



Leaves From the Tree

Studies from God's Word

In 2005, Pastor Tim Bourgeois began a daily bible reading to encourage Tree of Life Christian Church and the larger body of Christ to read the entire Bible cover to cover.

The following series of articles are transcripts of Pastor Tim's original emails.

Please use these articles for meditation, personal devotion, Bible study, or your own daily Bible reading.



LEVITICUS 14 - 20

Leviticus 14

14:1-7 - "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing. Now he shall be brought to the priest, and the priest shall go out to the outside of the camp. Thus the priest shall look, and if the infection of leprosy has been healed in the leper, then the priest shall give orders to take two live clean birds and cedar wood and a scarlet string and hyssop for the one who is to be cleansed. The priest shall also give orders to slay the one bird in an earthenware vessel over running water. As for the live bird, he shall take it together with the cedar wood and the scarlet string and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the live bird in the blood of the bird that was slain over the running water. He shall then sprinkle seven times the one who is to be cleansed from the leprosy and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the live bird go free over the open field."

Chapter 13 detailed the laws for leprosy but focused for the priests responsible on how to identify an outbreak, and the requirements for examination, isolating the person affected if necessary, and even excluding them from the camp of Israel in the cases that did not improve. This chapter is also dedicated to the leprosy issue, but from standpoint of the process involved in restoring the leper to full community access once their condition has improved. Like in the examination leading to isolation and even exclusion from the camp, the process of possible restoration centers on the role of the priest. No leper who had previously been excluded from the camp for an outbreak as described in chapter 13 could decide for themselves that they were now healthy enough to enter the camp and resume their former life. Keep in mind that camp exclusion was a serious matter. It meant a married person could not be with their spouse. It meant a parent could not be with their own children. It meant any former profession was no longer possible because anything the leper touched was rendered unclean. It was like the affected person was dead while they were still alive. The anguish of the person forbidden from the camp was more than the physical discomfort of their condition. They had to endure the daily loss of all of the comforts of family, friends and a productive livelihood.

The desire to return to benefits of the camp must have been great, but they could not decide for themselves when or even if they could return. It was entirely up to the priest to determine whether they could be restored. Since the leper could not enter the camp at all, if their condition improved they would have to pass word at the entrance of the camp to the priests. The priest would then come, and decide whether the afflicted person was eligible for restoration. The priest represented the Lord and His authority in this decision and his ruling could not be ignored or overruled. The priest also made zero effort to treat the problem in any medical way. The actual condition of the person was seen as being in the hands of the Lord. All of this was a strong message in the imagery of the circumstances of the

value of access as a full member of the covenant community. Everyone would be reminded from the example of any excluded individual what a great privilege it was to have access to the camp of Israel, the comforts of their own tent in the camp, and most importantly to the courtyard of the Lord's tabernacle.

This process of restoration was a symbolic expression of the Lord's mercy and grace in restoration. In the New Covenant there remain valid reasons for the community of believers to have to exclude members from the fellowship of the believing community. The issues are not physical like the symbol of leprosy in these laws, but spiritual defilements. The defilements that exclude a person from the church today include continuing in serious sins without repentance or change. We are given examples of this in two of the New Testament letters (I Corinthians 5, II Thessalonians 3:6-15). The purpose of excluding a person from fellowship, or what has been traditionally called excommunication, is not to permanently exclude them, but in the hope that the discipline of temporary exclusion will impact their heart and lead them to repentance as the necessary beginning of a restoration process. Of course, the heart of the Lord is always inclined toward restoration of his wayward people.

This famous encounter between Jesus and a leper shows the readiness of the Lord to heal and restore. "And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." (Matthew 8:2-4). Notice in this encounter, that even though the Lord Jesus healed the leper of his leprosy, He did not allow him to immediately return to his former life. Instead, as the laws of leprosy in Leviticus required, Jesus commanded him to present himself to the priest and go through the sacrificial requirements for full restoration.

14:8-13 - "The one to be cleansed shall then wash his clothes and shave off all his hair and bathe in water and be clean. Now afterward, he may enter the camp, but he shall stay outside his tent for seven days. It will be on the seventh day that he shall shave off all his hair: he shall shave his head and his beard and his eyebrows, even all his hair. He shall then wash his clothes and bathe his body in water and be clean. Now on the eighth day he is to take two male lambs without defect, and a yearling ewe lamb without defect, and three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, and one log of oil; and the priest who pronounces him clean shall present the man to be cleansed and the aforesaid before the LORD at the doorway of the tent of meeting. Then the priest shall take the one male lamb and bring it for a guilt offering, with the log of oil, and present them as a wave offering before the LORD. Next he shall slaughter the male lamb in the place where they slaughter the sin offering and the burnt offering, at the place of the sanctuary--for the guilt offering, like the sin offering, belongs to the priest; it is most holy."

This section shows us that the restoration of the leper involved a several stage process. After the priest inspected him and determined his condition had been arrested, he was to shave and wash both himself and his clothing before entering the camp to insure he did not carry any defilements into the holy camp with him. Even then, he could return to his own tent inside the camp, but was not allowed to enter his own home yet. He was required to spend another week living just outside his own tent. Then on the seventh day inside the camp he was to again shave all his hair and wash his clothing and body. On the eighth day after his return to the camp he was to approach the Lord in the tabernacle and offer the sacrifices required for full restoration to the Lord and to the community. He was required to offer a range of sacrifices detailed earlier in the law including a guilt offering, a sin offering, a burnt offering and a grain offering. There is no explanation offered here for why a sin offering was required even though there is no indication in the text of these chapters that the condition was due to the person's sin. The most likely explanation is that the sin offering was to cover all sins committed by the afflicted person during the time of their exclusion from the camp when they were not allowed to approach the tabernacle even to make an offering.

It was only after this process was completed on the eighth day that the person was fully restored to fellowship with God and with the community. The eighth day, as we have seen in previous studies was a symbol of new creation. For the restored person, this process indicated that their life was granted a new starting point. In addition to the eighth day requirement, the person could not be restored without the offerings of the sacrifices God required. This serves as a wonderful image of our own salvation. Each of us was excluded from fellowship with God and His people before the Lord gave us new life. Our new life began with the applied blood of the Lamb of God, as He was sacrificed for us on the cross.

14:14-18 - "The priest shall then take some of the blood of the guilt offering, and the priest shall put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. The priest shall also take some of the log of oil, and pour it into his left palm; the priest shall then dip his right-hand finger into the oil that is in his left palm, and with his finger sprinkle some of the oil seven times before the LORD. Of the remaining oil which is in his palm, the priest shall put some on the right ear lobe of the one to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the blood of the guilt offering; while the rest of the oil that is in the priest's palm, he shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed. So the priest shall make atonement on his behalf before the LORD."

The restoration process included an unexpected ceremony. The priest was to take some of the blood of the sacrifice and dab it on the right ear, right thumb and right big toe of the leper. Then some of the oil offered was dabbed in the same three places on top of the blood. It is unexpected because this is a ceremony that the average Israelite never experienced. The Levitical priests were consecrated in this same way, but it seems surprising that the lepers were set apart in this way. It was a ceremony signifying that the entire life of the person marked with the blood and oil in this way belonged exclusively to the Lord. It displayed the spiritual purpose of the Lord in such a gracious restoration. When the Lord restored a person from such a serious condition of living death, He expected that person to view their newly restored life as belonging to the Lord and not themselves. This is also an image that is meant to show us the way we should view our own lives following salvation. Since we were spiritually dead while alive before our salvation (Ephesians 2:1-3), any life we now have is only by the gracious restoration of the Lord. We owe Him everything. We owe Him our life.

