

Body Hanging on a Tree

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[0 : 00] But then he also gives them all kinds of laws by which they are to govern themselves as a nation state. And also how to govern themselves as to the worship of God in the Old Covenant.

And here we come to Deuteronomy 21 and verses 22 and 23, found right in the midst of these various laws.

If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, you must not leave his body on the tree overnight.

Be sure to bury him that same day because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.

The Lord is a God of justice. Justice and righteousness are the foundation of his throne. And all of his judgments, therefore, are right.

[1 : 03] And he wants the judges of Israel as well to imitate him in all of their rulings to rule in justice and righteousness. So here's God laying down some laws with regard to the justice that is to be served in the land.

And the matter has to do with crimes, you'll notice, of capital offense. The greatest crimes. A capital offense deserves a capital punishment.

A death sentence. And so it says, if a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree.

Now the picture here is not of death by hanging. That was not known to the Israelites that we know of. Their way of capital punishment was stoning.

If you just look up at the paragraph before with the rebellious son, what were they to do? Well, the parents were to say to the elders, verse 20, this son of ours is stubborn and rebellious.

[2 : 07] He will not obey us. He's profligate and a drunkard. Then all the men of his town shall stone him to death. You must purge the evil from among you. All Israel will hear it and be afraid.

That was the form of capital punishment. Stoning. What's envisioned in verse 22 is a man that was stoned to death.

And if it was an especially heinous crime like blasphemy, the dead body would be hung up on a pole or on a tree. It would be a gruesome sight.

A dead man hanging in a tree. And it was meant to be an object lesson. Listen, this is what happens if you do what he did.

Look and be warned. Matthew Henry comments that it was meant to strike the greater terror upon others that they might not only hear and fear, but see and fear.

[3 : 11] And to know this is what happens to one who dies under the curse of God. But even in such a case, there was to be a limit as to the shame brought upon the man.

And so verse 23 goes on to say, you must not leave the body on the tree overnight. But be sure to bury him that same day. Because anyone who's hung on a tree is under God's curse.

Enough is enough. And besides, to leave a cursed body exposed all night would make the land ceremonially unclean.

To have a cursed body up all night would make the land unfit for God's presence. So bury him on the same day that you hang him up on the tree, Dad.

So here's this old law of two verses tucked away in the many laws given in Deuteronomy to govern the people of God in the land of promise. 1,400 years later, Jesus Christ is drugged before the Jewish high court, the Sanhedrin.

[4 : 26] They're looking for false evidence against him so that they could put him to death. How's that for justice? But they didn't find any, though they called many false witnesses.

They're trying to frame him and they failed. But finally, the high priest charged him under oath. Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God. Our Lord says, yes, it is as you say.

But I say to all of you, in the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven. Immediately the high priest tore his robes and said, he's spoken blasphemy.

Why do we need any more witnesses? Look now, you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think? And his crony said, he's worthy of death.

This is a capital offense deserving of a capital punishment. He is worthy of death. And then they spit in his face, blindfolded him, struck him with their fist and said, prophesy.

[5 : 32] Who hit you? Mocking his claim to be God's prophet, mighty prophet. And then the temple guards took him and beat him. Now, all things being equal, the Jews would have taken him out and stoned him to death.

And then they would have hung his body up in a tree for blasphemy as an object lesson for all to see and fear. For anyone who claims to be equal with God, this is what happens.

You die under the curse of God. But there's a problem, as you know. The Jews were not a free people. They were ruled by the Romans.

And therefore, they were not free to carry out capital punishment. They had no right to execute anyone. They had certain rights that they could carry out their judgments, their religious trial courts of the Sanhedrin, but not the capital punishment.

And so their capital punishments and offenses needed to be brought to the Roman governor for his examination, his sentencing, and execution, which would be not by stoning, but by way of crucifixion.

[6 : 43] But the Sanhedrin know that Governor Pilate won't give two cents of a concern about religious issues like blasphemy.

So they change their charges when they bring their charge to the Roman court. And they say that he's guilty of inciting the people to rebellion. He's stirring up a riot.

