

Law and Order (Part 2)  
Deuteronomy 20:1-20

Intro:

Question: What is your vision of a perfect world? How would things work in your perfect world?

- **What would it be like? What would you do?**
  - Sleep late every day, breakfast in bed, eat all you want and not gain any weight, exercising is not necessary because we all have excellent blood pressure, low cholesterol and perfect vision and hearing.
  - Play golf, go fishing, hunting whenever you want and work would be fun. Perhaps relationships would be smooth, no conflict but peace and everyone would be happy. Family gatherings would be one big party because everyone got along and thought the best of everyone.
- **Perhaps in your perfect world there is no pain.** No one gets cancer, breaks a bone, has back surgery, no hernia surgeries, breaks an Achilles tendon, has low blood pressure, low cholesterol, perfect vision, great hearing, no allergies (these are just the issues in my family). There is no death or separation; no one has heart attacks or stroke. No one loses their memory or gets Alzheimer's or has psychological issues and chemical imbalances. Wouldn't that be a perfect world?
- **Whatever your vision of a perfect world it might not be too far off from God's vision of a perfect world.**
  - You see from Genesis to Revelation, from Adam to Moses to Jesus it has always been God's plan for a perfect world.
  - God's perfect world is for God's people to be in God's place submitted to God's rule. The shorthand of this explanation is that the perfect world is the Kingdom of God.
  - **Revelation 21:1-5**, "*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*<sup>5</sup> And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."
  - **God's people, in God's place under God's rule—the Kingdom of God.** A world marked by justice, grace, truth and peace.

**Here is the deal. Right now we do not have a perfect world.** Our world is broken and what we find in **Deuteronomy 20** is a glimpse in the chaos and brokenness. We see how God was working to bring about law and order in a world of chaos.

**Actually this is one of those passages where some people really get hung up on Christianity.** They say they cannot believe in a God that says *do not murder* in the sixth commandment, calls Himself a God of love and grace and then calls the complete annihilation of people as He did in Exodus, Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges. The problem is that most of the people who use this argument have never carefully read the Bible. They read portions of Scripture and lift things out of context.

**Illst: Think of it this way. Imagine you are able to use a time machine . . . transported to WWII, 1944, June 6<sup>th</sup>, D Day** and you see a group of young men ages eighteen to twenty-one years old storming the beaches of Normandy and killing everyone one in sight. If that was all you saw you might say, "*See . . . look at what kind of monsters these men are. They are all a bunch of killers.*"

**If that was all you saw you would have failed to see the big picture.** You would have failed to understand what started the war. You would come to the wrong conclusion that those young men were killers because you did not see that Germany invaded other countries and Japan attacked the U. S. at Pearl Harbor. What happened on the beaches at Normandy was in response to events that began years earlier.

**This was what is going on in Deuteronomy 20.** God did not start the war and He did not introduce the chaos—His enemy did. God has an enemy and God's people have an enemy and in the Garden of Eden Satan started the war with God and His people. He caused God's people to betray God and brought sin into the world. God has been at war with Satan since **Genesis 3**.

**So the warfare called for in Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges was part of a bigger story/war.** The Bible tells us God gave the people who lived in the Promise Land (the Canaanites) 400 years to turn from their sin.

The Canaanites practiced idolatrous worship where babies were sacrificed to gods, where elderly were killed because they lacked no good purpose in society, where anyone with any deformity was put to death. If a baby was born with any kind of defect it would be flung off the cliff of a mountain. Yahweh had actually been patient with the Canaanites for 400 years and a war was coming that would end their sinful practices.

Israel was not commanded to conquer the world only take the Promise Land and by doing so judge the nations that inhabited it. Working within the chaos and brokenness of their world God was bringing redemption.

What we are going to find woven through this chapter is the fundamental idea of choosing what is of utmost importance over something of less importance. The highest priority is always loving God and then loving your neighbor.

- **Pray**

**Here is the point for us this morning:** Even in the chaos and evil of life God calls His church to advance in the spiritual battle to love, trust and obey our Warrior King, Jesus Christ.

#### **I. Faith over Fear (Deuteronomy 20:1-4)**

**This is a no brainer for us right.** We will choose faith over fear every time. No one sets out to say, *"Yep I think I want to be a coward in this situation."*

**Yet while the answer is clear-cut the application is the problem.** It is when we are staring into the teeth of the enemy where fear begins to take hold and spread like a cancer in our hearts and minds.

