) will not listen to them, ¹⁹ then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, ²⁰ and they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’”*

Notice that it goes beyond just rebellious and whatever else. I mean, this guy is just off the rails.

It says, *“²¹ Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear.”* Alright. This is one of those interesting passages that, again, tends to assault our American sensibilities.

First of all, I want to tell you something about this. What you may not know is, that in other cultures, there was no mitigating element between a parent deciding that their child should die and actually putting the child to death. What I mean by that is, in certain cultures like Greek and Roman - under Greek and Roman law - parents had absolute authority. If a parent decided that their child should be punished unto death, they didn't have to take them to the city elders. They can just do it and nobody would have said anything. And that was not under Grecian and Roman law, that was not considered an act of murder.

You see the first thing you need to understand about this is, that God is putting another step in the way. He's saying, you got to bring your son to the elders. And assumedly, the elders have an opportunity to look at this situation for what it is and to corroborate the testimony that the parents are bringing. Or to say, hey listen, you guys need to chill. This guy is not so bad. But either way, they do not have that ultimate right under Jewish law.

And then I want to point out the fact there, as it said in verse 20, that this son is guilty of much more than just not getting along with mom and dad. Again, it says here, that he is a glutton and a drunkard. There's a bit more going on here than rebellion. But rebellion is the other thing I want to talk about. Because this is...

You need to understand something. Rebellion is seen in the Word of God as a great evil. And that comes a little bit as a surprise to most American Christians. Certainly, it comes as a great surprise to Americans who are not Christians. And one of the reasons for that is, because our American culture tends to highlight rebellion and think it's a good thing.

We think... I mean, we cherish rebellion. We have all kinds of movies that are based on rebellion. And they're considered the strong people, the honorable people. The bumper sticker that says Question Authority - we applaud that. Yeah, that's a good thing. We think we're tough and we're strong because we look at authority in the face and we say, forget it. I'm not doing what you want. Well, God says that's rebellion.

We read in Romans chapter 13, we're to obey the laws of the government.(Romans 13:1) And we read that and we're, wow, yeah! But Paul didn't know what kind of a government we have to obey. Do you know what kind of government he had to obey? Paul... Who was in charge at that time? Rome. Who was in charge of Rome at that time? Nero. Do you know anything about Nero? He was insane. He was literally out of his mind.

Imagine a... We talk about our President sometimes in rather negative tones. How would you like to have a guy, who just for fun, killed people, put them on sticks - big poles- and lit them on fire in his garden to light up the garden. That was Nero. Isn't that interesting?

And it was concerning that government that Paul wrote to the Romans and said, obey the laws of the government. Obey the laws that are out there. Why? Because rebellion is a great evil. It is not a sign of independence. It is not a sign of strength. What is it a sign of? I found an interesting quote/definition, if you will, of rebellion. Let me put this on the screen for you. You might find this interesting.

"...obstinate resistance to God exalts self-will to the place of authority, which belongs only to God."

An *"...obstinate resistance to God (actually) exalts (a) self-will to the place of authority, which (ultimately) belongs only to God."* You see, here's the point, God is the one who is the authority of our lives, ultimately. Do you know why we obey the laws of the government? You know why? Because God said to do it. Right.

God said, to obey the laws of the government. That's why we... And the reason we follow it there is, because the ultimate authority told us to do this. He is the ultimate authority of our lives. He is the leader.

Here's the other word we use for it, Lord. We don't often think about what Lord means. But Lord means ultimate authority - master. He's the Master of our lives. Right? And we obey Him, because there is no authority greater than He. He is the, if you will, Supreme Court, or whatever.

Do you understand that rebellion is, ultimately, a rejection of the authority of God in a person's life. And the declaration that they are their own authority. You can't tell me what to do. You're not going to tell me what to do. I'm not going to listen to you. Why? It's my life. And I'm going to do what I want with my life. Again, we make movies of that attitude. And we celebrate it.

But it is a great evil. And something that under God's economy, was a capital offense. The fact that this offends us, is proof of the fact that we don't understand the depth of how severe this thing is. And how important it is for us, as parents, to deal with rebellion in our children.

I'm not talking about taking them out to the city and having them stoned either. I'm talking about just dealing with the usual parental discipline, that is needed to make a child understand that rebellion is not going to be tolerated in our home. And to understand what the root of rebellion is.

Samuel spoke of rebellion, and said that, it's as the sin of divination. (1 Samuel 15:23) There's a similarity there of just rejecting the Lordship of God, the oversight of God, and searching in other self-directed areas for my answers, and so forth. There's a similarity to the sin of divination in that sense. Yeah, rebellion is a serious matter. And we need to love our kids through it.