He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar. He claims to be a king, setting him up as a rival against Caesar, the emperor. Well, they were lying through their teeth.

None of that was true. Jesus said, give to Caesar what Caesar's and to God what his God's. So Pilate knows it's for envy that they handed him over.

And he examines Jesus according to their charges. And he tells them, I find no basis for a charge against this man. Well, the rulers respond with no new evidence, just more volume.

[7 : 46] And they just keep shouting the lying accusations against him. And Pilate again later says to the Jewish leaders, I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him.

Neither has King Herod, as you can see, he sent him back. He's done nothing deserving death. No capital offense here. And so wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them yet again.

But they just shouted him down, stirring up the crowd to shout, crucify him. Crucify him. And Pilate says, why?

What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore, I'll punish him and let him go. But not the death penalty.

But with shouts, with loud shouts, they insistently demanded that he be crucified. And their shouts prevailed. Prevailed against justice.

[8 : 54] And Pilate surrendered Jesus to their will. Had him flogged and crucified between two criminals.

As if he himself were one of those criminals deserving of the death penalty. So nailed to a cross to die the slow death by torture, which was the Roman capital punishment.

All the while being mocked and treated as the worst of criminals. And after six hours hanging on the cross from nine in the morning to three in the afternoon, Jesus cried, it is finished.

Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. And with that, he bowed his head, breathed his last, and died. And then we read this interesting request of the Jewish leaders in John chapter 19 and verse 31.

Now it was the day of preparation. And the next day was to be a special Sabbath. That is, the Sabbath of Passover. Now every Sabbath was special, but the Sabbath of the Passover week was a real special Sabbath.

[10 : 15] And because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down.

So the Sabbath started at sundown. They want the bodies down before the sun goes down. And their concern seems to be clearly connected to this, what might have otherwise been some forgotten law way back in Deuteronomy chapter 21.

About bodies of capital offenders dying under the curse of God, being hung up on a tree, but needing to be taken down during the same day and buried.

Lest the land be defiled by the dead bodies of these cursed by God. They didn't want that happening, especially not on the holy day of Sabbath during Passover week.

And so by breaking the legs with an iron hammer or rod, their death would be hastened. Of course, it was unnecessary when they came to Jesus because he was already dead, fulfilling the prophecy that not one of his bones would be broken.

[11 : 38] So they made sure that the bodies were taken down by sundown. After all, that's what the law in Deuteronomy said to do with bodies that died under God's curse for the capital offenses.

But there's yet another New Testament reference to this passage in Deuteronomy. And it's connected as well to the death of Jesus. It's Galatians 3.13.

I'm sure most of you are familiar with it. Turn to it. Galatians 3.16. And this time it's not a veiled reference to Deuteronomy.

It's an exact quotation from Deuteronomy 21. Paul writes, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

As it is written, cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree. That comes right out of Deuteronomy 21, word for word. And it raises an important question, doesn't it?

[12 : 45] Jesus was hanging on a tree, to be sure. But was he cursed by God? As Deuteronomy claims that those hanging on a tree are indeed cursed by God.

Well, not the way Deuteronomy 21 inferred. That was for those who were guilty of a capital offense and who deserved the death penalty.

Yes, they died under the curse of God. But Jesus doesn't fit that description. He was God.

It was no blasphemy. There was no capital offense. And yet, in another way, he does fit that description. Because Galatians 3.13 is telling us that Christ upon the cross became a curse.

Not for his own capital punishment or capital offenses, but for ours. In order to redeem us from the curse of God. The curse of the law.

[13 : 56] So what we have here is something staggeringly wonderful. Full of wonder. The convergence. The coming together of both the human activity and the divine activity.

Right there on the middle cross of Calvary. What did man do to Jesus as they judged him? Did they get it right?

Is he cursed by God? No, they got it wrong. They got it horribly wrong. They threw justice to the wind. And they sacrificed the innocent, holy, blameless son of God.

As a pawn to serve their own selfish interests. What man did to Jesus there was the greatest travesty of justice. But what God did to him there was the greatest display of justice.

The very same event in history. Being the worst injustice and the greatest justice. Isn't that amazing?