There is another element of this that speaks to our life circumstances. When the Lord takes us through a deep and difficult trial, and brings us out on the other side, He intends for us to use that experience to minister to others. The priests lived lives of consecrated service, but we see here that the restored lepers were to see themselves as the consecrated servants of the Lord from that point forward. It is an awesome thing, that the Lord can cause the circumstances of our lives that represent our greatest trials to equip us for greater service. Passing through an experience like this is meant by the grace of God to change us and shape us for the Lord's service. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." (II Corinthians 1:3-4).

14:33-35 - "The LORD further spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying: "When you enter the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a mark of leprosy on a house in the land of your possession, then the one who owns the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, 'Something like a mark of leprosy has become visible to me in the house.'"

The last section of this chapter is similar to the last section of the previous chapter. In chapter 13 we saw that not only could a person be declared unclean, but fabric and clothing could become unclean through the development of what was probably fungus or mold. Now, in this section the same principle is applied to houses. This anticipates the future entrance into the Promised Land when Israel would conquer the people of Canaan and move into their houses. The point of the warning about unclean garments and now houses is to show us the nature of spiritual defilement. Defilement spreads. When we sin, it affects more than ourselves. Our environment is spiritually impacted by our sin. This was vividly portrayed in the Garden of Eden. When Adam sinned, he was immediately affected as he fell spiritually, but the impact was not limited to him. It was not possible for Adam to contain the ramifications of his sin within himself. The entire world was tainted by Adam's sin and the Lord made sure Adam learned that lesson by cursing the ground because of what he had done (Genesis 3:17). What we are intended to understand from this is the danger of sin and the spiritual contamination it causes.

Leviticus 15

PARENTAL ALERT—some of the following subject matter involves mature themes. Please review with discernment before sharing with your children.

15:13-15 - "Now when the man with the discharge becomes cleansed from his discharge, then he shall count off for himself seven days for his cleansing; he shall then wash his clothes and bathe his body in running water and will become clean. Then on the eighth day he shall take for himself two turtledoves or two young pigeons, and come before the LORD to the doorway of the tent of meeting and give them to the priest; and the priest shall offer them, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. So the priest shall make atonement on his behalf before the LORD because of his discharge."

This chapter continues the laws of the things that cause ceremonial uncleanness and address four specific issues; two for men, and two for women. The two issues for women address both normal and abnormal blood loss related to the female organs, while the two issues for men concern abnormal discharges and normal

emissions from the male organ. The abnormal conditions for both the male and the female stem from medical conditions and would be a health issue, but the purpose of these laws is not focused on the health of Israel any more than it was for the food laws as we saw. For all four of these conditions the response the Lord commanded was not a "cure" but a cleansing. The cleansing dealt with the spiritual defilement that the condition caused in relationship to the holiness of the tabernacle. There is no note of rebuke in this section blaming the person with any of these conditions. The sense is that most everyone in Israel will encounter one of these issues sooner or later, and these instructions insure that an individual will only be continually excluded from the tabernacle if they ignore or disregard them. In that sense, these laws are a gracious provision aimed at teaching them how to recognize what physical issues cause defilement and restoring them to ceremonial cleanness.

All of the elements involved are symbolic as well as physical. The blood flow which defiles the woman and temporarily disqualifies her from entering the courtyard of the tabernacle is unclean because of the fall of humanity into a sinful condition. The only flowing blood which is considered ceremonially clean is the blood of the appropriate clean sacrifices that God had ordained. It was a vivid reminder that our own blood is spiritually corrupt because of the taint of sin, and that only a blood cleaner than our own was acceptable to God in His holy dwelling place.

The emissions of the men were connected to the way God has ordained that we obey His purpose to fruitfully multiply in the earth. The association of that purpose with a temporary defilement was a regular reminder that even our ability to obey God in this commission to produce offspring has been touched by the fall. Nothing in our lives has been unaffected by the fall. There is a strong tendency in our culture today to identify anything that is natural as good and by extension holy. These laws reveal that God wants us to see the circumstances of our natural life from a different perspective. A thing is not automatically good and holy just because it is natural. This would have been true in the world before sin entered and the fall resulted. Things before the fall were by nature good. "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good." (Genesis 1:31). However, we cannot automatically assume that now. Because the effects of the fall are in many cases subtle and not obvious to the natural eye, we must learn how to see things from God's perspective. These laws teach that even these natural aspects of every man and woman's life carry a taint of the fall.

We should not take this point too far however. These conditions were not sinful. A sin offering was required to complete the cleansing process, but it was the lightest of the sin offerings, requiring only one bird to be offered. This signifies that only the element of sin is addressed in the offering, not a sin that the person making the offering had committed themselves. In other words, it was to teach all that we each carry an element of Adam's sin with us that needs to be dealt with by sacrifice. As with several previous kinds of sacrifices this was to be offered

following a seven day cleansing period, and the offering of the eighth day pointed as a symbol toward the new creation reminder of restoration to God's tabernacle. Every time an Israelite offered a sacrifice on the eighth day they were declaring with their actions that their old life in Adam deserved the judgment inflicted upon the sacrifice, and that only by the shed blood of that sacrifice could they enjoy new life in Christ.

15:19-25 - "When a woman has a discharge, if her discharge in her body is blood, she shall continue in her menstrual impurity for seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening. Everything also on which she lies during her menstrual impurity shall be unclean, and everything on which she sits shall be unclean. Anyone who touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. Whoever touches any thing on which she sits shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. Whether it be on the bed or on the thing on which she is sitting, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until evening. If a man actually lies with her so that her menstrual impurity is on him, he shall be unclean seven days, and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean. Now if a woman has a discharge of her blood many days, not at the period of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond that period, all the days of her impure discharge she shall continue as though in her menstrual impurity; she is unclean."

For those familiar with the accounts in three of the Gospels, this law of a continuing menstrual discharge should remind you of the encounter Jesus had with a woman with this kind of condition. "...But as He went, the crowds were pressing against Him. And a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. And Jesus said, "Who is the one who touched Me?" And while they were all denying it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing in on You." But Jesus said, "Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me." When the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came trembling and fell down before Him, and declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed. And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace." (Luke 8:42-48).

This story, just on the surface, is a beautiful display of the compassion and power of the Lord Jesus. The full appreciation of what happened that day requires some understanding that this law from Leviticus provides us. The law identified this woman as not simply unhealthy, but unclean. Her condition involved a continuing flow of blood from her menstrual cycle, but one which did not end after a few days each month. Instead, her cycle never ended, for a long twelve years by the time she met Jesus. The reality of her condition was that she was legally forbidden to enter the temple precincts in Jerusalem and had been restricted from approaching the altar of the Lord for those twelve years. In addition, she

was legally restricted from engaging in sexual intercourse for all long as her condition persisted. She also was not allowed to physically touch anyone else without rendering them unclean. For twelve years she had been socially isolated for the most part with the allowance of only conversation without physical contact. Just as difficult was the continuing element of her rendering unclean any garments she wore, and any furniture upon which she sat or upon which she laid down.

These standards were not simply social standards which could be bent or modified. These were holy standards that the entire community was required to follow and honor. As a result, it made even walking through the city streets and public marketplace extremely risky for everyone else due to the possibility of inadvertent contact in a crowded situation. Keep all of the above in mind as we read that the woman came to Jesus as the crowds of people "were pressing against Him." The implication is that the crowds were so thick around Jesus that there was not way to reach Him other than by pushing through the crowd. In order to reach Jesus, this woman actually broke the purity law and exposed everyone with whom she made contact as she pushed through the crowd to ceremonial impurity. Then, she compounded that violation of the law by intentionally touching the hem of the garment of Jesus when she finally reached Him. As far as she knew, her touching Jesus would render Him unclean.

