

Lesson 3 20th May, 2018

The Holy Laws of Israel

Lesson Scope: [Leviticus 11-22](#)

References in brackets refer to the lesson scope unless otherwise noted

Lesson Focus

The holy worship at the tabernacle, outlined in Leviticus 1-10, was not an end in itself. This holy worship was to prepare men for a holy walk.

Although Abraham was justified by faith, God had said to him, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1). In today's text, God repeats His timeless call: "I am the LORD: ... ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."

The Old Testament Law could not provide justification with God, but was added because of transgression (Galatians 3:19). Man needed a divine revelation to know right from wrong. In this week's lesson scope, the high-water mark of morality is revealed. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD" (19:18). Israel's Law was God's standard by which they would maintain their identity as His people. They were a chosen nation, separated unto God, consecrated to His service, and set apart by His laws.

In order for man to maintain access to God, he must separate himself from all that is unholy. The Law drew a visible line of separation for Israel and presents principles in type for New Testament living.

Much religion today portrays law as a suppressor or even an enemy of true spiritual life. This is false.

The principles of divine law are the same in both the Old and New Testaments. But the framework and applications change from the Old Testament to the New Testament. We base our applications on the New Testament.

All men are born with a carnal nature. Law reveals God's standard of holiness, quickens the conscience, and brings us to see our need of a Saviour.

In spite of great emphasis today on being spiritual, we need God's law as the measurement of our spiritual life. Jesus said, "Why call you me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Lesson Aim: To portray the spiritual significance of Old Testament laws of separation.

Theme Verses: 2 Corinthians 6:17-18. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Lesson Text

Clean Ways

Leviticus 11:45-47 For I *am* the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I *am* holy. ⁴⁶This *is* the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth: ⁴⁷To make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten.

Leviticus 13:2-3 When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising, a scab, or bright spot, and it be in the skin of his flesh *like* the plague of leprosy; then he shall be brought unto Aaron the priest, or unto one of his sons the priests: ³ And the priest shall look on the plague in the skin of the flesh: and *when* the hair in the plague is turned white, and the plague in sight *be* deeper than the skin of his flesh, it *is* a plague of leprosy: and the priest shall look on him, and pronounce him unclean.

Leviticus 17:10 And whatsoever man *there be* of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people.

A Clean Walk

Leviticus 18:3-4 After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances. ⁴Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I *am* the LORD your God.

Leviticus 19:14-18 Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I *am* the LORD. ¹⁵Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the per-

son of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: *but* in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour. ¹⁶ Thou shalt not go up and down *as* a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I *am* the LORD. ¹⁷ Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. ¹⁸ Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I *am* the LORD.

Leviticus 19:31 Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I *am* the LORD your God.

Leviticus 20:2-3 Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever *he be* of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth *any* of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. ³ And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name.

Leviticus 20:26 And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD *am* holy, and have severed you from *other* people, that ye should be mine.

Questions for Study

Clean Ways

1. What is the basis for God's holy laws?
2. How do men receive the ability of spiritual discernment?
3. What issues call for spiritual discernment today?
4. What steps can we take to avoid defilement in ourselves and our families in today's corrupt society?

A Clean Walk

5. How might we take advantage of others?
6. Describe God's standard of truthfulness.
7. How do we love our neighbor as ourselves?
8. How might the occult tempt us today?
9. What are the privileges of being God's people?

Analyzing the Passage

"I am the LORD" (11:45) reminded Israel of His authority and their accountability.

Leprosy is symbolic of sin (13:2-3). This disease and its physical results made a living example of the course and effects of sin.

The "doings of the land of Egypt ... and ... Canaan" (18:3) revealed the depravity of human nature and merited God's judgment. Nothing but complete rejection of heathen ways would save Israel from their downward pull.

The laws regarding interpersonal relationships written in 19:9-18 were expanded, explained, and exemplified by Christ and the apostles. Paul said, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12). The Law was spiritual, but man was carnal. The finished work of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit enabled man both to fulfill the Law and to live out the righteousness taught by Christ. (See Romans 7-8.)

The Sermon on the Mount, the teachings of James against partiality in James 2:1-13, and the message of John concerning the new commandment (1 John 2:7-8) illustrate the empowerment of the New Covenant in our lives.

Principles and Applications

Clean Ways

1. God calls His people to be holy as He is holy (11:45). Men become like the god they worship. If we are to be holy men, we must first perceive the holy character of God. Men tend to mentally reduce the character of God to the depravity of men. (See Psalm 50:21.) The Gospels are God-inspired selected accounts to give us a God-inspired picture of God Himself.

2. God's people discern between godliness and worldly defilement (11:46-47). The New Testament words prove and approve mean "to try or test." (See Philippians 1:10.) A transformed and renewed mind will "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

We test issues to discern God's will with a view to conform to God's will. An unwillingness to accept the revealed will of God will eventually result in the inability to discern God's will.

3. God's people must be separate from sin and its progressive defilement (13:2-3). Sin, as leprosy, is contagious. "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33). The Corinthians proclaimed themselves to be strong and able to mingle unaf-

fectured with idolaters. Paul told them straightly, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

4. The redeemed value the sacrifice made for their salvation (17:10). Silver and gold cannot measure the value of our redemption. The blood of Christ was precious above any other blood—it was without blemish and without spot.

