

Veritas Class
May 4, 2014
Righteousness Demonstrated in the Conduct of War IV
Deuteronomy 20:10-20

The Structure of Chapter 20

A. Taking Care of the Troops (20:1-9)

B. Dealing with the Targeted Towns (20:10-18)

¹⁰ When you approach a town to attack it, you must first offer its people terms for peace. ¹¹ If they accept your terms and open the gates to you, then all the people inside will serve you in forced labor. ¹² But if they refuse to make peace and prepare to fight, you must attack the town. ¹³ When YHWH your God hands the town over to you, use your swords to kill every man in the town. ¹⁴ But you may keep for yourselves all the women, children, live-stock, and other plunder. You may enjoy the plunder from your enemies that YHWH your God has given you.

¹⁶ In those towns that YHWH your God is giving you as a special possession, destroy every living thing. ¹⁷ You must completely destroy the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, just as YHWH your God has commanded you. ¹⁸ This will prevent the people of the land from teaching you to imitate their detestable customs in the worship of their gods, which would cause you to sin deeply against YHWH your God.

This
is how
you shall treat
the distant towns
and that are not of the towns
of the nations here (v. 15).

a. Instructions for Distant Campaigns (20:10-15)

(1) The Overture of Peace (v. 10)

(2) The Options

(a) A Positive Response (v. 11)

(b) A Negative Response (vv. 12-14)

b. The Fulcrum (c. 15)

a. Instructions for Campaigns Nearby (vv. 16-18)

(1) The Targets:

(a) The towns of these peoples that YHWH your God is giving you as a grant.

(b) Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites. Cf. 7:1.

D. I. Block

(2) The Treatment:

- (a) Do not spare anyone who breathes.
- (b) Apply the law of *herem*.

(3) The Rationale:

d. Notice how theological the whole ordinance is.

- 13 When YHWH your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it.
- 14 And you may use the plunder YHWH your God gives you from your enemies.
- 16 In the cities of the nations that YHWH your God is giving you as an inheritance,
- 17 Completely destroy them as YHWH your God has commanded you.
- 18 And you will sin against YHWH your God.

4. Instructions on Siege Warfare (20:19-20)

- a. The Policy
- b. The Motive
- c. The Rationale

How can we justify the particular policy against the Canaanites? Do we need to justify it?

Factors to consider:

1. God is sovereign. He can do anything he wants and be right doing it. He does not operate by human assessments.
2. The ways of God are a mystery.
3. This is a metaphor for scrupulous devotion to God.
4. This is not a distinctly Old Testament issue.
5. This policy did not originate with politicians or military leaders, but derived from Yahweh himself.
6. According to the biblical picture of the Canaanites, these peoples were extremely wicked and their annihilation represented God's judgment for their sin.
7. The Israelites were never to make the divinely prescribed policy concerning the Canaanites their general policy toward outsiders.
8. The *herem* policy was driven by religious, rather than genocidal or military considerations: the need to "keep Yahweh's holy people free from syncretism and idolatry."
9. The Canaanites suffered a fate that ultimately all sinners will face: the judgment of God.
10. In biblical times people had a sense of corporate identity that is difficult for us modern westerners to understand.
11. We must understand God's hatred of sin and his desire to transform a fallen world.
12. We must understand God's hatred of sin and his desire to transform a fallen world.
13. Although the Canaanites as a whole were subject to the judgment of God, they had at least 40 years of advance warning (see Rahab's confession in Joshua 2:8-11).
14. God really does not play favorites.