

# **LESSONS FROM LEVITICUS**

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For some weeks now we have been going through the Old Testament. We have been going through part of the Book of Leviticus ... the Code of Holiness.

The main reason is to show (or try to!) that the laws ... regulations ... practices are not all antiquated and absurd. Some were temporary ... or only for certain individuals ... but some are eternal ... and apply to you and me today ... and all show us something of God's mind and are useful.

The main purpose ... the overall objective ... is to defend the Bible ... especially the Old Testament scriptures ... especially against the scoffers and mockers. We don't need to avoid the Old Testament ... or be embarrassed by what's in it.

Many people do struggle with the Book of Leviticus ... but just because it may seem "very dry" or require a bit more effort on our part ... it doesn't mean we should just choose to avoid it. It's part of God's Word.

Looking at the Book of Leviticus we can see that the key theme is: Holiness. "Be Ye Holy".

That's still applicable today. God is still Holy. And He expects us to be Holy "In all our conduct". Are you ... am I?

There are many lessons of Holiness that we can learn from Leviticus ... even in those laws or practices that were only temporary.

We've been going through what's called the "Holiness Code" ... Leviticus Chapters 17-26.

So far ... a quick recap.

In Leviticus 17 we saw laws about where sacrifices must be brought ... and about not eating blood.

In Leviticus 18 we saw a number of laws about incest ... homosexuality and bestiality.

In Leviticus 19 we saw a number of laws about making provision for the poor in those days ... laws about being honest and truthful ... not defrauding your neighbours ... not stealing ... not being talebearers. There was another verse in Chapter 19 about loving our neighbour as ourselves (one of the two great Commandments).

We spent some time looking at the one verse that instructs against trying to breed different kinds of animals or mixing seeds in a field or wearing a garment of mixed fibres (specifically wool and linen). As we saw ... there is no penalty! We did see that it seemed to be very sensible? But the spiritual lesson is more important ... don't mix too closely with unconverted or unholy people! Be Ye Holy ... meaning be separate from people that have different attitudes than we have today.

We saw a prohibition on men shaving the sides of their head or disfiguring their beards. In context ... it seems to be a prohibition of what was then a well-known style of pagan worship. Today ... some strict Jewish sects still follow this literally.

Tattoos? (Also in Leviticus chapter 19). There is ½ a verse (out of more than 30,000 verses). It seems to be in context associated with some practice “for the dead”. Not clear nowadays ... 3,500 years later. It may not be wise to get a tattoo? But from ½ a verse ... it is difficult to be too dogmatic?

We came last week to Leviticus 20. It contains the death penalty for a number of serious/major sins. This was after due legal process.

Let man live by every word that comes out of the mouth of God.

### **Leviticus 20:1-2 (NKJV)**

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

2 “Again, you shall say to the children of Israel: **‘Whoever of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who gives any of his descendants to Molech, he shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones.**”

There is some dispute among scholars ... but this was probably referring to child sacrifice ... given in fire to Molech. God does not like child sacrifice. (Today's equivalent might be abortion!)

#### **Leviticus 20:6-8 (NKJV)**

6 **“And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people.**

7 Consecrate yourselves therefore, and **be holy, for I am the Lord your God.**

8 And **you shall keep My statutes, and perform them:** I am the Lord who sanctifies you.

These people had to remain separate from those nations round about them.

#### **Leviticus 20:27 (NKJV)**

27 **‘A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones.** Their blood shall be upon them.’ ”

What do we see today? This is a common practice ... seeking occult experience. Ouija boards ... mediums ... channellers ... horoscopes. This is not something that God takes lightly! What does God say about all of these things? Desiring of the death penalty. **There is only one source of truth ... and that is God!**

#### **Leviticus 20:9 (NKJV)**

9 **“For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.** He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood shall be upon him.

This verse is often misquoted. There is guidance in the Book of Proverbs of how to deal with disobedient child. This verse is talking about cursing. To curse is to treat with contempt ... may even include assault. To despise. Then you would have to bring it to the judges for verification.

Jesus had no problem with the death penalty for this offence ... He endorsed this commandment.

### **Mark 7:5-13 (NKJV)**

5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, “**Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders**, but eat bread with unwashed hands?”

6 He answered and said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:

**‘This people honours Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.**

7 **And in vain they worship Me,**

**Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.**’ (Man-made rubbish)

8 **For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men**—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.” (Would religious people do this?)

9 He said to them, “**All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.**

10 For Moses said, “Honour your father and your mother”; and, **‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’**

11 But you say, “If a man says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban’—” (that is, a gift to God),

12 then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother,

13 **making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down.** And many such things you do.”

They rejected the commandment of God. They set aside God’s word for their man-made traditions. So does Jesus have a problem with anyone being put to death for cursing their father or mother? No.

