



September 29, 2013  
Deuteronomy 19-25  
“Jesus - Our City of Refuge”  
Pastor Gary Hamrick

This study is the fourth in Pastor Gary’s series in the book of Deuteronomy. The continuing theme is “What You Need to Know Before You Go.” In his first message, the main point was, when you enter the good land and start living the good life, don’t forget God. Last week it was, when you enter the land that was occupied by pagan people, don’t be influenced by their pagan practices, don’t worship the way they worship, and don’t live like they live and so be conformed to the world; instead be transformed by God.

Pastor Gary adds to the list of “What you need to know before you go.” In this study we learn that Moses instructed them on specific laws that every civilized society needs. God’s people needed to understand they couldn’t live however they wanted. Instead, they were to respect each other’s property, each other’s lives and livelihoods. They would understand that in God’s Promised Land they needed civil and criminal laws to guide and govern their society. Courts would need to be established, and judges would need to be appointed to settle disputes and decide cases. They would find that God wanted these judges to impose consequences for breaking his laws, which ranged anywhere from a mild penalty to capital punishment. Additionally, these laws ranged from the practical (what are you supposed to do when you find something that belongs to your neighbor?), to the severe (what are you supposed do to someone who has committed first degree murder?).

### Examples Of Practical Civil Laws

1. **Deuteronomy 22:1-3** - *“If you see your brother’s ox or sheep straying, do not ignore it but be sure to take it back to him. If the brother does not live near you or if you do not know who he is, take it home with you and keep it until he*

*comes looking for it. Then give it back to him. Do the same if you find your brother's donkey or his cloak or anything he loses. Do not ignore it."*

- a. In other words, if you find something that belongs to someone else, either take it to the owner or if you don't know who the owner is, hold on to it until someone comes looking for it; then, give it back!
2. **Deuteronomy 22:4** - *"If you see your brother's donkey or his ox fallen on the road, do not ignore it. Help him get it to its feet."*
    - a. The translation is, if you see your neighbor dealing with a flat tire by the side of the road, stop and help him or her change it!
  3. Isn't it interesting to consider that God had to put these things in the legal code, simply because we are naturally greedy and selfish!
  4. **Deuteronomy 23:24-25** - *"If you enter your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat all the grapes you want, but do not put any in your basket. If you enter your neighbor's grainfield, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to his standing grain."*
    - a. The simple message is that it's okay to eat a snack from your neighbor's grainfield or vineyard, but don't steal a meal by bringing a basket or use a combine!

#### God's Provision For The Poor And Needy

5. In **Deuteronomy 24:17-22**, we see how the civil code provided for the poor and needy.
  - a. *"Do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this. When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow. When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this."*

## Courts Must Be Established And Judges Must Be Appointed

6. **Deuteronomy 25:1-3** - *“When men have a dispute, they are to take it to court and the judges will decide the case, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty. If the guilty man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall make him lie down and have him flogged in his presence with the number of lashes his crime deserves, but he must not give him more than forty lashes. If he is flogged more than that, your brother will be degraded in your eyes.”*
  - a. If you were guilty of a crime, you wouldn't be locked up with “a cot and three hot's,” and a great cable TV package!
  - b. In that day, depending on the crime, you were either beaten or killed!
  - c. It was either corporal or capital punishment according to God's laws.

## Examples Of Capital Crimes

7. First Degree Murder
  - a. **Deuteronomy 19:11-13** - *“But if a man hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him, assaults and kills him, and then flees to one of these cities, the elders of his town shall send for him, bring him back from the city, and hand him over to the avenger of blood to die. Show him no pity. You must purge from Israel the guilt of shedding innocent blood, so that it may go well with you.”*
8. Kidnapping
  - a. **Deuteronomy 24:7** - *“If a man is caught kidnapping one of his brother Israelites and treats him as a slave or sells him, the kidnapper must die. You must purge the evil from among you.”*
9. Rape
  - a. **Deuteronomy 22:25-26** - *“But if out in the country a man happens to meet a girl pledged to be married and rapes her, only the man who has done this shall die. Do nothing to the girl; she has committed no sin deserving death. This case is like that of someone who attacks and murders his neighbor...”*
10. Adultery
  - a. **Deuteronomy 22:22** - *“If a man is caught sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel.”*

- b. Today, adultery is still a crime in 23 states in the U.S. (although it is rarely enforced, save for leverage in divorce proceedings), and five of the twenty-three states classify adultery as a felony.<sup>1</sup>
    - i. In 2007, a Michigan appellate court ruled that adultery is still punishable offense, with the possibility of a life sentence!<sup>2</sup>
    - ii. Adultery is still illegal in Virginia.<sup>3</sup>
11. Rebellion Against Parents
- a. **Deuteronomy 21:18-21** – *“If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him, his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town. They shall say to the elders, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a 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 of it and be afraid.”*

#### Summary - Civil and Capital Laws

12. When you look at these laws, and there are many, many others in this section of the book of Deuteronomy, we learn about the heart of God.
- a. God wants us to treat our fellow man with dignity and respect.
    - i. Don't take what doesn't belong to you.
    - ii. Don't stand idly by when someone is in need, but help him or her.
    - iii. Don't neglect the poor, the widow, and the orphan, but care for them.
  - b. God wants us to respect life.
    - i. No kidnapping or murder!
  - c. God wants us to respect the dignity of a woman.
    - i. No rape!
  - d. God wants us to respect the honor of our spouse.
    - i. No adultery!
  - e. God wants us to respect our parents.
    - i. No rebellion!

