

FEBRUARY 25

Leviticus 16:29-18:30

As you read this, remember one thing. No one was forced to live in Israel. Even the Israelites who didn't want to live as God's people could have just packed up and gone back to Egypt. Once they were in the land, no one kept them from moving to one of the surrounding countries. But, if you wanted to be called one of God's people and claim the promise given to Abraham, you entered into this covenant of blessing. So keep in mind that in reality, individuals or families could have defected. But if you wanted to belong to God, it is only rational to understand that you had to belong to Him His way.

The issues, of course, are really life or death in their consequences. God's way is the only way. Our sin tells us something different and that is irrational. To think that gravity should be suspended because we don't agree is crazy. These people were saved by their faith in the promise for a savior, now expressed in the promise to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him. I was reading this morning, and it hit me that in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man is in Hades, but Lazarus is in "Abraham's bosom." Just as Hades is a place, Abraham's bosom is a place and not Abraham's lap. Abraham's bosom is the designation for the dwelling place for all those who were saved before Christ. It was called Abraham's bosom, because their faith was in God who promised a savior, and that savior would come through Abraham and the nation that would spring from him. That is why the place isn't called "Moses' bosom," or the "Law's bosom."

Leviticus 16:29-34

Israel's first month would have been March. It is notable that this is the only Sabbath in Israel's year where the people had to fast during the Sabbath. The fasting or "affliction" would have been in preparation for the receiving of forgiveness before the Lord. Those with a heart of faith would have found great meaning in this, but those without faith would have just seen this as a religious ceremony.

Can you understand that this event and the Passover were to be two of the main events of their year? All of the males in Israel were supposed to be on hand for both of these events. Note that John 8 & 9 take place during this Day of Atonement and the Feast of Booths which followed.

Just think of all the reminders God built into the year and culture of the Jews. But what were they reminders of? As disciples, we have even more reminders and things to keep us focused. The greatest of these reminders is our commission to follow our Lord into the harvest. Can you understand what the harvest is supposed to vividly remind us of?

Leviticus 17

As you read this chapter, notice the recurring phrases, *you shall say to them*, and *any one of the house of Israel*. These will help you see where a new directive begins.

Vs. 1-7 This was an educational commandment that seems to be given for the time they were living in *the camp*. The people had lots of livestock. We think of them only having manna to eat and that was their main dish. But they did bring animals with them. God provided rotisserie quail on occasion, and I'm sure they were able to buy from passing merchant caravans. Since they were all tented around the tabernacle, God said that if they slaughtered an animal, even for food, they had to bring it to the tabernacle and offer it as a fellowship offering. This would have served many purposes. The people would have gotten used to offering to the Lord. It would have been shared with the priests. It would have been shared with the poor and with their families.

V. 7 And it would have gotten them out of the bad Egyptian habit of making pagan sacrifices out in their fields.

Vs. 8-9 This was the design of what God was doing during those years. Of all the existing religions of the world, the Jews were the only ones who could offer on only one altar. Why do you think that was? What was it meant to create?

Vs. 10-16 We've talked about the theme of this section. God makes a big point about blood. Verses 10-12 are the clearest explanation of the importance of blood. One interesting thought here is regarding God giving blood so as to make atonement. I wonder if, as God created life, blood was created as a symbol for what would eventually be necessary in forgiveness. When we have immortal spiritual bodies, I doubt that blood will be necessary for life. It makes you think. Since this reminder about not drinking blood is mentioned here, it might also be that the drinking of blood was associated with pagan religion. In any case, blood was to be seen as precious.

Vs. 13-14 This had to do with wild animals that could be eaten. Here also, they could not drink the blood. The blood had to be drained and poured out. Being cut off could either mean being sent out of the covenant community or it meant being punished by death. I think, more often than not, it meant death. Again, if you didn't like God's rules, all you had to do was move, thereby removing yourself from God's covenant people.

Vs. 15-16 Apparently it wasn't against the law to eat road kill, but it did make you ceremonially unclean.

Leviticus 18

Vs. 1-5 After reading vs. 1-5, it is probably a good idea to read 18:24-30. God was not speaking theoretically here. Notice what He says of Egypt in v. 3. Note that God told the people what to expect. Thirty-eight years from this point, Israel will reestablish their commitment to the covenant just before they go into the land. No one had to say, "I do."

God was not only giving them regulations, He was keeping them from the excesses that already existed in the world around them.

Just as a note of trivia, Paul quotes v. 5 in Romans 10:5. Paul knew Leviticus.

Vs. 6-18 As you go through the list, you see that all of this had to do with sexual intercourse. *Uncover nakedness* was a figure of speech having to do with violating someone sexually. Some of what is forbidden here is incest and child abuse. This means that what is forbidden here was normal in Canaan.