### **Leviticus 20:10 (NKJV)**

10 “**The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.**

Adultery. Both are to be put to death. That would certainly cause a problem in the world today. Even in His day ... Jesus did call the people a wicked and adulterous generation.

Scholars debate whether Israel actually carried out the death penalty. Mostly they ignored God’s laws ... so they probably ignored these too?

Also ... some believe these are “maximum penalties” and judges could commute sentences in certain circumstances.

Either way ... it certainly reveals the importance of marriage in God’s eyes. Marriage was designed by God ... a “Divine Institution”. GOD DESIRES TO PROTECT IT!

The laws against fornication ... adultery ... homosexuality ... bestiality ... incest ... are all part of God’s system for upholding the importance of marriage ... which in God’s eyes pictures the marriage of Jesus Christ to His bride.

One way to protect marriage is to have strong laws.

Adultery is rampant today in our societies. The majority of people just live together. But ... of those who actually bother to get married ... between 25%-70% of women and 40%-80% of men have committed adultery. Some call it an “infidelity epidemic” ... it is everywhere. One researcher states that 60% of all marriages will suffer from adultery.

Major social impact ... unfaithfulness ... emotional problems ... depression ... an element of betrayal ... it can lead to violence ... divorce ... child-rearing problems ... usually with a financial impact ... etc. Major downsides!

God’s attitude hasn’t changed ... why should it? God hasn’t moved with the times. The laws He gave in 1,400 BC and before that ... still apply.

**Hebrews 13:4 (NKJV)**

**4 Marriage is honourable among all, and the bed undefiled; *but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.***

**CJB: “Marriage is honourable in every respect; and in particular, sex within marriage is pure. *But God will indeed punish fornicators and adulterers*”.**

God’s judgment is the death penalty. The ultimate punishment will be the second death ... the Lake of Fire. God’s standards haven’t changed.

**1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (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.**

Fornicators/idolaters/adulterers/homosexuals etc ... won't inherit the kingdom.

God will execute the death penalty in the Lake of Fire.

### **Leviticus 20:13 (NKJV)**

13 **If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death.**  
Their blood shall be upon them.

Homosexual conduct. The penalty is the death penalty. Despite many churches welcoming gays ... endorsing same-sex marriage ... God's opinion is very plain.

Homosexuality is destructive of marriage. The very 1<sup>st</sup> commandment that God gave to mankind was: "Be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth". That's the original commandment. Anything that stands in the way of marriage and families is wicked.

We just saw in 1 Corinthians 6:9 that homosexuals and sodomites won't be in God's Kingdom. If not repentant ... they will be in the Lake of Fire ... capital punishment ... death penalty.

### **Leviticus 20:15-16 (NKJV)**

15 **If a man mates with an animal, he shall surely be put to death, and you shall kill the animal.**  
16 **If a woman approaches any animal and mates with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal. They shall surely be put to death.** Their blood is upon them.

Bestiality. The death penalty.

Again ... the underlying lesson is SEX IS FOR MARRIED PEOPLE ONLY!  
That still applies today ... despite Hollywood celebrities ... and most of society!

### **Leviticus 20:22-26 (NKJV)**

22 **"You shall therefore keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them,** that the land where I am bringing you to dwell may not vomit you out.

23 And **you shall not walk in the statutes of the nation which I am casting out before you; for they commit all these things, and therefore I abhor them.**

24 But I have said to you, "You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey." **I am the Lord your God, who has separated you from the peoples.**

25 **You shall therefore distinguish between clean animals and unclean, between unclean birds and clean, and you shall not make yourselves abominable by beast or by bird, or by any kind of living thing that creeps on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean.**

26 And **you shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine.**

Don't "join the club". BE SEPARATE! BE HOLY! This still applies today. We are to be SPIRITUALLY HOLY.

The next chapter is addressed to the priests (a descendant of Aaron)... but there are still some things that we can learn.

### **Leviticus 21:1-6 (NKJV)**

1 And the Lord said to Moses, **"Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: 'None shall defile himself for the dead among his people,**

2 except for his relatives who are nearest to him: his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, and his brother;

3 also his virgin sister who is near to him, who has had no husband, for her he may defile himself.

4 Otherwise **he shall not defile himself, being a chief man among his people, to profane himself.**

5 **"They shall not make any bald place on their heads, nor shall they shave the edges of their beards nor make any cuttings in their flesh.**

6 **They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God**, for they offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and the bread of their God; **therefore they shall be holy**.

The priests were to have higher standards than most. The priests had special rules. They were directly serving God in the Holy Place.

It is implied in verse 5 not to imitate the priests of other religions ... like in Egypt with their hair or beards. A similar instruction as to men generally ... but should be neatly trimmed.

#### **Ezekiel 44:15-24 (NKJV)**

15 “But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood,” says the Lord God.

16 “They shall enter My sanctuary, and they shall come near My table to minister to Me, and they shall keep My charge.