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<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adultery>

<sup>2</sup> [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/2010-04-26-column26\\_ST\\_N.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/2010-04-26-column26_ST_N.htm)

<sup>3</sup> In 2004, the Town Attorney for Luray, Virginia, was convicted of adultery and sentenced to perform community service. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A62581-2004Sep4.html>

## God's Provision – Cities Of Refuge

13. In the midst of all these civil and criminal laws, and the punishments that went with them, God made gracious provision to help people who had accidentally committed a crime and who needed protection and a safe haven where they could flee before being condemned or killed by others.
14. **Deuteronomy 19:1-7** – *“When the Lord your God has destroyed the nations whose land he is giving you, and when you have driven them out and settled in their towns and houses, then set aside for yourselves three cities centrally located in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess. Build roads to them and divide into three parts the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, so that anyone who kills a man may flee there. This is the rule concerning the man who kills another and flees there to save his life – one who kills his neighbor unintentionally, without malice aforethought, For instance, a man may go into the forest with his neighbor to cut wood, and as he swings his ax to fell a tree, the head may fly off and hit his neighbor and kill him. That man may flee to one of these cities and save his life. Otherwise, the avenger of blood might pursue him in a rage, overtake him if the distance is too great, and kill him even though he is not deserving of death, since he did it to his neighbor without malice aforethought. This is why I command you to set aside for yourselves three cities.”*
15. **Joshua 20:4-6** – *“When [a fugitive] flees to one of these cities, he is to stand in the entrance of the city gate and state his case before the elders of that city. Then they are to admit him into their city and give him a place to live with them. If the avenger of blood pursues him, they must not surrender the one accused, because he killed his neighbor unintentionally and without malice aforethought. He is to stay in that city until he has stood trial before the assembly and until the death of the high priest who is serving at that time. Then he may go back to his own home in the town from which he fled.”*
16. David capitalized on this theme in the book of Psalms; by saying the Lord is like a city of refuge where those who were oppressed or in trouble could flee.
  - a. **Psalm 9:9-10** – *“The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, the Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.”*
  - b. **Psalm 16:1** – *“Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge.”*
  - c. **Psalm 18:2a** – *“The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge.”*
  - d. **Psalm 46:1** – *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”*
  - e. More than 15 additional references to God being our refuge can be found

in the book of Psalms.

17. According to [Joshua 20:7-8](#), there would eventually be six cities of refuge in Israel: Golan, Ramoth, Bezer, Kedesh, Shechem, and Kiriath Arba (Hebron).

#### Five Similarities Between Cities Of Refuge And Our Refuge In Jesus

18. Both are in easy reach of the person in need.
  - a. Each city was located equidistant from the others, so there would be easy access.
19. Both are accessible to everyone.
  - a. No one had ever to fear that they would be turned away.
20. Both are the only alternative for the person in need.
  - a. Without this provision, the *“avenger of blood”* would certainly kill him or her.
21. Both provide protection only within their boundaries.
  - a. If you left the city, you could be killed, so the parallel is that life is only found in Jesus, not apart from him.
22. With both, full freedom comes with the death of the High Priest.

#### One Crucial Distinction

23. The cities of refuge were only for the innocent; but today the guilty can find refuge in Christ!
24. [Psalm 31:1-2](#) - *“In you, O Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness. Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me.”*

#### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Allow the people in your group to share experiences they’ve had when they found something.

- a. What was the reaction of the person who received their lost item(s)?
3. Have you had the experience of losing something you thought you'd never see again, only to be totally surprised when someone returned the item(s)?
4. Read and discuss [Deuteronomy 23:24-25](#).
  - a. Do you feel it's okay to eat grapes or other food items as you move from aisle to aisle in the grocery store?
  - b. Are there other examples you can share in which some people think it's okay to do something that would violate God's instructions?
5. Provide a summary of civil and capital laws prior to reading and discussion specific Scriptures. (See #12 above)
6. Read and discuss [Deuteronomy 21:18-21](#).
  - a. Use these links to read about a recent incident at the home of a retired NFL football player, plus an article by Rebecca Hagelin, which deals with the issue of teenage rebellion.<sup>4 5 6</sup>
7. Read and discuss [Deuteronomy 19:1-7](#) and [Joshua 20:4-6](#).
8. Allow the people in your group to share about times they were in trouble, faced problems, or sinned, and they ran to the Lord like a city of refuge.
9. Spend time talking about the five similarities between cities of refuge and Jesus.
10. Read the Psalms Pastor Gary mentioned when he spoke about the large number of references to the Lord being a refuge. (See #16 above)
11. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: see how God wants them to live when it comes to practical ways they can honor him and others by their personal conduct; thank the Lord for being their refuge in times of trouble and difficulties; thank the Lord for being there for them when they've sinned and need his forgiveness.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/sep/29/hagelin-are-teens-or-parents-the-problem/?page=all>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.helpmesave300.com>

<sup>6</sup> <http://foxnewsinsider.com/2013/09/19/former-nfl-star-brian-holloway's-new-york-home-trashed-over-200-partying-teenagers>