Her actions were inexcusable in the eyes of the law and the community required to uphold the law. If here condition had been exposed, she risked the angry response of the entire crowd for defiling them without their knowledge or agreement. That risk she was taking explains her response when Jesus pointed her out in the crowd. As soon as she touched His garment, He recognized that the power to heal her had gone out of Him into her. When He stopped in the midst of the crowd and insisted on identifying the one who had touched Him in this way, the woman came forward, but then fell trembling to her knees in an attitude of grateful humility, mixed with concern over having violated this law in such a bold way. She then declared openly to the crowd why she had touched Him (this was an admission of her unclean condition). She also testified how she had been immediately been healed when she touched Jesus. The gracious mercy of the Lord was displayed in this. Her healing eliminated the source of her uncleanness and the uncleanness she had just passed on to others in the crowd. Touching Jesus was the only possible exception to the social barriers this law imposed. Everyone she had touched for twelve years was made unclean by that contact. When she touched Jesus, He did not become unclean, but she was healed, made whole, and ceremonially cleansed.

Leviticus 16

16:1-4 - "Now the LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they had approached the presence of the LORD and died. The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, or he will die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. Aaron shall enter the holy place with this: with a bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. He shall put on the holy linen tunic, and the linen undergarments shall be next to his body, and he shall be girded with the linen sash and attired with the linen turban (these are holy garments). Then he shall bathe his body in water and put them on."

Chapter 16 returns to the narrative story of the history of Israel that left off in Chapter 10. Chapters 11-15 in between established the laws of the clean and the unclean. From those laws we learned that every Israelite would inevitably become unclean by just living a normal life. The main point of those chapters was to teach God's people how spiritually defiled the world had become due to the fall of man into sin. Since we are all born into a fallen world and live every day of our lives in it, there is a natural level of insensitivity we all develop to the spiritual defilement in the world. We are used to it. These laws were intended to expose Israel to the reality of how God views us in our unclean state and to raise their awareness of their own fallen condition. Each of the individual defilements of the previous five chapters were assigned their own necessary sacrificial resolution as an appropriate offering was to be made every single time they were rendered unclean and the accompanying ritual was to be performed each time as well. However, even the most conscientious Israelite ran the risk of carry unresolved uncleanness and defilement by neglecting any single violation, or even by not knowing that they had contracted such uncleanness.

The events of this chapter marked a single day on the yearly calendar for Israel. This was the Day of Atonement. It was the day that covered all of the uncovered violations for the entire previous year. It was God's ultimate provision of mercy and grace for His people under the Old Covenant Law. It became known as the most holy day of the entire year for Israel. Later rabbis simply referred to it as "The Day." It is also known by its designation in Hebrew as Yom Kippur. This day was special among all the tabernacle services in every aspect. The entire nation participated, but the actions of the high priest were the central focus of the day.

The law for the day of atonement was not the idea of Moses, Aaron, or any other Israelite. It came by revelation directly from the Lord and while the details of that day no longer are practiced today anywhere in the world, the spiritual meaning of it continues as the foundation for our salvation as Christians. The events of this day are a complex portrayal in the imagery of the tabernacle of the work Jesus accomplished in His death on the cross. It involved a multi-staged ritual in which the high priest, and only the high priest was to enter the tabernacle. Even the

high priest was only allowed to do so after first washing himself, dressing in special clothes that he only wore on this day of the year, offering a series of sacrifices for himself, the Holy of Holies, the entire tabernacle, and finally all of the people. That last sacrifice for all of the people made atonement for all of the sins that the entire nation of Israel had committed for the entire previous year and dealt with all the sins that had not been properly addressed in any other sacrifices. It was only by obeying the commandments of this day that Israel as a nation could maintain its special calling as God's holy nation among all the nations of the earth (Exodus 19:6).

The special garments the high priest was to wear only on this day were of course significant. We have previously studied the special garments and ephod that the high priest was to wear on all the other days of the year. Those garments were woven from blue, purple and scarlet thread with threads of gold added. He also wore a beautiful turban on his head, a sash around his waist, special shoulder pieces with precious gemstones and a breastpiece set with twelve precious stones. All of his daily garments together gave the high priest the stately appearance of a king. Those garments were worn to accentuate the beauty and glory of the office of the high priest (Exodus 28:2). On this day of atonement, the high priest was to remove his normal glorious garments and dress in simple linen garments. The contrast was dramatic. It was the difference in how a common person dressed compared to the dress of someone rich and powerful. The reason for this change had to do with the purpose of this day. On this day the high priest represented the people to God, where as on other days he represented the Lord to the people. He was dressed to serve as the offerings necessary for atonement were to be made. This laying aside of his usual garments is a poignant picture for us of the sacrificial choice Christ made for us long before the cross.

In order to accomplish God's plan of salvation, Jesus first had to come to this world, not just as a spiritual visitor, but as one of us. His incarnation as a human being was foundational to the sacrifice He would offer on the cross. In order to be born as a human being, He first chose to lay aside the heavenly glory. In His birth, He took the form of a servant rather than a king. "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Philippians 2:5-8). It was only after His death on the cross, that He was rewarded by the Father with the restoration of His full glory in his resurrection, ascension and exaltation at the throne of God. This is also pictured in the events of the day of atonement in which the high priest is re-clothed with his garment of beauty and glory only after the atoning sacrifice is complete.

16:12-15 - "He shall take a firepan full of coals of fire from upon the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground sweet incense, and bring it inside the veil. He shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the ark of the testimony, otherwise he will die. Moreover, he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; also in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times. Then he shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering which is for the people, and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat."

As the high priest entered the tabernacle to make atonement, he encountered, not an empty room at the conclusion of an empty ritual, but he encountered the presence of the Lord Himself. This was not a meeting to be taken lightly. In giving the instructions for this day, the Lord intentionally reminded Aaron of the death of his two eldest sons when they had entered the tabernacle. The Lord reminded Aaron of this painful memory because it was critical that he learn and remember the lesson that they had failed to learn. They died because they entered the presence of the Lord having disregarded His commands regarding when and how to come before Him. Here the Lord gives specific commands for the offering of incense on the altar of incense in the first room of the tabernacle before he could proceed to enter the inner room of the most holy place. The Lord warned him in this passage that if he disregarded this command, he would die.

Aaron was to offer the incense in such a way that a cloud of the smoke of the incense would form in the tabernacle. The purpose of the cloud was to cover the mercy seat inside the Holy of Holies. The mercy seat was the golden lid which covered the box of the ark of the covenant. The ark and the mercy seat symbolically represented the throne of God. It was above the mercy seat that the visible glory of God would appear. The cloud of incense to cover the mercy seat was a necessity and an expression of God's accommodation. The issue was that as well prepared as Aaron was to enter the tabernacle, he was still a fallen, imperfect man. As he stepped into the holiest place, he encountered the glory of God. The cloud of incense served the same purpose as the pillar of cloud did that led them through the wilderness. The cloud shielded him from the full glory of God. Without the cloud, he would be exposed to too much of God's glory and would die. The cloud of incense was God's provision to filter His glory so that Aaron could bear it as he fulfilled his duties within the holiest place.

16:21-22 - "Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness."

One of the sacrifices of the day required a double sacrifice of two goats. Aaron was to cast lots to identify one goat to be slain and its blood gathered and used to make atonement. The other goat was offered, but not killed. Instead Aaron was to lay his hands on the head of the goat and as he did so, to confess over the goat all of the sins of the nation. Of course, it was not possible for Aaron to know every single sin of the nation, let alone to mention each one individually on a single day, but he was to make confession of sin on behalf of the entire nation representing all the sins they had committed for the entire preceding year. Doing so symbolically transferred the sins of the nation from themselves to this goat. Then, one man was designated to take the goat and lead it outside the camp into the barren wilderness where he was to release the goat.

