

February 24: 20:1-20

**Laws concerning war with distant enemies and more local enemies (distant verses 1-15, local verses 16-20)**

- I. Intro to warfare with distant enemies (verses 1-4)
  - a. We have seen instructions about battle before. These are instructions regarding battles that are distant.
  - b. Verses 1-9 have a repeating theme of not being afraid.
  - c. These are all passages about NOT being afraid: Deut 3:22; 7:18; 31:6, 8; Ps 20:7; Is 31:1<sup>1</sup>
  - d. They go out to battle and they see horses and chariots and people that are more numerous than them, they are not to fear.
  - e. It would be natural to fear wouldn't it?
  - f. You see more people, you see horses and chariots, the fear response may go up.
  - g. But verse 1 reminds them that the Lord is with them. This is the same Lord who brought them out of Egypt.
  - h. The reason for not being afraid is God. God protects them. God fights for them.
  - i. Verse 2: the priest speaks to the people.
  - j. Verse 3 tells us what the priest says. We see 4 commands and then in verse 4 we see why: He is encouraging them not to fear. 1) Do not be fainthearted. 2) Do not be afraid. 3) Do not panic. 4) Do not tremble.
  - k. Verse 4: The Lord fights...
- II. Reasons by which people can leave (verses 5-8)
  - a. I find this section interesting.
  - b. This is showing that God was not dependent on every last man.
  - c. Actually, God did not need any of them (see Judges 7 and Gideon).
  - d. 1) A man with a new house could leave. 2) a man with a new vineyard can leave. 3) a newly engaged man can leave. 4) the man that is afraid can leave.
  - e. Dt 24:5 *When a man is newly married, he need not go into the army nor be obligated in any way; he must be free to stay at home for a full year and bring joy to the wife he has married.*
  - f. Psychologically fear could be contagious.
- III. Appointment of commanders (verse 9)
  - a. They are developing their command structure so that they can go to battle.
  - b. This is an orderly way of going into battle.
- IV. Offer of peace (verses 10-12)
  - a. These are cities that are distant, we must remember that.
  - b. They offer peace first.
  - c. Even if they offer peace, they become forced laborers.
  - d. Verse 12: if they do not make peace then they besiege it.

---

<sup>1</sup> [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

- e. There was a history channel documentary about presidents who were in WWII and they talked about Eisenhower entering the French North Africa. Before going to war he met with them to negotiate peace.
- V. The battle (verses 13-15)
- a. They are to strike all the men with the sword.
  - b. Verse 14: they are to take captive all the women, children and animals.
  - c. They are to take all the spoil.
  - d. Verse 15 is a summary.
- VI. Laws concerning war with Canaanite nations (verses 16-18)
- a. Deut. 7:1-5 is a close cross reference.
  - b. Canaanite cities or cities that the Lord is giving them as part of their inheritance.
  - c. They are not to leave alive anything that breathes.
  - d. Verse 17: utterly destroy them. 1) the Hittite, 2) Amorite, 3) Canaanite, 4) Perizzite, 5) Hivite, Jebusite.
  - e. As the Lord has commanded...
  - f. Verse 18 gives purpose.
  - g. God does not want His people corrupted. They would sin against the Lord.
  - h. *Dt 7:4 for they will turn your sons away from me to worship other gods. Then the anger of the LORD will erupt against you and he will quickly destroy you.*
- VII. The trees (verses 19-20)
- A. Verse 19 is instruction to make use of the trees by keeping them alive if they can find fruit off of them.
  - B. Verse 20: is to make use of the trees by cutting them down if they are not fruit trees.
  - C. IVP BBC: **siege works**. To capture a walled city, it was necessary to employ a variety of siege works, including ramps (2 Sam 20:15; 2 Kings 19:32), towers (Is 23:13; Ezek 21:22) or perimeter walls to prevent escape (Ezek 26:8; Mic 5:1). Battering rams (Ezek 26:9) as well as supports for tunnels undermining the walls also required the use of timbers. This explains the dispensation allowed in Deuteronomy for the cutting of trees during a siege. The Assyrian reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 B.C.) at Nimrud portray many of these siege engines and simultaneous methods of warfare.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [\*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament\*](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Dt 20:20.