

SOME LAWS ARE NOT FOR TODAY

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I've been talking about the value of the Old Testament scriptures. A lot of people tend to avoid it ... potentially ... it is "difficult" or "all done away" ... so why bother? It's been replaced by the "new and improved".

We saw that the early New Testament Church only had the Old Testament scriptures. Paul referred to them as the "Holy Scriptures" ... able to make Timothy wise unto salvation ... able to make us complete ... perfect ... mature.

Jesus said we were to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Old Testament only ... at that time).

We should value the whole Bible. It's one book ... one author. All helpful to us. If we want to spend more time in the New Testament ... fine. But just don't ignore or diminish the so-called Old Testament ... treat it as out-of-date and not relevant.

The last couple of weeks we've focused very much on some of the Old Testament laws or practices that some people choose to scoff at. The example of the West Wing episode from years ago ... with President Josiah Bartlet. He scoffs and mocks at the radio show host who hadn't stood up when he came into the room by asking her various questions starting with homosexuality and going on to ask, "doesn't the scripture say that I can sell my daughter into slavery ... suggest footballers wear gloves ... stone my brother for growing mixed seeds ... burn my mother alive for wearing a garment of mixed threads".

When people hear laws like that ... and such severe penalties ... they conclude that the Old Testament and its God ... are weird. These laws are antiquated and absurd. It's clear the Old Testament is not relevant to modern Christians (of course ... the President made up the penalties!!)

When churches and Christians condemn homosexuals ... they often refer to Leviticus chapters 18 and 20 ... "see" they say ... "God's word calls it an abomination". But then the come back is usually : "Okay. But it says the death penalty applies in Leviticus. Do you believe that?" There's usually silence at that point. The same book says, "Don't wear garments of mixed fibres. Do you practice that?" They normally say that that doesn't apply to us today. The same book says, "no mixed seeds in your fields. Do you believe and practice that?" The same book says, "don't eat pork or shellfish. Do you practice that?" (The usual answer is, "No".)

The accusation is then made that churches are just picking and choosing to suit their own prejudices ... their own preferences. Or sometimes ... that they're just hypocrites.

What would our defence be? How would we respond to "clever" people who ask these questions? Do we pick and choose? We keep the unclean meats instructions of Leviticus chapter 11 and the Holy Days of Leviticus chapter 23 ... but not the mixed seed or mixed fibres of Leviticus chapter 19 ... or the death penalty for homosexuality of Leviticus chapter 20!

Hopefully we'll see that we have Biblical reasons ... good ones ... for what we believe.

One point we raised last week is that if we decided that Leviticus chapters 18 and 20 are wrong about homosexuals ... if it's right in our modern world to ignore Leviticus chapters 18 and 20 as archaic and absurd and of no value. Where would that leave us? We'd end up with some really peculiar conclusions.

Leviticus 18:5-9 (NKJV)

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 SPEAKING HERE)

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

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 was forbidden in Leviticus. Is it okay now? The vast majority agree that incest is not right. If we throw out Leviticus ... we would have to throw out incest too. No. We would say that these are good applicable laws.

Leviticus 18:20 (NKJV)

20 **Moreover you shall not lie carnally with your neighbour's wife, to defile yourself with her.**

Adultery was forbidden. Is that okay now in we have thrown our Leviticus? Most societies agree that there shouldn't be adultery. In practice ... of course .. it is fairly common.

Leviticus 19:18 (NKJV)

18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but **you shall love your neighbour as yourself:** I am the Lord.

Do we throw that verse out? Is it not for today? Didn't Jesus quote that ... it's one of the greatest commandments.

It's right next to verse 19 ... about the mixed seeds and mixed threads. So ... should we throw that out?

Leviticus 19:19 (NKJV)

19 "You shall keep My statutes. You shall not let your livestock breed with another kind. **You shall not sow your field with mixed seed. Nor shall a garment of mixed linen and wool come upon you.**

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 ... okay now ... if Leviticus is irrelevant? No!!

Most people would accept the validity of the scriptures prohibition of incest ... bestiality ... perhaps adultery (one of the big 10) ... and all would uphold "Love your Neighbour".

Yet many ... even some churches ... reject the prohibition on homosexuality as not for today. Most reject the prohibition of mixed seeds and fibres for today.

So. Is absolutely everyone guilty of picking and choosing? On both sides of the arguments? What's the answer.

We mentioned previously that not all Biblical laws are the same. Not all of equal weight or importance. Not all permanent ... some temporary. There are different purposes.