The symbolic purpose of this double offering was that the full work that Jesus accomplished on the cross could not be adequately represented by one sacrifice alone. Each part of these two sacrifices shows an aspect of the cross. We could describe these two aspects as the root and fruit of the cross. The first goat which was killed and its blood gathered to apply in the tabernacle and on behalf of the people is the root of the cross which is the sacrificial death of Jesus on our behalf. The second aspect of the release of the second goat shows the fruit or beneficial result of what the cross accomplished for us. Because of the cross, our sins have been transferred from us to Christ. In doing so, our sins were not removed just out of our reach, but far away from us in a permanent removal. "As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:12). This aspect of Christ's sacrifice as the sin bearer who has completely taken our sins away from us is emphasized in this prophecy. "All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him." (Isaiah 53:6).

16:29-34 - "This shall be a permanent statute for you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall humble your souls and not do any work, whether the native, or the alien who sojourns among you; for it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you; you will be clean from all your sins before the LORD. It is to be a sabbath of solemn rest for you, that you may humble your souls; it is a permanent statute. So the priest who is anointed and ordained to serve as priest in his father's place shall make atonement: he shall thus put on the linen garments, the holy garments, and make atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar. He shall also make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. Now you shall have this as a permanent statute, to make atonement for the sons of Israel for all their sins once every year." And just as the LORD had commanded Moses, so he did."

This section of the Lord's commands for the Day of Atonement is problematic today for many people. It is clear that the Lord declared this was to be "a permanent statute for you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month..." That is was to be permanent simply meant that it was not designed as a short term provision, but from that time on. This and this alone was God's provision for the atonement of Israel. The question is, what about the Day of Atonement today? In modern Judaism, the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur remains the most important day on the Jewish calendar and it is still observed, but with radical differences. Today, when Yom Kippur is practiced, there is no tabernacle (or temple), there is no high priest to lead it, there are no sacrifices slain, no blood poured out and applied, and no goat released into the wilderness. In fact the only aspect of the ancient Yom Kippur observance that is still practiced today is the instruction of the Lord for the people to obey all these requirements by taking the day off and humbling themselves before the Lord, which is done as a fast of normal food and pleasures for that day. All of the other requirements are ignored by even the most stringent orthodox Jewish Rabbis. Why would they ignore all of the essential elements of this day?

They ignore them because there is not temple still standing since the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70AD. There has been no Jewish high priest recognized since that same year. Since the sacrifices required by this day could only be offered in the tabernacle, and later the temple, and only by the high priest, there is no righteous way to offer the atoning sacrifice since 70AD. That event left all Jewish people with only two choices. The choice that the majority of Jewish leaders made was to invent their own substitute rules for Yom Kippur. Since then, orthodox Jews rely on their own good deeds and fasting to make atonement for their own sins before God. The issue is whether God accepts good works and fasting as adequate atonement for our own sins. To imagine He does ignores the absolute necessity of the laws in this chapter. Otherwise God would have simply commanded Israel to fast and do good deeds this day. Our good

deeds don't come close to covering the spiritual debt to God's holy justice that our sins have incurred.

Thankfully, there is another provision, but admittedly one that most Jewish people are not willing to embrace. All of the meaning and significance of that day was fulfilled in the once for all sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross. His blood is the permanent blood of atonement that has satisfied the holy justice of God for all of the sins for all who believe this glorious message. There is no other provision that God has made for our sins, or ever will make. If we accept His provision of the sacrifice of His Son then we have eternal atonement. If we reject His only provision for our sins, then on the Day of Judgment we will have to pay the price for our own sins.

Leviticus 17

17:1-9 - "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and to his sons and to all the sons of Israel and say to them, 'This is what the LORD has commanded, saying, "Any man from the house of Israel who slaughters an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or who slaughters it outside the camp, and has not brought it to the doorway of the tent of meeting to present it as an offering to the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD, bloodguiltiness is to be reckoned to that man. He has shed blood and that man shall be cut off from among his people. The reason is so that the sons of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they were sacrificing in the open field, that they may bring them in to the LORD, at the doorway of the tent of meeting to the priest, and sacrifice them as sacrifices of peace offerings to the LORD. The priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the LORD at the doorway of the tent of meeting, and offer up the fat in smoke as a soothing aroma to the LORD. They shall no longer sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat demons with which they play the harlot. This shall be a permanent statute to them throughout their generations.'" Then you shall say to them, 'Any man from the house of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, and does not bring it to the doorway of the tent of meeting to offer it to the LORD, that man also shall be cut off from his people.'"

Chapter 17 carries forward one of the concerns of the Day of Atonement and extends it beyond the boundaries of that single day. The Lord wanted His people to understand the special role of blood in their lives and their relationship to the Lord. The laws of this chapter were not limited to only the priests, but were aimed at every single Israelite, and also applied to any outside the covenant who traveled with them. No one was exempt from these laws regarding the blood. These were also not to be regarded as minor laws. The Lord gives two strong

warnings regarding anyone that disregards or violates them. They would be "cut off from among his people", which effectively amounted to permanent isolation from the tabernacle and covenant community. That warning reflected how Israel as a nation was to treat any who broke the blood laws.

It was strictly forbidden to kill an ox, lamb, or goat in the camp of Israel or outside the camp in the field without bringing the animal to the tabernacle. These animals were the domesticated animals God had ordained for offerings. Even if the purpose of killing the animal was only to eat its meat, it was still required to be brought to the tabernacle. The priest had to supervise the slaughter, insure the blood was properly drained from the animal, some of the blood was offered along with the fat which the Lord had reserved for Himself. By establishing this clear prohibition, the Lord effectively eliminated false religious worship from Israel in a single stroke. It was a common practice in the false religion of Egypt, as well as the other pagan nations of the ancient world to make liberal use of blood in their sacrifices to their idols. It was not unusual to even drink a portion of the blood of the sacrifice as part of the rituals. The Lord forbid Israel to participate in the worship of other gods in the Ten Words (Exodus 20:3-4), and now with the laws of blood He eliminated the possibility of any continuing that practice. Until now, an Israelite discovered slaughtering an animal to offer in worship of a false god could easily cover their sin by claiming it was only being killed to eat. Now, anyone slaughtering any animal other than under the watchful eye of the priesthood was in violation of the law.

Later in the chapter, the Lord makes an allowance for hunting outside the camp. If an animal is slain during a hunt, of course this would not be under a priest's supervision. In such cases, the blood was to be drained and poured out on the ground and covered with dirt so that it could not be used for any illegitimate religious purpose. In the restatement of the Law in Deuteronomy, when Israel would settle all over the Promised Land with many physically distant from the tabernacle and temple in Jerusalem, the Lord made this additional provision. "When the LORD your God extends your border as He has promised you, and you say, 'I will eat meat,' because you desire to eat meat, then you may eat meat, whatever you desire. If the place which the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, then you may slaughter of your herd and flock which the LORD has given you, as I have commanded you; and you may eat within your gates whatever you desire. Just as a gazelle or a deer is eaten, so you will eat it; the unclean and the clean alike may eat of it. Only be sure not to eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh. You shall not eat it; you shall pour it out on the ground like water. You shall not eat it, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you, for you will be doing what is right in the sight of the LORD." (Deuteronomy 12:20-25).

This was all to make a strong emphasis on the spiritual significance of the blood. Every single time any Israelite shed blood, they were to have their concerns raised and attention focused on the seriousness of what they were doing. As with

the other laws of the Old Testament, this was meant to prepare their hearts for Christ in a key way. As we saw in the previous chapter on the Day of Atonement, God has provided for our salvation in one way and only one way. Salvation is found through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for our sins, and purchased at the price of His own blood shed for us. Any mishandling of the blood of these animals was a symbolic misappropriation of the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God. God was training them to honor and respect the blood as an example to us of the value of what Christ accomplished in His death. It also serves as a warning to not turn our hearts in any other spiritual direction in the vain hope of finding salvation in any other than Christ.