A Clean Walk

5. A Biblical way of life sets people apart from society (18:3-5). The peace and rest of God's Spirit abide in our hearts. Wild and noisy behavior, parties, sporty vehicles, and prank-playing reveal a lack of spiritual life. Parents must start at a young age to root out the loud and big spirit and teach sobriety. The world is on the go. We should be a "stay at home" people. We must be genuinely morally pure. Covered sin should not lurk among us.

6. God's people do not take advantage of others (19:14-15). Do we sin against others behind their back and keep the knowledge secret? God knows even if men do not. The New Testament condemns backbiting. We must do our utmost to avoid placing a stumbling block in the path of one who is struggling spiritually.

7. God condemns the false witness (19:16). A witness knows facts by personal observation. To condemn a person on the basis of gossip, hearsay, chat-line information, or supposition is sin. Beware of the person with the latest continent wide information and a verdict on every situation. Much of such information will likely be untrue.

8. The exercise of genuine love marks God's people (19:17-18). At times this will involve rebuke and exposure of sin. This will only be effective if a good relationship has been previously maintained. Christian love precludes the whole package of hatred, jealousy, envy, grudges, and slander.

9. God's people seek Him rather than the occult (19:31). God condemns those who "ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff [divining rod] declareth unto them" (Hosea 4:12). Water witching is not a neutral issue. If a health practice seems questionable or appears to be tied to the occult, we should abstain from its use.

10. Idolatry is an affront to the holy God (20:2-3). We shudder at the gory forms of idolatry that God warned Israel against and which they later were guilty of practicing. But not all idolatry is so gruesome. Our

possessions, our businesses, and even our very selves become idols if we allow them to come between us and God.

11. Godly parents jealously guard their children so that they are not given to the world (20:2-3). We must guard their moral purity. We reject the world's philosophies of child training and discipline. We must guard against fascination with electronic devices and see to it that our children experience the blessing of worthy physical labor. Excessive peer interaction can hinder good parent-to-youth relationships and lead to spiritual instability.

12. God claims a holy people as His own (20:26). What greater privilege could we possibly have than to be a child of the King? To be a child makes us an heir. Only eternity will reveal the scope of this inheritance.

Important Teachings

1. God calls His people to be holy as He is holy (11:45).
2. God's people discern between godliness and worldly defilement (11:46-47).
3. God's people must be separate from sin and its progressive defilement (13:2-3).
4. The redeemed value the sacrifice made for their salvation (17:10).
5. A Biblical way of life sets people apart from society (18:3-5).
6. God's people do not take advantage of others (19:14-15).
7. God condemns the false witness (19:16).
8. The exercise of genuine love marks God's people (19:17-18).
9. God's people seek Him rather than the occult (19:31).
10. Idolatry is an affront to the holy God (20:2-3).
11. Godly parents jealously guard their children so that they are not given to the world (20:2-3).
12. God claims a holy people as His own (20:26).

Answers to Questions

1. What is the basis for God's holy laws?

God's holy character and His perfection in all His attributes are the basis for His holy laws. God as man's Creator is man's Judge, the one to whom we will give account. God loves fellowship with His creation. God has revealed to us His nature, His love, and His laws so that we

may experience fellowship with Him.

2. How do men receive the ability of spiritual discernment?

God has not written exhaustive volumes of detailed right and wrong for every situation. Nor does God reappear every decade to give a verdict on every new course of men. Rather, men gain the ability of spiritual discernment by immersing themselves in the study of God's Word. In so doing, we also learn to understand God Himself. As we live, we learn what draws men to God and what leads men away from God.

3. What issues call for spiritual discernment today?

We need to discern the spiritual implications of large businesses on our people. We need to discern how Satan captivates people with the thrill of new inventions. We need to discern how Satan inflates man's ego and lust for power by global connections and information. Other issues are higher education, Mennonite ecumenism in relief efforts, and increasing government control of life.

4. What steps can we take to avoid defilement in ourselves and our families in today's corrupt society?

We need strong homelife. We need to spend time at home. We cannot afford to have businesses that bring the world into our homes. We must eliminate corrupt media such as newspapers and many magazines. We must discipline our families not to eat out unnecessarily or vacation where carnality is excited.

5. How might we take advantage of others?

We mistreat others when we secretly plot to their disadvantage. We must not use another's misfortune as our opportunity. God cares for the handicapped. It is wrong to mock persons who are in some way different from others. It is wrong to mock those in the church who are less popular. It is wrong to use power in the church for personal advantage. It is wrong to crush the spirits of others.

6. Describe God's standard of truthfulness.

Our yes means "yes" and our no means "no." We may not say something at one time and change it later. It is never right to intentionally give a false impression.

7. How do we love our neighbor as ourselves?

How would I feel if others did this to me? We hear the heart issues of others just as we would wish them to hear us. We give others a fair hearing if there is a difficulty. We treat others with the same fairness we wish for

ourselves. We know what is right and wrong when others mistreat us. We should apply the same standards to ourselves.

8. How might the occult tempt us today?

We might be tempted with questionable health practices. A dry ell or two might tempt us to try water witching.

9. What are the privileges of being God's people?

God's people enjoy fellowship with Him. They enjoy His care and experience His presence and sustaining grace in their lives. They have the comfort in their conscience of being at peace with God and the anticipation of eternity with Him.

Summarizing the Lesson

When God's laws become burdensome, something is amiss in the heart. As a man who desired to live a holy life, the psalmist David delighted in God's holy laws. He wrote, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.... Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.... The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver" (Psalm 119:18, 34, 72).

Research Guide

Read the lesson scope, Leviticus 11-22, to understand the context and the depth of meaning in God's Law.