Unfortunately, we, today, most parents, we talk about our kids going through that rebellious stage, as if this is a normal part of childhood. And we just need to love them through it. But, I think as Christian parents, we need to do something more than that. And that doesn't mean getting frustrated and getting angry. But it does involve stepping up our parental guidance in their lives to understand how serious rebellion really is.

All right, then we come to the final two verses of the chapter. And it says, “*22 And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death...*” Now we got somebody who's been, accused of a crime, he's been

punished for it by death. And by the way, that death would usually occur, or come about by stoning.

And it says, “...and you hang him on a tree, ...” Now this is not referring to crucifixion. And it's not saying that's how he died. What they would do is, they would impale the body... Boy, it was a different time of living, wasn't it? They would impale the body on a pole - on a tree - and leave it there as a deterrent to other activity of the same kind that got this guy into trouble. In other words, it was a way of letting people know this isn't tolerated.

If those things happen, verse 23, “*his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day,...*” And there is the Jews tradition right there laid out. They buried people the same day. And here's the reason why God says it, “...for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.”

Alright, you can see here from this verse the idea here is, that leaving the man hanging on a tree, would defile the land if he's left there too long. He's saying don't do that. But it's also important to note here, that the body of this individual was not cursed by God, because it was hanging on a tree. It was hanging on a tree because it was cursed by God. You with me?

The curse was not because it was on a tree. It was on a tree, because of the curse. They were cursed because of their crime. Because they'd been accused, found guilty of a crime, and they had to be put to death for that crime. And there was a curse upon that individual, that was shown to them by hanging them on a tree. God says, don't leave them overnight, because that would defile the land. Take them down, bury them,” and so forth.

Now what's interesting about this is this passage definitely points forward to Christ. And when we read through the New Testament, we find the New Testament authors, have picked up on this idea of a tree when they refer to the cross of Christ.” And Peter and the other apostles did this.

Let me show you some examples up on the screen. The first is from Acts chapter 5. This is Peter and the other disciples speaking,

Acts 5:30 (ESV)

The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.

The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.

Notice they didn't say specifically on a cross. They said on a tree. And that's interesting because they're using language from Deuteronomy. And then you've got Peter's remark in 1 Peter 2:24 that says,

1 Peter 2:24 (ESV)

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

And then the Apostle Paul actually borrows this passage from Deuteronomy. He says in Galatians chapter 3,

Galatians 3:13 (ESV)

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.”—

And you'll notice when you read that in your Bible, there's a footnote pointing you to this very chapter in Deuteronomy. And what we learn by that is, that Jesus, not only died in our place, but He took upon Himself, our curse.

The curse that was on our lives because we had disobeyed the law and so forth. And He received the curse that we deserved. And we received, as a result what we did not deserve, which of course is the promise of new life in Christ.

So it's interesting, isn't it, that God declares in Deuteronomy chapter 21, that anyone who is hung on a tree - there's a curse that's obviously there because of the crime in which they committed and so forth. And this is the reason, you see, why the Jews just couldn't accept Jesus as the Messiah.

For most Jews, this was an unmanageable conundrum because you see Messiah means, Anointed One. And they had a pretty high view of the Anointed One. But they knew that Jesus, had been hung on a cross, which was tantamount to being hung on a tree, since they were made of wood. And they knew that made Jesus, the cursed one.

And in Jewish thinking, it's like, wait a minute, He's the Anointed One and He's the cursed one at the same time? How can the Anointed One, one who is blessed of God, be the cursed one who is rejected by God? How is that possible? And in most cases, they just said, that is the most ridiculous, contradictory thought I've ever heard in my life. And they rejected it out of hand.

Let's put Galatians back up one more time. Here's what they didn't understand.

Galatians 3:13 (ESV)

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree” —

“Christ redeemed us from the curse by becoming a curse,” Right? By becoming that curse. Yes, the Anointed One, redeemed us from the curse by becoming a curse for us. Literally, taking that curse on Himself, for us.

And yes, Paul openly cites Deuteronomy in declaring, Jesus Christ as the Savior of all mankind. He openly cites this contradiction that the Jews could not handle. He doesn't try to soft pedal it or say, I know there's this passage in Deuteronomy. And I know that bothers some of you guys. But listen, just don't worry about that. Jesus... No, no, no!

He connects the two and says, yes! Yes! Anyone who's hung on a tree is under a curse. Jesus, was under a curse for us. He took our curse so that we might be set free. What a powerful statement. What a powerful reality that is rooted right here in Deuteronomy chapter 21.