[15 : 10] The beautiful, terrible cross. While men were doing their worst, torturing and killing the innocent, perfect God man. God was doing his best.

Cursing him to provide salvation for a countless number of sinners. Who were under the curse. So the crucifixion, I say, is a unique, a strange, a mysterious event in this sense.

That men were killing him for crimes he did not commit. And God too was killing him for crimes he did not commit.

Yet what man did was unjust and what God did was just. For the crimes he justly, Christ justly died for were our crimes against God.

High crimes. Capital offenses of the worst kind. Sinning not merely against men, but against God our creator.

[16 : 14] The holy one of Israel. Crimes of deepest eye we see. Crimes deserving capital punishment. Death under the curse of God.

And then the second death of eternal everlasting shame and torment of hell. I say they were our crimes. But they became his crimes.

When he was made sin for us. Second Corinthians 5:21. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us. So that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

And then that passage in Isaiah 53:6. We all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has gone his own way. And you'd expect to hear.

And that's why you're cursed. But the next line is. And the Lord laid on him. The iniquities of us all. That's how our crimes became his.

[17 : 17] The Lord laid our crimes. Our iniquities. Upon him. They were put to him. Transferred from us to him.

So when he comes to the cross. It's with a criminal record. Of the greatest sinner who's ever lived. Bearing the whole mountain of my sins.

Not only my commission. My sins of commission. But my sins of omission. The good I failed to do. That doubles the mountain of my sin. And then there's all of your sins.

And all of the sins of all God's people. Who ever lived in the past. Or will live in the future. Can you imagine the weight of the sin.

That was placed on Jesus. When the Lord Yahweh. Laid on his son. The iniquity. Of us all. And so with that sin upon him.

[18 : 12] He comes to the place of judgment. The cross. Where sin is dealt with. Where capital sins. Receive capital punishment. And the question now is.

What will the God. What will God the judge do with his own son. Now. You know that's the real test of justice. For a judge isn't it.

He might be tough on crime. When it's somebody else's son. But what does he do. When it's his own son. That is found with sin. Well this is the son.

That he loved for all eternity. And in whom he found greatest delight. And declared. I'm well pleased with him. Well he cursed him.

That's what he did. He punished him. He gave him the death. Penalty. And during those strange. Three hours of darkness.

[19 : 11] In the middle of the day. From twelve to three o'clock. Three hours. Matching that strange. Three day curse. Of darkness upon.

Egypt. The Lord who had laid the iniquities. Of us upon his son. Now cursed his son. The darkness that was all around.

Was a dim reflection. Of the darkness. In the soul of Jesus. Who cried out. My God. My God. Why have you abandoned me?

Of course it was the sin. That was laid upon him. Because in being made sin for us. He became a curse. For us. And the father turned his face away.

And the son felt nothing. Not an ounce of his father's love. But hung in darkness. Under his wrath. His curse.

[20 : 21] Abandoned. Wounded. Crushed. Punished. And compressing into those three dark hours. What. You and I. Finite men.

Would have taken all eternity. To feel. He bore. The infinite wrath of God. The curse that was due us. Isaiah says.

We despised and rejected him. And we thought he was getting what he had coming. We considered him. Rightly stricken by God.

Smitten by him. And afflicted. Oh but how wrong we were. Because he was being wounded for our transgressions. That were now laid on him.

And he was being crushed for our iniquities. And it wasn't his own. And he was being punished. That we might have peace with God. And his stripes were healing us.

[21 : 22] And so. Being sin for us. He became a curse for us. And that's why Paul. Here in Galatians 3.13. Quotes our passage in Deuteronomy 21.

That Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. How? By becoming a curse for us. As it is written. Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree. So if these capital offenses for which he's being cursed weren't his.

But rather ours. Well what were our capital offenses? What did we do that was so bad. That it deserved the highest punishment. Of God's curse.

Well we broke his law. We broke his law. It was the curse of a broken law. Look up just three verses.

At Galatians 3.10. Paul says that all who rely on observing the law are under a curse. For it is written. Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the law.

[22 : 32] That's Deuteronomy 27. Have you ever. Have you done everything written in the law? Have you continued to do everything written in the law?