We are not living like they lived in that day and time but what is amazing in this text is the way they prepared for the physical battle is the same as preparing for the spiritual battle. Notice the three things they did to prepare:

- 1. Verse 1: They were to remember God was their Warrior,**
  - a. He is the One who delivered you from Egypt.** Translation: God is Your Hero so let what He has done in the past to save you drive out the fear in your hearts in the future.
  - b. Psalm 20:7,** a Psalm designed to remind Israel to trust in the name of the Lord. They might go around singing:  
*"Some trust in chariots and some in horse but I trust in the name of the Yahweh."*
- 2. Verse 2-3: They listened to the word of God spoken by the priests.**
- 3. Verse 4: They were to remember God goes with them and just like He was their Hero in the past so He will be their Hero in the future and give them victory.**

#### **Application:**

**The battle is spiritual for the church.** We are not trying to take land and fight physical wars.

- **Read Ephesians 6:10-18** says we are to put on the armor of God (GROW 252 study this next year) in order to be equipped to fight the spiritual battle.
- **2 Corinthians 10:3-6**, "*For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. <sup>4</sup> For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, <sup>6</sup> being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.*"
- **We are trusting in God and listening to His word.** The word of God is truth and we need to believe it. We do not need a priest to give it to us for Jesus Christ; our High Priest has given it to us. He has spoken His truth to us. **The most common spiritual battle we face is believing the truth of God over the lies of the enemy.**
- **My own spiritual battle:** Insight from the book *With: Reimagining How You Relate to God* by Skye Jethani. [When ministry becomes an idol for me I try to get from ministry my meaning, worth and significance and I relate to God from the position that He owes me ease and peace for faithfully serving Him.]

## II. Blessing over Battle (Deuteronomy. 20:5-9)

In vv. 5-9 we find reasons for military exemption. When you read this text it might sound like excuses.

**However, for Deuteronomy 20:5-9, there is a higher priority at work in these exemptions.**

1. **Verses 5-7:** The reason some men could be exempt from military service for these reasons is because of the importance of the generational promise of the people of God, in inheritance of the land.
2. **Verse 8:** The last reason, those who lacked faith and were fearful, was most likely a twofold reason.
  - a. First: Yahweh fought for those who trusted Him. He did not want any men fighting that did not trust Him.
  - b. Second: The fainthearted might spread fear throughout the assembly of men.

### Application:

**Where is the spiritual battle for us in this text?** Jesus took these legitimate military excuses from **Deuteronomy 20:5-9** in His parable of the Banquet of the Kingdom of God and then applied them as poor excuses for refusing to come to the banquet in **Luke 14:16-24**? Let's hear the parable from **Luke 14:16-24**:

*"A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. <sup>17</sup> And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' <sup>18</sup> But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' <sup>19</sup> And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' <sup>20</sup> And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' <sup>21</sup> So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' <sup>22</sup> And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' <sup>23</sup> And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. <sup>24</sup> For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.' "*

The call in the parable is to a great banquet and not a call to military service but it is a call to come to the banquet of the Kingdom of God. These men basically responded to the servant's invitation, for the most part, with the military exemptions. So Jesus took these legitimate military exemptions and applied them to the invitation to be in the Kingdom of God.

I think the allusion to Deuteronomy 20:5-9 is there and if it is then what does it mean for us in the spiritual battle?

1. First we know from the context of Luke 14 that Jesus is telling the Pharisees what kind of people will be in the Kingdom of God (v. 23). Tax collectors, the lame, the poor, those who have the lowest position in society; it has nothing to do with your standing and everything to do with the Master who calls.
2. Second here is no excuse for rejecting the call to follow God (v. 24). This is the call to be God's people in God's place under God's rule—the Kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> The banquet is the celebration of the victory of God over His enemies. To reject this is to reject the inheritance God is giving you. It is not about land and the military it is about the Messiah and eternal life. *Friend if you are here today and hearing the gospel preached then you are hearing this invitation and even command to obey the gospel and follow Christ. Don't make excuses for rejecting the gospel but embrace Christ.*
3. Third for those of us who respond to the call prepare yourself for battle (vv. 21-22). In Deuteronomy 20:5-9 those who were called to military service were to serve to advance the Kingdom of God for then God's people would inherit the promise of God. Those who were exempt were to do the same but by fulfilling the call to fulfill the generational promise to God's people in God's place under God's rule. There are no exemptions for being a disciple of Christ that is the reason Jesus said in Luke 14:26-27, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." <sup>27</sup> Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."

Brother and sister in Christ, here are our marching orders. To live as our King lived. Are you following your King?

### III. Peace over Conflict (Deuteronomy 20:10-15)

Verses 10-15 gave Israel the instructions on how to engage their enemies outside of the Promise Land. There was not Geneva Convention back then to give global instructions on how nations should wage war, take care of prisoners and make peace. War was savage and horrific.

What Yahweh does in these verses is give Israel instruction on how to deal with cities and enemies outside of their land of inheritance. Outside the Promise Land they were able to make peace with their enemies and allow them to live and be servants to the people of Israel.

However, if they decided to wage war they were commanded to take the city and everything in the city would become the spoils of war. Only the male combatants would be put to death so that the means to fight and the cause of the violence would be removed and peace could be established.

#### Application:

The spiritual battle with peace over conflict is to consider that these are the rules of engagement for those who are not Christians (outside the covenant community). So how are we to show peace over conflict?

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<sup>1</sup> This parable is in the context of Kingdom of God parables. See Luke 13.

1. **First we practice peace over conflict when we take the gospel to those who do not believe so that they find peace with God. Romans 5:1,** *"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Our spiritual battle is to take the gospel to those who do not believe so that they find peace with God through Christ. This is what Great Commission living is. It is to spread a passion for the glory of God in all things to all peoples, tribes, tongues and cultures.