17:11-12 - "And any man from the house of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement. Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, 'No person among you may eat blood, nor may any alien who sojourns among you eat blood.'"

The prohibition against eating blood had to do with both drinking blood, as some ancient cultures did, and eating any meat that had not been properly drained of blood when it was slaughtered. This was again, as we have seen from earlier studies not required for health purposes, but for spiritual reasons. In this case, the spiritual reason is the special purpose of blood in God's creation design. God made both our physical bodies and the bodies of animals as a blood based life system. The blood is the core, or essential element of our physical lives. We can lose virtually any other part of our physical makeup and still survive, except for our blood. Since it is designed by God as the basis for our life, He also chose for the blood to represent the value or worth of our lives for the purpose of sacrifice and salvation. Therefore, blood was reserved for holy purposes. It was never to be shed without a proper recognition of that holy purpose.

It's clear from these last two chapters that blood played a critical role in the worship of the Old Covenant tabernacle. "And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." (Hebrews 9:22). What we are meant to learn from this is that blood is just as important for us today as it was for them. The only difference is that the specifics of the laws regarding the blood of animals do not apply in the same way for us today, since there is not tabernacle any longer, and no priests to supervise the slaughter of animals. Instead all the concern in the New Covenant focus on blood has shifted from the blood of animals to the blood of Christ. The one exception to this is the carry over of the Lord's prohibition of consuming blood even for the New Testament believers as described in Acts. "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and

from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell." (Acts 15:28-29).

Questions from Leviticus 16:

Question: I was curious as to why Aaron had to make atonement for the Holy Place, Tent of Meeting and the altar?

Answer: It's a good question, because the natural assumption would be that the tabernacle and its furnishings were holy because they were God's house, and would not need to have atonement made for them. The point of having Aaron make atonement for the tabernacle is that it was considered defiled by contact with fallen, sinful humans. Many of the laws we have recently studied showed in a variety of circumstances that when someone or something unclean touched that which was clean, that the unclean defiled the clean. The sins of Israel spiritually affected the spiritual integrity of the tabernacle. Even the priests who actually made physical contact with the altar and entered inside of the tabernacle were themselves contagiously communicating defilement that needed to be addressed. The atonement offered for the tabernacle on the Day of Atonement cleansed all defiling residue from the tabernacle being in the center of a nation that was not perfectly holy.

This also pictures in advance an interesting element of the sacrifice of Christ. "Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;" (Hebrews 9:23-24). When Jesus entered heaven He cleansed heaven itself of defilement. The concept here is that humans were made as both physical and spiritual beings. We were designed for heavenly interaction with God. Even our worship and prayers which at times contain fleshly, self-centered elements are imperfect expressions of God's holiness and as they enter heaven they carry defilement with them. Christ cleansed heaven itself with His sacrifice as the fulfillment of what Aaron did on the Day of Atonement.

Leviticus 18

PARENTAL ALERT—some of the following subject matter involves mature themes. Please review with discernment before sharing with your children.

18:1-3 - "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'I am the LORD your God. You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes.'"

This chapter contains key passages in which the Lord is further defining what He meant when He identified Israel as His "holy nation." He did not mean that Israel would only be distinguished from the world around them by unique and more frequent religious rituals while living just like the other nations once the rituals were done. What will distinguish Israel as holy is that they will live differently than the other nations of the world 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Their holiness will be revealed in their every day behavior as much if not more than it will on special religious days. The starting point for what defines them as holy is not with themselves, or in comparison to the nations around them. Their reference point for holiness is the Lord. He is the holy God Who called them out of Egypt, made them His own special nation, and had called them to the Promised Land.

The Lord establishes Himself as their standard of holiness by introducing this chapter of laws on specific holy behaviors by declaring, "I am the LORD your God." The significance of this simple declaration should not escape our notice. The Lord had already previously introduced Himself to Israel with awesome demonstrations of His powerful presence, and in many laws. Why would He state Who He is again to precede this section? It was a way to remind Israel that they belonged to Him and not to themselves. As a nation in covenant with God they were not free to make their own laws, set their own standards, or choose their own ways to behave in areas of spiritual, moral and ethical concern. It is a reminder that the god of a nation becomes the standard for that nation. As the God of Israel, they would always be responsible to live as He required them to live. Of course, even though the Lord is the only true God over all the earth and every nation in all of history, the nations of that day did not acknowledge the One true God any more than they do today. Each nation chose their own gods to worship. The gods of those nations became the standard for the behaviors of those nations. The Lord makes it clear that He will not tolerate Israel following the standards of the gods of Egypt, where they had lived, or Canaan, where they would live once they entered the Promised Land.

We are to understand the heart of the Lord's concerns for Israel and apply them to our own lives today as Christians. Just like Israel lived in the midst of nations of false worship and corresponding corrupt behaviors, all Christians today live in the midst of a world that worships anything and everything other than the One true God. The moral standards of the world around us are not based on the holiness and righteousness of God, but upon whatever the society and culture currently value the most other than God. The contrast between the world's standards and God's standards is in some cases more subtle today than in the days of ancient Israel, but the spiritual difference is just as real and serious. The church has always struggled with the implications of this issue. The Lord has called us into the world on a mission to serve Him and represent Him to the world, but He also calls us to remain spiritually separate from the world while we serve Him in it. "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world." (John 17:14-18).

The church typically swings from one extreme to another in the attempt to honor these dual concerns of the Lord. Either we tend to separate so far from the world that we cannot even connect with those who are still in it, or in our effort to identify with them and reach them we become so much like them that we become spiritually indistinguishable from the world we are trying to reach. This balance point must be discovered by every generation of believers. In the effort, one thing we must keep in mind however is that the behaviors identified in this chapter with the evil of the world are non-negotiable. These are moral absolutes that identify the holy standards of God for every generation. No matter how much the society around us may embrace these behaviors, they remain forever forbidden for us who base our behavior on a heavenly standard that does not change with the times.

18:4-5 - "You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the LORD your God. So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD."

In these verses there is a simple word of promise. The promise is that the person that performs, keeps and lives according to the standards of God will live. What is meant by this is not just that the person obedient and faithful to God's law will physically survive, or that the person that violates them will instantly drop dead. The meaning instead is that God is promising a certain kind of life to the person that honors His law standards in their behavior, not merely with their words. The Lord is encouraging the hearts of the faithful that there is a reward for obedience. The ultimate reward is not in this life, but at the throne of God on the final Day of Judgment. Those who lived lives pleasing to God will be blessed forever more.

Yet, there is also reward in this present life for obedience and faithfulness. The Lord will work in the life and life circumstances of those that so honor Him to show them and everyone that observes their lives that it is always wise to obey God. This does not mean that God is here promising that only pleasant experiences will accompany an obedient life, but that the Lord will cause the obedient to be blessed as the overall characteristic of their lives. Necessary difficulties will be experienced by the obedient and faithful as they endure the reactions of a God dishonoring society, and also pass through the testing circumstances designed by God for their own spiritual growth. Conversely, the rebellious and disobedient can expect not only to lose the blessings of the Lord but to receive deserved judgment from God not only in this life, but in eternity.

18:6 - "None of you shall approach any blood relative of his to uncover nakedness; I am the LORD."

A large section of this chapter is devoted to what we could describe as laws of incest. They are laws forbidding crossing sexual boundaries with any family relation either by blood or by marriage covenant. We should not determine the impact of these laws based on continuing current social distaste for this kind of behavior in our present day. Our society only frowns upon incest because of previous generation's strong Christian and Bible influence. Without that previous influence as a social moral foundation, our society would see incest in the same way the cultures of Egypt and Canaan did. In Egypt, the royal family purposefully practiced the types of incest named in this section in order to maintain the "purity" of the Egyptian royalty by insuring that no Egyptian royalty married outside of the family. The Canaanites practiced all twelve specifically forbidden incest behaviors in this chapter and did so with the perspective that it was "natural" and acceptable.

