

THE HOLINESS CODE

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For some weeks ... I have been encouraging us to value the Bible ... all of it. Including the "Old Testament" scriptures.

We've seen that many people (even a number of churches) scoff at the Old Testament ... they accuse it of being old ... it is out-of-date ... at times it is absurd. Remember "West Wing" ... making fun of the Old Testament scriptures ... making references to slavery ... unclean animals ... the Sabbath ... mixed seeds and your mom wearing a garment of mixed fibres ... and so on.

Most church-goers don't even know the names of the Old Testament books let alone have familiarity with the content ... so they are not in a position to defend the scriptures.

They just get embarrassed ... maybe us too ... get uncomfortable ... at what they hear ... and in many cases just assume "it's all done away". "It's not relevant". "The Old Testament law has been replaced by New Testament Grace".

Yet many people in the church world still want to pick and choose ... like a restaurant menu. They approach the Bible the same way. All churches definitely want to keep tithing (!) ... many want to keep prohibitions on homosexuality ... but some don't. They claim homosexuality is fine in modern times and many churches welcome gays ... many support same-sex marriages. Then again ... most churches reject the Sabbath and the laws of unclean meats ... but most want to retain the prohibitions on incest and bestiality.

And they all want to keep Leviticus 19:18 ... "Love your neighbour as yourself".

All very confusing? Picking and choosing the bits you want.

Hopefully ... we've seen that not all laws in the Bible are the same. Some are eternal ... they apply to everyone everywhere in all societies: they would be God's eternal moral laws ... like murder.

Some are temporary ... or are for certain people only (of the Jews' 613 commandments in the Torah ... some are only for men ... some are only for women ... or Levites or priests ... etc).

The scripture is usually very clear as to what applies still.

CIRCUMCISION. Clear teaching in the New Testament (and implied even in the Old Testament). It is no longer required for salvation.

TEMPLE WORSHIP SYSTEM. Sacrifices ... offerings including washings ... its priesthood.

Last week we spent a little time in looking at some of the rules/regulations associated with the physical temple worship system ... those which are now "done away" (as shown by the destruction of the Temple ... plus scriptures such as Hebrews 8, 9 and 10).

But even here ... even though the specific laws may have ended ... we can still learn from them. The scriptures are still useful ... to make us wise unto salvation.

Because very often we see a New Testament application ... that absolutely does apply to us.

Remember last week ... we looked at some references in Leviticus to laws that made one "unclean" (Hebrew: Tamē)?

The physical lesson back in those days was that God is Holy and He is dwelling with them ... in a Holy temple ... Holy altars ... Holy priesthood ... Holy sacrifices ... and God wanted to remind the people that they should endeavour themselves to be Holy (as far as a carnal people could be) if they wanted to participate in worship.

If you were unclean ... ceremonially ... you couldn't participate. It was purely ceremonial uncleanness. Typically you'd stay unclean till sunset. Sometimes ... you may have to bathe ... wash your clothes ... symbolic of being clean or Holy ... before God.

We looked at a few examples last week from Leviticus.

- Touch carcass of unclean animal (rat/snake/dog)... you become unclean.
- Several weeks after childbirth
- Discharge of blood
- Leprosy also made you unclean

These physical restrictions don't apply today ... there is no physical temple or priesthood ... and we can see that the Bible tells us so.

Jesus speaking to the woman in Samaria:

John 4:19-24 (NKJV)

19 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.

20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.

22 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.

23 **But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.**

24 **God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.**"

God wants everyone everywhere to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

So. Although there is no physical uncleanness ... no ceremonial uncleanness ... for us today ... there are still very important teachings about being spiritually clean ... BEING HOLY PEOPLE ... which is more important to God. The underlying intent all along was to be spiritually clean.

Let's review some New Testament scriptures from last week.

Ephesians 5:1-7 (NKJV)

- 1 **Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.**
- 2 **And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.** *(That replaced all of the offerings and the sacrifices)*
- 3 **But fornication and all uncleanness** *(in the New Testament uncleanness is often associated with sexual immorality or fornication)* **or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;**
- 4 **neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting,** but rather giving of thanks.
- 5 **For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.**
- 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.
- 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them.

BE CLEAN ... SPIRITUALLY! Being unclean cuts you off from God.

2 Corinthians 6:14 - 7:1 (NKJV)

- 14 **Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?**
- 15 And **what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?**

16 And **what agreement has the temple of God with idols?** For ***you are the temple of the living God.*** (***Today. God dwells in certain people***) As God has said:

"I will dwell in them
And walk among them.
I will be their God,
And they shall be My people."