Notice that both Abraham (v. 11) and Jacob (v. 18) would now be out-of-bounds.

V. 19 This is specifically dealing with a sense of respect that God wanted to instill in Israel.

V. 20 This is the seventh commandment. Not only would you have been unclean, but you would have committed a capital offense.

V. 21 So why do you have the mention of Molech in this verse? I don't think that God is now talking about religion, but He is talking about the outcome of uncontrolled sexuality, babies. Since the beginning of man's lust for sexual freedom, unwanted pregnancies have been a problem. Molech was a pagan society's version of abortion. Because of the very loose sexual behavior back then, sexual intercourse was a part of pagan worship (Baal, for example), and there were a lot of unwanted kids. Figuratively speaking, in this society of perverted morality, where you had the temple of Baal on one corner, you also had a temple to Molech on the other. In Molech worship you offered the baby in sacrifice, throwing it into the "mouth of Molech," which actually was a flaming pit with a mouth-like opening. Even Solomon did this at the end of his life. They didn't have abortion back then, but they did have unwanted babies because of Baal worship, so they needed Molech. "He is also called Molech (Lev. 18:21, 20:2-5), Milcom (1 Kings 11:5, 33), and Malcham (Zeph. 1:5, KJV). This god became Chemosh among the Moabites." (from Eaton Bible Dictionary)

The issue here is not pagan worship. God is saying that Molech wasn't the answer to unwanted babies. Following God's rules was the answer.

Vs. 22-23 Notice that homosexuality is forbidden, as is having sex with animals.

Vs. 24-30 These laws are more than ceremonial laws for Israel. There is a universality to all of them, except maybe v. 19. That God allowed certain things in different cultures (for example, Abe's marriage to Sarah), at different periods of time, does not mean He approved them. These laws tell you what He approves of. The fact that God adds words like perversion and abomination shows you that these are not "object lessons" for Israel, but real social and moral laws.

Notice how often God mentions that the nations who dwell in Canaan were doing these things.

Mark 7:24-8:10

Mark 7:24-37

So why is this story here? It has a lot to do with where Jesus is, where He is healing, and what the response is. Jesus has been unofficially rejected by Israel. He knows that He will be rejected and that the gospel will go to the Gentiles. Jesus is now introducing His disciples to working with Gentiles. This wasn't going to be easy. They were true-blue Jews. When we get to the book of Acts, we'll see that God went to great lengths to help the apostles go beyond their deep-seated prejudice against the Gentiles.

This wasn't the first time that Jesus had healed Gentiles. It is mentioned that great multitudes from Tyre and Sidon came into Galilee and Judea to be healed. But now, Jesus was in Gentile territory.

Vs. 24-30 Notice that Jesus was trying to stay out of sight. Again, He is showing the disciples how to be flexible when the Father changes your plans. We have talked about this story in Matthew. Since the woman addressed Jesus in Matthew 15:22 as the Son of David, Jesus knew she had faith. The real lesson and even His treatment of her was to show her faith to the Twelve. The Gentiles could have great faith in their Lord.

Vs. 31-37 Again, this story is important because of where Jesus is. This is the area that was prepared by that other disciple, who was not only clothed and in his right mind, but was glorifying God all over the place.

If this man was a Gentile, what the apostles were seeing was symbolic of what would happen later in the book of Acts. The Gentiles would not only hear, but would proclaim the gospel.

Mark 8:1-10

Jesus didn't have to feed large crowds twice to prove He could do it. And the gospel writers didn't have to mention Him feeding two large crowds. The difference, again, is where this happened. Most of the people in all of these stories were Gentiles.

The Gentiles are coming to Jesus. Jesus is still making His offer to the Jews, but it is already obvious that He is welcoming all nations to salvation. I think it is so interesting that Jesus saves us to be like Him. And working in the harvest, getting our hands dirty, reaching the lost and making disciples is so like Him.

Psalm 41

It's hard to know when David wrote this. This psalm has the feel of when David was running from his own son Absalom, and some of David's trusted friends turn on him.

Vs. 1-3 One hallmark of David's faith was his protection of and help to the poor. During the years he ran from Saul, David was still protecting Israel's towns and bringing them money and

livestock. I suppose in this situation, David was the poor man that was being treated wrongly. In fact, it looks like David may have been sick.

Vs. 4-9 If this was written as David is running from Absalom, the sin mentioned is his taking of Bathsheba and killing of her husband Uriah.

Vs. 6-8 This seems to show that David was sick, and everyone was hoping God would take David through this illness.

V. 9 This could be referring to Ahithophel, David's chief counselor. This verse is an allusion to Jesus' betrayal.

Vs. 10-13 This is David's confidence in God's love for him.

Proverbs 10:15-16

Seems like a dark proverb, unless the man is rich because of working in righteousness, and the poor man is in poverty because of pursuing gain from doing wrong.