18:22-30 - "You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination. Also you shall not have intercourse with any animal to be defiled with it, nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion. Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled. For the land has become defiled, therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants. But as for you, you are to keep My statutes and My judgments and shall not do any of these abominations, neither the native, nor the alien who sojourns among you (for the men of the land who have been before you have done all these abominations, and the land has become defiled); so that the land will not spew you out, should you defile it, as it has spewed out the nation which has been before you. For whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do so shall be cut off from among their people. Thus you are to keep My charge, that you do not practice any of the abominable customs which have been practiced before you, so as not to defile yourselves with them; I am the LORD your God."

This final section of the chapter is particularly difficult to digest for our present culture and generation. So much so, that many so-called Christian groups (let alone the world) have done their worst to twist the clear and obvious meaning of 18:22 simply because it directly conflicts with a sexual behavior that our society wants desperately to rehabilitate and re-identify as acceptable, normal, and a viable "alternative lifestyle." Don't make the mistake of thinking that God's perspective of this kind of sexual behavior has changed at all in the generations between when He first spoke these words and now. The behavior in view is more commonly called homosexuality today. It is not treated here in God's Law as a lifestyle, or even more importantly a biological orientation as most claim today. It is treated as a behavior. Biblically, all behaviors of this sort are the outward expression of heart choices made by the person practicing the behavior. It is because it is a moral choice lived out as a behavior that the person can and will be held accountable to God.

Homosexual behavior is identified here as an abomination. This is a critically important word which sets this behavior in right perspective. The term describes the attitude of the one who has named it an abomination. In other words, this is more than the personal opinion of Moses, Aaron, or any other Israelite. This is how God views this behavior. He still views it this way. The word abomination translates a Hebrew word meaning something hated, or detestable. It is a word describing a very strong revulsion. As an ironic contrast, there is a politically correct movement gaining momentum in our culture to classify any public speech or writing that puts homosexuality in a bad light as "hate speech." Many would even desire to make it a crime to speak against this behavior. What I am writing in this section would be considered hate speech by that movement. The reality is, that this section of Leviticus is hate speech. Simply put, God hates homosexual behavior. It is not a behavior that He mildly disapproves of. He detests it. As His

people, so should we. This does not mean that we are to be hateful toward those that choose to practice such behavior. We can strongly disapprove of their behavior without violating other commands of God to love our neighbor as we love ourselves for instance.

So that Israel does not misunderstand the deadly effect of such defiling and detestable behaviors on a society, the Lord calls their attention to the nation of Canaan that at this moment still possessed the Promised Land. The Lord uses a vivid word picture to describe His own perspective and attitude toward them. He used what we call personification, which is to give human characteristics to something that is not human to make His point. He described that the land was vomiting out the inhabitants that were currently living there. Their behaviors had so polluted the land spiritually that the land was sick to its stomach of them and was forcefully ejecting them. This image previews the coming judgment of God on these societies. The Lord also uses this as a warning to Israel that the land would do the same to them if they were to ever adopt the ways of the corrupt nations around them.

Leviticus 19

19:9-10 - "Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God."

The Law of God was a comprehensive guideline for Israel including what things should be done as a nation as well as what things to avoid. This law, as many others anticipated their lives once they reached the Promised Land and settled into an agricultural economy. This law regulated how Israel was to harvest their own fields each year. The restriction was aimed at those farmers in Israel that would be so careful in the harvest that they would gather every stalk of grain and any other crop that was grown. The obedient Israelite was to intentionally not harvest his own field all the way to the edges of the field. Additionally, as the crops were being harvested, if some of the crop fell to the ground as it was being gathered and bundled, instead of bending down to pick up what fell, they were to leave it where it fell. This standard insured that each season a small percentage of each crop was left in each field throughout Israel. The Lord was not training His people to be careless by this law, but was training them to be kind and compassionate.

The purpose of this law was to make available some food for the poor and needy in Israel. Once the harvest was complete, and even as it was being harvested with permission from the owner of the field, the poor and needy were allowed to

come into the field and harvest what remained at the outer edges of the field, as well as gather the small portions of the crop that had previously fallen to the ground. This food was purposefully not to be harvested by the owner of the field and then given as a gift to the poor. Instead, those in need were to come do the work of harvesting the available food for themselves. In God's Law for His holy nation there is no provision for what we have in our society of a welfare system where people in need simply collect without work or effort from the abundance of others and funneled through the national government. Instead of a welfare system, there was this law. The beauty of this law was that it not only provided necessary food for those in real need, but it did so in a way that did not impose on the landowner / farmer, while also training the needy to work for their own living by causing them to gather their own food.

19:17-18 - "You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD."

This passage is one of the most significant portions of all of God's Law. We know that with certainty because of the way both the Lord Jesus and Paul the apostle quoted from it and taught from it. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'" "This is the great and foremost commandment. 'The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'" "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:36-40). Jesus identifies the phrase, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" as one of the two core principles of all of the Law of God. The two principles are 1) Love God, and 2) Love your neighbor. Jesus taught in this section that the whole Law and all the Prophets books to follow in the Old Testament are concerned to establish our hearts in these two commands. As we saw in our study of the tablets of the Law written by God on Sinai, that these two principles in a sense summarize the two tablets of the Law and each corresponds to five of the original Ten Words or Commandments. The first five commandments reflect the concern to teach us to love God, and the second five commandments teach us to love our neighbors.

Paul then refers to this same section and applies it to the Christian life. "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." (Romans 13:8-10). The person that loves his neighbor has fulfilled all of the concerns of the Law of God that were aimed at all of our horizontal relationships with other people. Keep in mind, that

the fulfillment of the love your neighbor standard is based upon what God defines as love, and upon who God identifies as our neighbor. Human tendency is always to minimize the responsibilities that come with such far reaching laws. Jesus had to give us many further instructions and examples to show us the nature of true love as He defines it. The famous parable of the Good Samaritan was given by Jesus in response to a question He was asked for the purpose of clarifying who belongs in the neighbor group for each of us.

The parable of the Samaritan is a powerful description in story form of the essence of the command to love our neighbor. In the story, a Samaritan stopped to help an injured Israelite and showed true neighbor love for him by treating his wounds, carrying him to safety, and even paying his lodging bill. The degree of the love the Samaritan showed is further emphasized when we understand the natural distaste with which Israelites held Samaritans at that time. The point is that our neighbor is whomever crosses our path in life. The believer should recognize the sovereignty of God in the encounter and be always prepared to display the true love of God in a way that honors Him and represents Him to our neighbor.

19:26-31 - "You shall not eat anything with the blood, nor practice divination or soothsaying.... Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God."

This section gives a strong and non-negotiable prohibition to certain spiritual practices of the ancient world. Those practices included divination, soothsaying, mediums and spiritists. These are actually two pairs of similar practices. These were very common practices in all of the cultures of the ancient world, but God insisted that the people of His holy nation refrain from these practices. They were not to even allow these things to be practiced in their society, and later laws in Deuteronomy reaffirmed the complete prohibition of these spiritual practices (Deuteronomy 18:9-14). Today, in our society, not only do we allow these exact practices, we create television shows to promote them, games to encourage these practices, and laws to protect the right to practice them.

Divination and soothsaying involved using various natural elements to "read" or discern hidden spiritual messages for one's present or future life. Modern examples of divination would include reading Tarot cards, or the famous "game" of the Ouija Board. The person who practices divination sees messages in the cards, or animal bones, or other natural patterns that supposedly represent messages from God. It should be obvious to the believer that God will not speak through such practices when He forbids His people to seek messages in this way. Yet, in spite of that, some naive Christians are drawn into these practices without recognizing the spiritual danger inherent in them.