You could categorise the laws:

- God's Eternal Moral Laws (Murder, Idolatry)
- Civil Laws which would apply to the nation
- Laws of Temple Worship ... which includes sacrifices
- Physical Laws ... like quarantine
- Laws that were not good

You and I don't get to pick and choose. The scriptures explain what's for us ... and what's not. No need to guess.

We'll look at some examples to illustrate how scripture explains what applies.

First: Remember

1 Timothy 1:8 (NKJV)

8 But we know that **the law is good if one uses it lawfully,**

(AMP) "... the Law is good if anyone uses it lawfully [for the purpose for which it was designed], ..."

Today we are going to look at 2 specific laws.

First. Let's look at the Old Testament law of **Circumcision**. A very important law ... a sign of God's Covenant with His people. And ... if you were not circumcised ... you have no covenant.

Genesis 17:9-14 (NKJV)

9 And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.

10 **This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised;**

11 and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and **it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.**

12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.

13 He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and **My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.**

14 And **the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.**"

The word "Circumcision" is mentioned about 100 times in the Bible.

- Any stranger who wanted to keep Passover had to be circumcised

- David referred to Goliath as an “uncircumcised” Philistine ... A LOSER!

Wouldn't it seem that circumcision being so vitally important ... should continue in the New Testament? And ... every single man of God was sealed in that way.

In fact ... many people did believe that ... which is what led to the first big church conference in 49 AD.

Acts 15:1-2 (NKJV)

Conflict over Circumcision

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.**

Acts 15:4-5 (NKJV)

4 And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them.

5 But **some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.”**

Acts 15:6-12 (NKJV)

6 **Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.**

7 **And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: “Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.** (Referring to the incident with Cornelius)

8 **So God**, who knows the heart, **acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us,**

9 and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

10 Now therefore, **why do you (the disputors) test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?**

11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

12 **Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.**

So. A church letter was sent out confirming that circumcision was not necessary. God had set an example by begetting Cornelius and friends.

Paul had already seen this truth ... prior to the conference. He just went there to get it approved and officially sanctioned. We see his understanding in :

1 Corinthians 7:17-19 (NKJV)

17 But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches.

18 **Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised.**

19 **Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.**

Don't be circumcised. Paul can see that God's not particularly concerned about a piece of flesh. What's important is keeping the commandments of God. It's the heart that God is after.

Romans 2:25-29 (NKJV)

Circumcision of No Avail

25 **For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.**

26 **Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?**

27 And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law?

28 **For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;**

29 **but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter;** whose praise is not from men but from God.

It's the PUTTING AWAY (cutting away) OF THE FLESHLY WAY OF LIFE ... the fleshly mind ... the fleshly attitude. Cut that out of your life. Have your heart circumcised.

Later ... in the book of Romans ... Paul explains how Abraham was declared righteous because of his faith ... which he demonstrated BEFORE HE WAS CIRCUMCISED.

Paul is very clear. You did not need to be circumcised.

Also:

Galatians 5:1-2 (NKJV)

1 **Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.**

2 **Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.** (That is a bit of a threat)

Don't pursue circumcision.

Galatians 6:15 (NKJV)

15 **For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything,** but a new creation.

Neither circumcision or uncircumcision is important. Nothing to do with your walk with God.

There are more places we could look ... but the New Testament is very clear. Physical circumcision is no longer obligatory. That law has now ceased.

We're not picking and choosing when we say it is not necessary. And even in the Old Testament there were clues that God was not really interested in the flesh ... but in the heart.

Deuteronomy 10:12-16 (NKJV)

12 "And now, **Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but *to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul,***
13 and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good? *(That's what God desired)*

14 Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God, also the earth with all that is in it.

15 The Lord delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day.

16 **Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.**

If we've repented and been baptised ... we have been circumcised in our hearts. There has been a change in the Law of Circumcision ... and it's Biblical.

So the Old Testament Law of Circumcision is clear. The New Testament makes it very plain.

Another major law is to do with the Temple Worship and Sacrifices.

This was the heart and core of all the Old Testament religion. Tabernacle replaced by the Temple ... Priests ... Sacrifices ... Offerings -> every day of the week. Altars ... Tables ... Candles

... Showbread. This was major ... an entire system for the Worship of God. It wasn't incidental.

We don't have to wonder today whether the Temple Worship systems should continue. There are 2 essential reasons:

One. The Temple was destroyed in 70AD. There are no altars today ... no officiating priesthood. That system is finished. It is fair to believe that God brought it to a very public and dramatic end.