2. **Second we practice over conflict when we love those who persecute us for our faith in Christ. Romans 12:20-21,** *"<sup>20</sup>To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.'<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."*

This is our marching orders as Christians in how to engage with those outside of Christ. We love them and pursue peace and treat them with dignity.

**This is why our small groups are so important.** Spiritually we actually live in enemy occupied territory (spiritual enemy, not people) and it makes living in this world difficult and complex. It is easy to get discouraged and stumble in our practice. Our small groups allow us to draw strength from one another through Christ, to encourage one another, pray for one another and to strategize how to reach our neighbors with the gospel.

**Are you in a small group?** We would love to help you get plugged into a small group.

#### IV. Obedience over Disobedience (Deuteronomy 20:16-18)

**Verses 16-18** gave them very different rules for engaging the enemy within the borders of the Promise Land. The Promise Land is the land of inheritance. It was a reflection of the Garden of Eden. It was *God's people, in God's place under God's rule—the Kingdom of God*. It was to be a shadow of the Kingdom of God to come and there was no place for idolatry or wickedness in the Kingdom of God.

There were two reasons for the complete destruction of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites. This is where we need to remember the big picture and get the context so we will understand why Yahweh called for the complete destruction of the people in the Promise Land.

1. **The first reason is found in Genesis 15:16,** *"And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."* Time was up for the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. Judgment had come on those people in the form of God's people receiving their promise.
2. **The second reason is found in v. 18,** *"that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God."* In this situation, the highest priority here was to love God above all else. They could not allow any trace of the pagan religions to remain in the Kingdom of God—The Promise Land. Ezekiel tells us that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked so on one level God is grieved at their death but on another level God is glorified because the wicked have been judged for their sin and God's people are in God's place under God's rule—the Kingdom of God.

#### Application:

The spiritual battle for Christians is that the Kingdom of God is in our hearts not land. Just like the land was to be purged of anything that competed with Israel's love for Yahweh so we are to purge our hearts of anything that competes with our love for Christ.

Remember **Luke 14:26**, "*If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.*" It is not that followers of Christ should abandon their parents and family but when it comes to their question of loyalty and love they must love Christ above all. He has no rival when it comes to loving Him.

You see if you love a family member too much and he or she does not love Christ then they could cause you to stumble. They could cause you to love Christ less or even walk away from the Christ altogether. Beware of those who would cause you to walk away from Christ, even family members. On one level we must love them but on another we cannot allow them to pull us away from Christ. Relationships are not more important than Jesus.

#### **V. Preservation over Destruction (Deuteronomy 20:19-20)**

**Verses 19-20 conclude the instruction on warfare.** These final two verses seem odd and out of sync with the rest of the chapter if you take them out of context. Again we must keep things in the larger context of Yahweh's redemptive purposes.

It was not that Israel could not use trees in battle but that they should not use the fruit trees. The fruit trees preserved life in the land. What would it mean if you cut down all the trees and then had no fruit trees to sustain life?

Before there was a movement to preserve trees Yahweh was concerned for how help to sustain life. The protection of those trees was to that life would be preserved in the land for generations to come. It was planning ahead and thinking of future generations.

#### **Application:**

Before there was Green Peace and save the trees God was concerned for the environment. How is the Kingdom of God advanced through the gospel of Jesus Christ with environmental issues? As Christians we are stewards of God's creation. The environment has been given to God's people as something to steward since the Garden of Eden. Sin has corrupted it but the gospel of Christ redeems it.

The question for us is how do we showing our unbelieving neighbors the glory of Christ in the gospel as we use our natural resources? If the heavens declare the glory of God then we must show them the ultimate glory of God is seen in Christ, worship Him instead of creation.

#### **Conclusion**

**As I close I want to give you one simple charge as you go back into battle this week.** Because God is your personal, strong, faithful, victorious Warrior fight for what matters most. Whether it be a frustrating co-worker, a frustrating family member, a frustrating job, a frustrating project in school you must complete or whatever it is let's be people who fight for goodness, for righteousness, for truth, for justice and for peace. Church let's do battle to put to death the sin that so easily entangles us and to fight the good fight. Let's strive with all of the grace that Jesus gives us to walk in the way He walked. Let's love our enemies.

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a pastor and theologian during WWII.** He was known for his staunch, outspoken resistance to Hitler and the Nazi party. He turned away multiple opportunities to flee Germany and seek refuge somewhere else and over and over again he stayed engaged in the battle and in the fight against evil and injustice and deception and oppression. Time and time again he was found fighting for what matters most. Eric Metaxas, in his book, [\*Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy\*](#) writes, "*Being a Christian is less about cautiously avoiding sin and about actively and courageously doing God's will.*"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Metaxas, Eric (2011-08-29). *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (p. 486). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

**God's invitation to us as his people is to imitate Him as our Victorious Warrior.** What it boils down to is that the church is God's divine plan to fight evil on this earth until Jesus returns. God is calling us to fight for what matters most is in and of itself an act of worship because God is your personal, strong, faithful, equipping and victorious Warrior—fight for what matters most.