There are also some who still identify themselves as mediums, but that term has fallen out of common usage in recent years in favor of more mystical sounding

terms like "channeling". There are basically two kinds of mediums or channels. One purports to receive messages from the dead, while the other claims to receive messages from non-human sources such as angels or UFOs. The medium or channel claiming to have a connection with the spirits of the dead who have a desire to communicate with the living has been popularized by Hollywood in the movie *Ghost*, and the television series *Crossing Over*, and *Medium*. The channeler is supposed to be a person more spiritually tuned to receive their messages. God knows the natural inclination of people to know things hidden from them including the future. This warning was given in anticipation of the temptation even believers would experience from those who claimed to communicate with "spirits beyond the grave." The serious nature of this practice is revealed when we recognize that there is a good reason why God forbids His people to participate in such practices. The true source of these messages is not UFOs, angels, or the spirits of dead loved ones, but demonic spirits using these guises to delude and lure into spiritual darkness those who embrace them.

19:32-34 - "You shall rise up before the grayheaded and honor the aged, and you shall revere your God; I am the LORD. When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God."

There are two laws in these verses that would benefit our society in particular if they were to be applied in the way that God intended. The first law requires a specific behavior in response to the elderly in the society. As with all of God's laws, the behavior required is the appropriate outward expression of a right perspective and attitude in the heart. In this case, the right perspective encouraged is for all relatively younger people in the nation to recognize the value of the elderly and to honor them in an expression that has been lost in the last generation of our society. The law required something more tangible than having a respectful attitude toward the aged. It called all Israelites to respond in a specific physical way whenever an elderly person was encountered.

That response was to rise up in their presence. Simply, it meant for the younger people to get up from sitting down when an elderly person entered the room in which they were sitting. To clarify, this did not apply to anyone that happened to be older than you. It was not a relative standard. The accepted standard in the culture of that day was that an older person was anyone over the age of fifty. There was a time in our culture when a form of this principle was practiced as a social pattern of behavior. I remember being taught by my parents as a child to stand up whenever an adult entered the room. That pattern of behavior no longer is a concern of many parents today. As a result, it is an easy observation that older people are commonly treated with diminished honor in our society, and often with no honor shown to them in normal social circumstances at all.

The second law in this section that has fallen by the wayside in our society is the response to the strangers in our society. In this passage, the term stranger does not refer to someone you have never yet met, and so they are socially a stranger to you. Instead, the term refers to what we would call today a foreigner. Strangers were people that came from other nations surrounding Israel. Many were drawn to Israel from other nations because of the evident blessing of the Lord upon Israel. The Lord intended His great blessing on Israel to not be guarded only for Israel to enjoy, but that the blessings of the Lord would spill over the full lives of God's covenant people and be a natural attraction to those who longed to enjoy such blessings for themselves.

This law is especially problematic today, even for many believers, because of the huge issue with the influx of so many illegal aliens into the United States. Even many Christians feel perfectly justified in angry or outraged expressions to those who have crossed our nation's borders without going through the proper procedures. I am 100% in favor of obeying the law and urging others to do so also, but this law of God should not be ignored in our patriotic zeal to protect our national boundaries. What God calls His people to do is recognize a higher spiritual purpose in the presence of aliens in our midst. The implication is that the Lord has drawn them here for His purpose and that our interaction with them is a spiritual opportunity to represent an even greater nation than the USA to them. As citizens of God's kingdom, He calls us to treat them with respect and to show His love to them. The reminder the Lord gives of Israel's recent status as aliens in the land of Egypt is meant to shape their perspective to a more sympathetic orientation. The implication is that without the reminder, Israel, like ourselves would tend to see any strangers from a self interested viewpoint. Kingdom living calls us to see such strangers through the perspective of how God would have me treat them first and foremost.

Leviticus 20

20:1-5 - "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "You shall also say to the sons of Israel: 'Any man from the sons of Israel or from the aliens sojourning in Israel who gives any of his offspring to Molech, shall surely be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones. I will also set My face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given some of his offspring to Molech, so as to defile My sanctuary and to profane My holy name. If the people of the land, however, should ever disregard that man when he gives any of his offspring to Molech, so as not to put him to death, then I Myself will set My face against that man and against his family, and I will cut off from among their people both him and all those who play the harlot after him, by playing the harlot after Molech.'"

The violations in this chapter were already listed in chapter 18, but here the Lord makes known the judgment or penalty that was to be carried out for each transgression. This first section involved a man giving any of his offspring to Molech. The name Molech is no longer familiar to anyone who has not read the Bible, but it was the name of one of the chief gods of the Canaanites. The worship of Molech involved sacrifice, however the particular sacrifice was not an animal, but a child. The person bringing the sacrificial child to Molech would bring one of their own children from their family and offer the child to Molech in a fiery sacrifice that was expected to bring increased fertility and blessing to the life of the one offering.

This law placed this horrific practice in right perspective. The Lord would personally respond in judgment against anyone in Israel that participated in such evil. The Lord's description is that He would set His face against that person. This was a way of saying that the Lord would treat that person as His own enemy from that point forward. The Lord also called the entire holy nation of Israel to follow His example in responding to such evil practices in their midst. There was no allowance made by the Lord to anyone who saw and knew this was being practiced to disregard it or look the other way. It was the entire community's responsibility to take a stand against such profane and defiling activity in their community. The community was to carry out the judgment of the Lord in a public and joint response. The penalty required was stoning. That involved each member of the community to pick up a sizable stone and together to throw their stones at the guilty person until they died from the impact of the stones. It was not an easy, clean way to execute. It was bloody, graphic and intended by the Lord to make a lasting deep impact on the hearts of every participant and witness.

This false worship of Molech is also described by the Lord as "playing the harlot after Molech." This identifies a theme that will continue throughout the Old Testament. It is a key covenant theme of Old Testament and it anticipates an

issue that remains at the heart of our own relationship with the Lord today. To play the harlot with Molech is a word picture which describes Molech as if he were an illicit lover. Those who play the harlot with him are portrayed in this word picture as an unfaithful bride breaking her marriage vows. The Lord is also involved in this word picture, just not directly mentioned. The Lord is the faithful husband of the unfaithful bride. Israel was pictured here as the bride of the Lord. Israel had given her vows of faithfulness to the Lord at the foot of Sinai when the Lord established a covenant of marriage between Himself and Israel. Any in Israel who turned from the Lord and worshipped any other god, was breaking their vow to the Lord to love Him only. This was spiritual adultery.

In the New Covenant, the church has been betrothed to Christ as her only husband. No believers worship Molech today, but the danger of spiritual adultery remains. "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." (James 4:4). James teaches that spiritual adultery is not limited to the overt worship of obvious false gods, but that line of unfaithfulness to our heavenly husband is crossed whenever we enter into friendship with the world. James is not warning us here about making friends with people that do not know the Lord. Instead, the warning is for a believer who adopts the world's standards of right and wrong as their own standard. We are showing friendship to the spiritually rebellious world around us when we embrace its standards, and in doing so turn from the standards of the Lord.

20:7-8 - "You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. You shall keep My statutes and practice them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you."

These verses return again to the main theme of Leviticus, which is holiness. The Lord is an awesomely holy God. In heaven, the four living beings that are in closest proximity to Him behold His glory and continuously cry out with a shared exclamation of, "Holy, holy holy is the Lord God..." (Revelation 4:8). We should expect that the great priority of the covenant that God establishes with His people is to call His people to greater holiness as His holy nation. In this call to holiness we are certainly not to hypocritically put on a holy act. The Lord intends for His people to be an authentically holy people. We become more holy by looking to Him, learning His standards from His Word, and committing to imitating Him.