Without fault. Without interruption. Oh far from it. Well that's why we deserve capital punishment. The curse of God.

We've broken the law. Of our maker. Of our benefactor. Our God. And the broken law of God has only one thing to say to any lawbreaker.

Damn you. Curse you. That's all the law. Once it's broken can say to anyone. It can never say. You're forgiven.

You're absolved. Go in peace. It knows no such thing. The broken law of God only and always condemns.

[23 : 37] And you see that's why Paul is arguing that no one will ever be saved by. Keeping the law. Because the law has only one thing to say to the lawbreaker.

It doesn't say come on do a little more. Maybe you'll balance the scale. It says you're damned. You're cursed. That's all you get from a broken law. God is too just.

To let sin go unpunished. He will by no means clear the guilty. Even when that sin and guilt is found on his own beloved son. As he bears our sin and guilt.

I wonder if we really. Know a tenth of what it means to be. Damned by God. Cursed by God. That quote.

Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything. That's Deuteronomy 27. What follows is Deuteronomy 28. And Deuteronomy 28 is a long chapter.

[24 : 41] Of what it means. And what it looks like to be cursed by God. It's like a horror movie. I wouldn't suggest you read it at night.

It's a description of having every single thing in your life cursed by God. Your home life. Your family life. Your farm.

Your business. Your weather. The land. Your kids. Your wife. Your animals. It's all under the curse of God. That's the curse.

That's what our capital offenses to God deserve. And God sent his own son into the world out of love to bear in our place.

That curse. And so that curse bearing death for us has redeemed us and forever freed us from the curse of God.

[25 : 43] He was cursed that we might be eternally blessed. And you can read in Deuteronomy 20. The first part of 28. What it means to be blessed. It's to have God's blessing on your food and your farm and your kitchen and your wife and everything.

To have God's blessing on everything you do. He takes the curse that we deserved and gives us the blessing that he deserved. What an amazing transaction and trade.

Our curse for his blessing. So I say in a mysterious supernatural way. We have this strange concurrence between man's actions and God's actions.

Man punishing Christ for crimes he did not commit. The greatest tragedy. Travesty of justice. And God too punishing Christ for crimes he did not commit.

The greatest display of justice. Justice for Christ. And mercy for us. And yet both of these things are happening simultaneously.

[26 : 53] What's the odds of that happening in the world history? The greatest act of justice. And the greatest injustice.

Happening at the very same moment in human history. At the very same place in the very same person. The son of God become man.

I say that alone argues for the sovereignty of God over all things. God has ordained and orchestrated history hasn't he?

Who else could pull this off? And so in the cross we behold the wisdom of God. The power of God to bring about our salvation. And at the cross we behold the grace and love of God.

The father would rather curse his son than to curse us. That the son would voluntarily come to be cursed.

[27 : 56] And to become sin for us. And to become the curse for us. And that God the Holy Spirit would sustain our Savior. Under all the injustices of men.

And the pure justice of God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. What we owe to our triune God. Loving us at the cross.

Doing justice to our Savior. That he might have mercy on us. There's a wonderful hymn we're going to sing. In which we sing of justice.

And we sing of the pains of our Savior. And yet there's this line. That the deepest stroke that pierced him. Was the stroke that justice gave.

Not the stroke of injustice for men. Oh, that was torment. It was torture to be sure. But the deepest stroke that pierced him. Was the justice stroke.

[29 : 04] The sword of God's justice for our sin. It's number 192. Stricken, smitten, and afflicted. Let's sing in wonder of this love and praise.

For such a salvation and such a Savior. 192. Rape and heaven. Chapter 1 Bar And the sea star.

melko and ■■■. Father, there's a BMJ. The Dios that has come to using. Let's be saved and our nuts, for such a ■■as bien. Everybody with no grace. And the was worth doing well with your sin. In the sea. Yep. Amen. You are full of sin. The love and grace. Absolutely. Men of sin. The love and love ensues the Lord.

Lord and the peace. Lord and the ■■■ of the heaven to show. One of this love and beautifulón■■■. And the grace,