

Loving Christ in All of Life

Week 18 - Bloodguilt

Deuteronomy 21:1-9

- The world God made reflects His triunity - one and many are equally ultimate
 - Under the law, every individual is responsible for his own sins, yet the community is held responsible for how they deal with violations of the law
 - The people as a whole are to reflect God's holiness, and so every crime must be justly punished
 - God cannot ignore sin, and neither may His sword-bearing avenger (the state) ignore crime
- Murder requires capital punishment to satisfy civic justice - all murder must be taken seriously
 - If a conviction could not be secured, this did not erase the necessity of restitution
 - It is the community's responsibility to protect and defend its members - if it fails to do this, it must acknowledge its failure and ask God for mercy
 - Also provides practical incentive for magistrates to exhaust all resources to do justice
 - To ignore or make light of the need for restitution is to make peace with murder
 - Innocent blood shed cries out to God for justice and brings a curse on any nation (Num. 35:33, Lev. 20:4-5)
 - If a community fails to make restitution for murder, eventually God will see to it Himself - the community cannot escape covenantal judgment without repentance
- Means of executing justice reflects communal responsibility
 - At times, the community, under the authority of the state, is called to carry out punishment against the criminal (Deut. 17:6-7)
 - Serves as a deterrent against false witnesses
 - Emphasizes the responsibility of the community to avoid bloodguilt
- The law is careful to avoid bloodguilt by unjust executions
 - Num. 35:9-29 - cities of refuge served to ensure due process
 - Especially necessary in the ancient context where tribes/families often took justice into their own hands
 - Also serves as a sort of appeal - a check on state injustice & error
 - Recognizes the sanctity of life and responsibility for restitution even for accidental manslaughter