

In many ancient cultures it was common practice to execute an enemy or criminal by hanging them on a tree. Or, more commonly, the dead body would be hung on a tree after execution by some other means. Until fairly recent times, the body would often be left exposed for some time as a warning to others.

Verses 22-23 prohibit this lengthy and macabre display. Archaeologists tell us that many of the cultures surrounding Israel had strict laws about burial. But they were usually connected to superstitions about the spirits of the dead gathering around the body and somehow endangering the living. Even our Western culture has accumulated many superstitions about the simple but sobering fact of death. As one example, the

original reason mourners covered their faces was to prevent spirits from recognizing and harming them.

For a book stretching back thousands of years, the Bible is remarkably free of superstitious practices aimed at placating a host of invisible spirits. There is only one supernatural being whom we are told to fear and seek to please, the Creator of heaven and earth. And He Himself has provided the way for us to be reconciled to Him and to be brought into a loving relationship as sons with Him. And that is by the death on a tree of his own beloved Son.

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree” (Galatians 3:13).*

### Questions:

1. What is the purpose of the ceremony given in verses 1-9?
2. Read Numbers 19:1-10. Why is the heifer in Deuteronomy 21 killed by having its neck broken instead of the usual method of slaughter?
3. Is there any picture of Christ in this passage?

4. How is the principle of mercy seen in verses 10-17?
5. Does Scripture ever endorse polygamy —having multiple wives — as seen in verses 15-17?
6. What other problems arise from polygamy as we read through the Bible?
7. Why do you think such a harsh penalty is imposed in verses 18-21?
8. What is the principle in verses 22-23?