17 And it shall be, whenever they enter the gates of the inner court, that they shall put on linen garments; no wool shall come upon them while they minister within the gates of the inner court or within the house.

18 They shall have linen turbans on their heads and linen trousers on their bodies; they shall not clothe themselves with anything that causes sweat. ***(The priests had to turn up ... physically clean. Spotlessly clean garments. They are coming to a Holy God)***

19 When they go out to the outer court, to the outer court to the people, they shall take off their garments in which they have ministered, leave them in the holy chambers, and put on other garments; and in their holy garments they shall not sanctify the people.

20 “**They shall neither shave their heads, nor let their hair grow long, but they shall keep their hair well trimmed**.

21 No priest shall drink wine when he enters the inner court.

22 They shall not take as wife a widow or a divorced woman, but take virgins of the descendants of the house of Israel, or widows of priests.

23 “And **they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean**.

24 In controversy they shall stand as judges, and judge it according to My judgments. **They shall keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed meetings, and they shall hallow My Sabbaths**.

These next few verses are addressed to the High Priest.

#### **Leviticus 21:10-14 (NKJV)**

10 **‘He who is the high priest among his brethren, on whose head the anointing oil was poured and who is consecrated to wear the garments,** shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes;

11 **nor shall he go near any dead body, nor defile himself for his father or his mother;**

12 **nor shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am the Lord.**

13 **And he shall take a wife in her virginity.**

14 **A widow or a divorced woman or a defiled woman or a harlot— these he shall not marry; but he shall take a virgin of his own people as wife. (He is picturing Jesus Christ)**

There were special standards for the High Priest ... to better represent OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST.

#### **Leviticus 22:17-25 (NKJV)**

17 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

18 **“Speak to Aaron and his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, who offers his sacrifice for any of his vows or for any of his freewill offerings, which they offer to the Lord as a burnt offering—**

19 **you shall offer of your own free will a male without blemish from the cattle, from the sheep, or from the goats.**

20 **Whatever has a defect, you shall not offer, for it shall not be acceptable on your behalf.**

21 And **whoever offers a sacrifice of a peace offering to the Lord, to fulfill his vow, or a freewill offering** from the cattle or the sheep, **it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it.**

22 **Those that are blind or broken or maimed, or have an ulcer or eczema or scabs, you shall not offer to the Lord, nor make an offering by fire of them on the altar to the Lord.**

23 Either a bull or a lamb that has any limb too long or too short you may offer as a freewill offering, but for a vow it shall not be accepted.

24 **You shall not offer to the Lord what is bruised or crushed, or torn or cut;** nor shall you make any offering of them in your land.

25 Nor from a foreigner's hand shall you offer any of these as the bread of your God, because their corruption is in them, and defects are in them. They shall not be accepted on your behalf.' ”

God is a Holy God. How do you approach a Holy God? With offerings which must be of the best quality.

No compromise. Give this old worn-out 3 legged goat to God ... and sell the healthy specimen for good money? Would anyone do that? What attitude would that display? Did people do that? YES THEY DID!

### **Malachi 1:6-8 (NKJV)**

6 **“A son honours his father,**

**And a servant his master.**

**If then I am the Father,**

**Where is My honour?**

**And if I am a Master,**

**Where is My reverence?**

**Says the Lord of hosts**

**To you priests who despise My name.**

Yet you say, ‘In what way have we despised Your name?’

7 **“You offer defiled food on My altar,**

But say,

‘In what way have we defiled You?’

By saying,

‘The table of the Lord is contemptible.’

8 And when **you offer the blind as a sacrifice,**

Is it not evil?

And when **you offer the lame and sick,**

Is it not evil?

Offer it then to your governor!

Would he be pleased with you?

Would he accept you favourably?”

Says the Lord of hosts.

The priests offered the lame and the sick.

**Malachi 1:12-14 (NKJV)**

12 “But you profane it,  
In that you say,  
‘The table of the Lord is defiled;  
And its fruit, its food, is contemptible.’

13 You also say,  
‘Oh, what a weariness!  
And you sneer at it,’  
Says the Lord of hosts.

“And **you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick;**

**Thus you bring an offering!**

**Should I accept this from your hand?”**

**Says the Lord.**

14 “**But cursed be the deceiver**

Who has in his flock a male,  
And takes a vow,

**But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished—**

**For I am a great King,”**

**Says the Lord of hosts,**

**“And My name is to be feared among the nations.**

We don't offer animal sacrifices today? But ... any offering to God should be of good quality ... not the remains ... not the residue. A Holy People will give the best of what they've got.

**Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV)**

1 **I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.**

2 **And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

Our bodies ...our lives ... are to be a living sacrifice.

Our life is largely made up of our time and resources. When we consider our time and our resources ... does God just get the left-overs ... what we can spare when we've fulfilled our own desires? Or does He get what is fitting for A HOLY GOD?