17 Therefore

**"Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.**

Do not touch what is unclean, (***Spiritually ... you and I should be avoiding getting tied up in an unclean world***)

And I will receive you."

18 "I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the Lord Almighty."

Chapter 7

1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**

SEEK TO BE HOLY.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 (NKJV)

3 **For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;**

4 **that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honour, (be spiritually clean)**

5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

6 that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.

7 **For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.**

Holiness ... not uncleanness.

Uncleanness ... true uncleanness ... isn't caused by touching things ... it's of the heart.

God wants us ... in the New Testament ... to be clean of mind and spirit. We need to purify ourselves ... cleanse ourselves.

1 John 3:1-3 (NKJV)

1 **Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!** Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

2 Beloved, **now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.**

3 **And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.**

We're bombarded on every side by uncleanness ... by advertising ... media ... movies ... ideologies. A great deal of it is likely to contaminate us. The product of a selfish and corrupt world ... influenced by unclean spirits. We need to guard our minds ... and seek to be pure ... to be careful that we don't become "the same temperature" as the world around us.

Proverbs 4:20-27 (NKJV)

20 My son, **give attention to my words;**
Incline your ear to my sayings.

21 **Do not let them depart from your eyes;**
Keep them in the midst of your heart;

22 **For they are life to those who find them,**
And health to all their flesh.

23 **Keep your heart with all diligence,**
For out of it spring the issues of life.

24 **Put away from you a deceitful mouth,**
And put perverse lips far from you.

25 Let your eyes look straight ahead,
And your eyelids look right before you.

26 Ponder the path of your feet,
And let all your ways be established.

27 Do not turn to the right or the left;
Remove your foot from evil.

God says to be attentive to His Words ... His sayings. Keep your heart with all diligence!! Above all else ... GUARD YOUR HEART!! How do we do that? We are the gatekeeper. We decide what goes in our eyes or in our ears. Reflect on which path you are taking. Keep on the narrow straight road.

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

We can look at anything ... hear anything ... think anything. We are free to choose ... but at what cost?

The Old Testament scriptures show us how God wanted people around Him to show their respect and reverence by being clean ... ceremonially. Underlying intent should be clear ... God wants His family today to be spiritually clean ... to be pure in heart.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NKJV)

19 Or **do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit** who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

20 For **you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.**

God dwells in us ... we are the temple of God's Holy Spirit ... we need to glorify God ... in our body and spirit.

God doesn't want us to be unclean ... contaminated by the world ... He wants us to be clean ... or "Holy".

1 Peter 1:13-16 (NKJV)

13 **Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober,** and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance;

15 **but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,**

16 **because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."**

If we want to fellowship with God ... the lessons of the Old Testament ... clean/unclean ... apply.

Where does this command "Be Holy" come from?

Leviticus 19:1-2 (NKJV)

1 And **the Lord spoke** to Moses, saying,

2 "**Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.**"

Holy = Hebrew: Qodesh = be separate ... to be separate from the world ... dedicated unto God.

There are over 100 references to being Holy in Leviticus.

Leviticus is probably one of the least read ... least liked ... books in the Bible. "All those sacrifices ... all that blood!"

Lots of people who try to read the Bible through ... get as far as Leviticus ... then give up. They've read Genesis and Exodus a number of times ... but they can't get past Leviticus!

Some people who've studied it in depth say it becomes one of their favourite books. Leviticus used to be the 1st book in the Bible that Jewish children studied in the synagogue.

Today ... most churches "Christians" ... either ignore it ... or reject it. Yet ... it is part of God's inspired word. It contains many direct statements from God. And even though many of its specific laws and practices no longer apply ... for example ... those relating to worship rules for the physical temple and the physical priesthood ... there is still much for us of value.

So we'll take a fairly quick review ... particularly of what some people call the "Holiness Code" ... Leviticus Chapters 17-26.

Remember. There are over 100 references to "Holy" ... plus the command in Leviticus 19:2 to be "Holy" ... which the Apostle Peter quotes as a command to New Testament believers too.

Leviticus 17:1-6 (NKJV)

- 1 And **the Lord spoke** to Moses, saying,
- 2 "Speak to Aaron, to his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them, 'This is the thing which the Lord has commanded, saying:
- 3 "**Whatever man of the house of Israel who kills an ox or lamb or goat in the camp, or who kills it outside the camp,**
- 4 **and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting to offer an offering to the Lord before the tabernacle of the Lord, the guilt of bloodshed shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people,**
- 5 to the end that **the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they offer in the open field, that they may bring them to the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to the priest, and offer them as peace offerings to the Lord.**
- 6 And the priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and burn the fat for a sweet aroma to the Lord.