Secondly. The scriptures themselves tell us clearly it was no longer necessary for New Testament believers. We don't need sacrificial blood of bulls or lambs or goats ... when we have the SHED BLOOD OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD.

Hebrews 9:1-14 (NKJV)

1 Then indeed, even **the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary.**

2 For a tabernacle was prepared: **the first part**, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, **which is called the sanctuary;**

3 and **behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All,**

4 which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; ***(the 10 commandments)***

5 and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

6 Now when these things had been thus prepared, **the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services.**

7 But **into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance;**

8 **the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while**

the first tabernacle (the earthly one) was still standing.

9 It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—

10 concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances **imposed until** the time of reformation.

11 **But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.**

12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but **with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.**

13 **For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,**

14 **how much more shall the blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, **cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**

They were temporary ... up until a particular time ... a time of reformation. Very useful for teaching lessons to the carnal nation of Israel. Stubborn ... rebellious ... killed the prophets ... went into captivity.

The Temple Worship System was of limited benefit ... it NEVER CHANGED THE CONSCIENCE of the Old Testament people.

Hebrews 10:1-4 (NKJV)

1 **For the law, (of temple worship and sacrifices) having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.**

2 **For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.**

3 **But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.**

4 **For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.**

Animal blood can't cleanse sins ... Jesus' blood does!!

Hebrews 10:12-22 (NKJV)

12 **But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever,**

sat down at the right hand of God,
13 from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.

14 **For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.**

15 But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, *(quoting Jeremiah)*

16 **"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,"**

17 then He adds, **"Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."**

18 Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.

19 **Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,** *(we can enter 24/7 ... because of Jesus' blood)*

20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,

21 **and having a High Priest over the house of God,**

22 **let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.**

The New Covenant was predicted in the Old Testament ...
Jeremiah Chapter 31.

Hebrews 8:1-2 (NKJV)

1 **Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,**
2 **a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.**

So why would anyone need the physical temple or physical priesthood ... when we have Jesus ... our High Priest?

Hebrews 8:6 (NKJV)

6 **But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.**

A Better High Priest and a Better Covenant and Better Promises.

Scripture is plain. The physical temple ... and its entire worship system ... sacrifices ... washings ... offerings ... priesthood ... was always inadequate. Good for a carnal people ... for a limited time.

But now ... replaced by A GREAT HIGH PRIEST WHO LIVES FOREVER. Who shed His own blood. Who serves in the Heavenly Temple and Holy of Holies.

All very clear.

And also hinted at in the Old Testament itself. Because ... if you think about it ...it's easy to see that God wouldn't get much out of a lamb being slain ... or a bull burned on a fire. He would recognise a good attitude in the one bringing the offering ... and it would instil awareness in the offeror.

But it's easy to see that it's not God's best.

Psalms 40:4-8 (NKJV)

4 **Blessed is that man who makes the Lord his trust,**
And does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.

5 Many, O Lord my God, are Your wonderful works
Which You have done;
And Your thoughts toward us
Cannot be recounted to You in order;
If I would declare and speak of them,
They are more than can be numbered.

6 **Sacrifice and offering You did not desire;**
My ears You have opened.

Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.

7 Then I said, "Behold, I come;
In the scroll of the book it is written of me.

8 **I delight to do Your will, O my God,
And Your law is within my heart."** *(That is what God
is looking for)*

1 Samuel 15:20-23 (NKJV)

20 And Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the voice of
the Lord, and gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me,
and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly
destroyed the Amalekites.

21 But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the
best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to
sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal."

22 So Samuel said:

**Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and
sacrifices,**

As in obeying the voice of the Lord?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,

And to heed than the fat of rams.

23 **For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft,
And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.**

**Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,
He also has rejected you from being king."**

To obey is better than sacrifices.

God lives in majesty ... glory ... incredible light ... the actual
smell of a goat burning ... or a sight of a bull bleeding ... ISN'T
GOING TO BE ALL THAT EXCITING?

But ... A HUMBLE HEART ... AN OBEDIENT EAR ... ONE WHO SEEKS AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS ... WHO LOVES GOD'S LAWS ... that's what is important and delightful to God.

The Temple Worship System ... with all of its sacrifices ... washings ... rules ... was always just temporary. It never really worked. It has long since served its purpose.

We now serve God in TRUTH AND IN SPIRIT. We have the shed blood of the Lamb of God.

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.

(Present your entire life to God ... a living sacrifice)

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 minds are renewed when washed in the word ... especially the Old Testament)

Let's renew our minds in God's Word.