The Lord calls us to this life of holiness and in the call we have the assurance of His power working in us and upon us to bring it to pass. He confirms this in this passage with the declaration, "I am the LORD who sanctifies you." The point of this declaration is that the Lord knows that holiness is really beyond our reach. No matter our best efforts, we cannot make ourselves truly holy from the inside out, but He can and will. This principle is echoed in the New Testament in these passages. "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with

fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:12-13). "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass." (I Thessalonians 5:23-24).

The theme of both of these passages is that the New Covenant believer is to be sanctified and that their lives are to be characterized by holiness. The holiness standard for the believer in the New Covenant is not less than the standard of the Old Covenant as though God relaxed the standard for us in Christ so that we can call ourselves holy even though we really are not. If anything, the standard of holiness is even greater now, because while the focus in the Old Testament was on obeying the laws of Moses, the focus in the New Testament is to become like Christ. Our confidence in this great purpose of the Lord for our lives is not in ourselves, but in Him. He is powerfully at work inside of us to influence us by His Spirit to make the right choices and live in the right way. He has not only called us to this, He will also bring it to pass. Our personal holiness is 100% God dependant.

20:9-16 - "If there is anyone who curses his father or his mother, he shall surely be put to death; he has cursed his father or his mother, his bloodguiltiness is upon him. If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. If there is a man who lies with his father's wife, he has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death, their bloodguiltiness is upon them. If there is a man who lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death; they have committed incest, their bloodguiltiness is upon them. If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them. If there is a man who marries a woman and her mother, it is immorality; both he and they shall be burned with fire, so that there will be no immorality in your midst. If there is a man who lies with an animal, he shall surely be put to death; you shall also kill the animal. If there is a woman who approaches any animal to mate with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them."

This section lists some of the violations of the Law of God that required a death penalty for the one who committed such acts. The sin that opened this chapter of sacrificing one's own child to Molech is also included in the death penalty category. Few, even in today's more "sensitive" culture would argue against the death penalty for someone that burned their own child to death. However, many of the other violations in this section have been rejected by our society as worthy of the death penalty. The list of offences includes cursing parents, adultery, incest, homosexuality, and bestiality. These sins are such grievous assaults on

God's standards that the Lord commanded that Israel deal with them by executing those who practiced such acts. Remember that the Lord did not ordain any prisons for His holy nation. None were locked away from society as we do today. It's true that this served a practical purpose during Israel's first forty years in the wilderness journey since there was no possibility of building a prison for a people constantly on the move. Yet, even after they entered the Promised Land and settled in it, the Lord never had Israel build any prisons. A prison is a society's acknowledgment of problems that cannot be resolved. The Lord did ordain the way to resolve such serious social problems and that was to command the permanent elimination of the people that chose to practice such transgressions of His Law.

There are many opponents of the death penalty in today's society. They argue that the value of the life of the person to be executed outweighs all other considerations. This is foolish sentimentality and a gross exaggeration of human value when a person is given over to serious sin. The Biblical perspective is that our value as human beings is based upon our creation design of bearing God's image and purpose to honor Him. If we reject that design and purpose to such a degree as to cross the behavior boundary lines described in this section, then we have forfeited our human value as well as our right to live. The death penalty served God's purpose in His holy nation by teaching in a vivid display the seriousness of His call to holiness and demonstrating His justice. It also preserved the purity of the society by eliminating evil elements before they could spread their influence further.

The question is often raised whether these laws should be practiced by societies today. This is a complex question, deserving a book length response, but a couple of points can be made in a brief response. First, these were the laws of God for Israel. God did not require all the nations to live according to these standards, but He did commission Israel to teach the nations the ways of God in His holy Law so that the nations could learn and be changed by the knowledge of what God expected of all humanity. It is a serious misunderstanding of God's Law to say it has nothing to teach society today. "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;" (II Timothy 3:16).

The second point is that if we say that God's Law is not to be consulted as the basis of a society's morals or its laws which govern morals, then the question remains as to which other standard will that society use in its place. The issue is that every society must choose some standard to be the basis of its laws. If God's standards are rejected as not applicable, then where will that society turn to find a foundation for its laws and morals? Of course, in every case, the only alternatives are the various shifting expressions of human standards. In other words, the society will reject God's standards in preference for their own. Our society today still maintains some measure of decency because, and only

because the original standards of this nation have not yet been entirely jettisoned. Those standards were for the most part Biblically based.

Questions from Leviticus 19:

Question: If it is true that mediums can't talk to the dead, then how come when King Saul sought out a medium, Samuel came up and talked to Saul and told him he was going to be killed?

Answer: Technically, it is not that mediums can't talk to the dead, it is that they don't talk to the dead when they are receiving their messages. The issue really boils down to what the Bible teaches us regarding the situation of the dead. What actually happens to the spirits of the people once they die? Do their disembodied spirits remain here interacting with spiritually sensitive people by communicating messages to them? The answer is no. Instead, during the Old Testament, before the first coming of Christ, the spirits of the dead were taken to one of two places. The righteous dead were taken to Abraham's Bosom (Luke 16:19-26), also called Paradise, where the righteous dead waited for the coming of Christ and the opening of heaven in the New Testament. The unrighteous dead were taken to Hades where they wait the final judgment. None of them is free to interact, let alone communicate with people who are still alive (Luke 16:27-31).

The question you raised concerns a specific event involving King Saul and Samuel the prophet. I'll address that situation again when we reach that passage in our study, but I'll give a brief answer to it now. It is true in the passage you are referring to that Samuel was dead at this time and that his spirit did appear to Saul and speak a message from the Lord to him. This is clearly what we can identify as an exception to a spiritual rule. It was the Lord's doing, and He is free to bring someone up from the dead if He chooses to do so. In this case, Samuel was used by the Lord to deliver a word of judgment from God to Saul. However, it was the Lord Who brought Samuel momentarily back from Abraham's Bosom, not the medium of En-dor. In the passage, she is actually surprised that it is really Samuel. The result was not what she expected. The normal practice of every medium even today is that they are either putting on an act and simply making up their messages, or else they are in contact with a demonic spirit who is feeding them messages using the deception of posing as departed human spirits.

Question: Leviticus 19:28 "You shall not make any cuts in your body for the dead nor make any tattoo marks on yourselves: I am the LORD." Does the tattoo pertain only to markings related to the dead? And, how does this relate (if at all) to 1 Corinthians 3:17 "any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are." and Romans 12:1 "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship".

Answer: I'm assuming that your question has to do with whether this law was addressing the common cultural practice today of people getting tattoos, and how that might relate to the New Testament passages you mentioned. This law forbidding tattoos in Leviticus 19:28 is not addressing the kind of tattoos that are commonly done today. Most tattoos done today are for purpose of permanent skin decoration. The goal of the tattoo today is to draw attention by enhancing beauty or communicating some message. The tattoo practice addressed in Leviticus had a more directly religious purpose. Those tattoos were marking made on the body as an expression of worship of the various false gods. It was a common practice in the Canaanite cultures in the Promised Land. The Lord was forbidding His people to mark themselves as belonging to any of the gods of the nations.

In answering the question as to whether it is allowable for a believer in Christ to get a tattoo, it is important to say up front that there is no specific passage anywhere in God's Word that would forbid it since the Leviticus passage is really addressing a physically similar, but spiritually different practice. If I was asked for my advice by a believer interested in getting a tattoo, I would however bring up to them the issue that you mentioned about our body being identified by the Lord as belonging to Him and being His temple. In the Old Testament, it is clear that the Lord was very specific as to how He wanted His tabernacle / temple to be decorated. The people of God were not free to apply whatever designs to the exterior of the temple just because it pleased them to do so. The Lord has identified how He wants the lives of believers to be decorated with certain characteristics, behaviors and good deeds. I would tend to see tattoos on the bodies of believers as graffiti on the exterior of God's temple that would not enhance God's message, but rather detract from it.