The sacrifices must take place only at the sanctuary.

Today. Jesus is our Perfect Sacrifice. He shed His blood once for all time. The temple has gone. There is no priesthood. These laws here are not applicable for us today.

Leviticus 17:10-14 (NKJV)

- 10 **'And whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people.**
- 11 **For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for**

your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.'

12 Therefore I said to the children of Israel, '**No one among you shall eat blood, nor shall any stranger who dwells among you eat blood.'**

13 "Whatever man of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who hunts and catches any animal or bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust;

14 **for it is the life of all flesh. Its blood sustains its life.**

Therefore I said to the children of Israel, '**You shall not eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood.** Whoever eats it shall be cut off.'

Don't eat blood ... it is the life of the flesh. If meat is a sacrifice ... the blood makes atonement. If other than a sacrifice ... the blood must still be poured out.

Is this applicable for us today? Most (all?) ... Church of God groups do not eat blood or blood products. People in society do eat black pudding ... blood sausages. Does that law apply to us today or is that over now?

Compare:

Genesis 9:1-4 (NKJV)

1 So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.

2 And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand.

3 Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.

4 **But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.**

So. Don't eat blood! So the prohibition about not eating blood ... goes back ... long before Moses! It is not part of the Old

Covenant or temple worship. It was prohibited centuries before the days of Moses. Let's look in the New Testament.

Acts 15:1-2 (NKJV)

1 And **certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."**

2 Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.

A dispute over circumcision.

Acts 15:13-14 (NKJV)

13 **And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me:**

14 Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.

James sums up.

Acts 15:19-20 (NKJV)

19 **Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God,**
20 but that **we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.**

Here's James and the elders writing out a letter. Avoid blood.

Acts 15:23-24 (NKJV)

23 They wrote this, letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, **To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:** Greetings.

24 Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law"—to whom we gave no such commandment—

Acts 15:28-29 (NKJV)

28 **For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:**

29 **that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.** If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

Avoid blood.

So. The prohibition on consuming blood ... is not just in Leviticus ... it is one of the key scriptures ... it still applies today. (These are the verses that the Jehovah's Witnesses use today as being the reason that they don't have blood transfusions).

Leviticus 18:1-5 (NKJV)

1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: **I am the Lord your God.** (*You should add to that, "Be ye Holy ... for I am Holy"*)

3 According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances.

4 **You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the Lord your God.** (*Implied: "Be ye Holy"*)

5 **You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord.**

God's words.

Leviticus 18:6-9 (NKJV)

6 **None of you shall approach anyone who is near of kin to him, to uncover his nakedness: I am the Lord.** (*Be ye Holy*)

7 **The nakedness of your father or the nakedness of your mother you shall not uncover.** She is your mother; you shall not uncover her nakedness.

8 **The nakedness of your father's wife you shall not uncover;** it is your father's nakedness.

9 **The nakedness of your sister, the daughter of your father, or the daughter of your mother,** whether born at home or elsewhere, **their nakedness you shall not uncover.**

Incest prohibited. Most countries today prohibit incest ... though not all. This appears to be a moral law ... not connected to the temple worship system. It is still applicable today.

Recollect too ... that sexual relationships in God's plan are only legitimate within marriage!

Leviticus 18:22-29 (NKJV)

22 **You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination. (Homosexuality)**

23 **Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It is perversion. (Bestiality)**

24 "Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you.

25 For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants.

26 **You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations,** either any of your own nation or any

stranger who dwells among you

27 (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled),

28 lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you.

29 **For whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit them shall be cut off from among their people.**

As with incest ... these are moral laws ... they are not part of the temple worship system. These are still applicable today. The death penalty is still applicable today.

1 Corinthians 6:9 (NKJV)

9 ***Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.*** *(They won't be there! If they don't repent. The death penalty still applies. Capital punishment for these abominations)*

God's Kingdom is for Holy People ... for spiritually clean people. Thankfully we've all been washed ... cleansed ... in the Blood of The Lamb. But equally ... we don't want to become "casual" in these areas ... even if the world around us fully accepts them ... and pressurises us to do the same!

The Holiness Code tells us to Be Holy! A Holy people ... spiritually clean.