

# 18-19 Bible Study #25

3/19/19

# Leviticus (Cont)

- **Leviticus 17-22** contains the “**Holiness Code**” which was very important for the Old Testament, but also played a major role in the New Testament
- The “Holiness Code” is located right in the middle of the Law (Torah)
- The **Book of Leviticus** was seen as the central “**scroll**” of the Law and understood as the “heart of the Torah”
- At the very center of the Holiness Code is **Leviticus 19:2** which states: “*You shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy*”

# Leviticus (Cont)

- As a reminder, the word Holy (*qadosh*) meant to be set apart, distinct, different
- The *Hebrew* people were supposed to be set apart, and different from all the other nations round about
- *Israel* had been called out of *Egypt* by *Yahweh* and set apart as a model for the other nations to follow
- Even the “sojourners” who were living among them and came out with them in **Exodus 12**, were under parts of the “Holiness Code”
- Only in the “Holiness Code” do we find laws governing the “sojourners”

# Leviticus (Cont)

- In fact, the sojourners did **not** even have to circumcise their sons, abstain from pork, or obey the *Kosher* laws
- But, every Israeli male had to obey **all** of the laws of the *Torah* including those in the “Holiness Code”
- The “Holiness Code” will be extremely important when we look at what happened in **Acts 15** \*

# Leviticus (Cont)

- **Leviticus 17:1-9**

- Provided the key that unlocked the mystery of all of the animal “blood issues”
- It required that all sacrifices be brought to the door of the Tent of Meeting
- If an *Israelite* wanted to kill an animal (for a meal), he was required to take it and kill it in front of the door of the Tent of Meeting as an offering to *Yahweh*, as a matter of catechesis

# Leviticus (Cont)

- God did not delight in the slaughter of his creation or in seeing blood
- And since God is immutable, this action was designed to change the man seeking to kill the animal
- As mentioned earlier, the temptation for the *Israelite* and the sojourner (who were polytheists in *Egypt*) was to offer an animal as an appeasement to a local or family god

# Leviticus (Cont)

- This was done by killing an animal and pouring some of its blood on the altar as a sacrifice to their god and then consuming the rest
- Therefore, God required them to take the animal to be slaughtered to the door of the Tent of Meeting

# Leviticus (Cont)

- The word “*satyrs*” referred to the goat gods of the wilderness “*after whom they played the harlot*”
- Father pointed out that these men were, by nature, religious and because they came from a pagan background, they would be tempted to offer a slaughtered animal to one of their pagan gods
- This law was to prevent this act \*

# Leviticus (Cont)

- **Leviticus 17:10**

- Notice that God specified that both the *Israelites* and the sojourners (who were living among them) were to avoid eating blood
- However, to avoid wasting meat from an animal killed in the wilderness (hunting), they could pour the blood into the ground and cover it with dirt so that they would not be tempted to drink it
- If a man killed an animal in the wilderness or it died and he wanted to eat it, he was considered to be unclean until sunset and he must bathe before returning to a clean status \*

# Leviticus (Cont)

- **Leviticus 17:11-13**

- Father explained that “sin” in the Bible was seen as a turning away from God who was the source of life
- When a person turned from the source of life, he found “death”
- Sin was an act that separated a person from God (who was immutable and never changed)
- God was seen as standing in the door waiting for the man to come back
- Thus, the blood of the animal (liquid life) shed in a sacrifice was seen as an image of this restoration to life

# Leviticus (Cont)

- In antiquity, the people saw a great deal of animal blood as people butchered large numbers of animals for food often at a temple
- Most animals were lifted up by their back legs causing the blood to flow toward its head and its **jugular and carotid arteries were cut by a sharp knife**
- This caused the blood to rush out like a garden hose
- Slowly, the blood pressure dropped and the animal died a peaceful death in about 5 minutes

# Leviticus (Cont)

- The problem arose at this point because the pagans collected this blood to drink it or bathe in it to acquire its life force
- Here, God tells the people of *Israel* not to do this except for certain very clearly defined sacrificial liturgical actions
- Father suggested that we draw a line from **Leviticus 17:11** back to the word “blood” in **Leviticus 16:14** \*

# Leviticus (Cont)

- **Leviticus 17:14-16**

- A question arose concerning what a person would do if he ate the flesh of an animal that died or was killed by a beast
- Because the blood was considered its life and this meat should not be wasted, they were required to bathe and wash their clothes and be considered to be “unclean” until sunset \*

# Leviticus (Cont)

- **Leviticus 18** discusses various “licentious” activities to include the **rules of consanguinity** (of common blood)
  - Any Israelite or sojourner (male) was forbidden to have relations with any woman who was “near of kin”
  - This was defined as sister, mother, aunt, niece
  - This was referenced as a euphemism; to seeing “his father’s nakedness”

# Leviticus (Cont)

- Additionally, this law forbade sexual relations between two men, or with animals or a menstruating woman
- These were all punishable by being cut off from the community
- This is the background for what we call today, “incest”

# Leviticus (Cont)

- The first prohibitions discussed in **Leviticus 17-18** included a prohibition against:
  - Sacrifices offered to idols
  - The eating of blood
  - Consuming animals that were strangled
  - Finally, prohibitions against unchastity, unlawful marriage, and unlawful relations
- Since at that time, the Law was still being read in the synagogues, most people knew about the Holiness Code \*

# Leviticus (Cont)

- **Leviticus 19-22** contains the second half of the “Holiness Code”

# Leviticus (Cont)

- **Leviticus 19:1-2**, as mentioned earlier, contained the climatic central verse, *“you shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy”*
- Once again, the meaning of this was for them to be “set apart” or “distinct from the other nations” because Yahweh was holy and therefore distinct from other gods!
- These laws were to keep both the Israelites and sojourners living with them distinct and separate from the nations around them

# Leviticus (Cont)

- Hopefully, they would keep them from backsliding into paganism
- They would prevent them from intermarriage, eating meals, or any other activities with members of other nations
- By living this very different lifestyle, there would be no way for them to get mixed up with their neighbors
- If the Israelites reverted to polytheism, then the whole thing would come to naught

# Leviticus (Cont)

- The purpose of selecting Abraham and his descendants was so that all of the nations could be blessed and brought into the people of God
- The rest of the “Holiness Code” presents some other important statements, but for now we need to see its impact on the first “council” of the Church discussed in **Acts 15** \*

# Acts 15

- **Acts 15:28-29**

- At this time, the early church (new way) was attempting to resolve the Judaizers controversy
- The debate was over whether a convert from the gentiles had to become a Jew before he could be a member of the church
- The early Church decided that the gentile convert did not have to circumcise their sons or practice the Kosher laws if they adopted the same prohibitions that had been applied to the sojourners in **Leviticus 17**

# Acts 15 (Cont)

- Thus, the prohibitions for the gentiles required them to:
  - Stay away from blood
  - Stay away from strangled animals
  - Not eat meat offered to idols
  - Avoid certain marital situations later identified as incest
- These prohibitions were behind much of what Paul taught to the Romans and **Galatians** in his early epistles
- These letters are sometimes confusing to the *Lutherans* and other *Protestant* groups today because they do not understand the historical context that was applied to the Judaizers as discussed in **Acts 15** \*

# Leviticus (Cont)

- Other miscellaneous laws in **Leviticus 19** included:
  - Gleaning in the cornfield and vineyard (Lv 19:9-10)
  - Justice toward neighbors (Lv 19:11-14)
  - Unlawful Mixtures (Lv 19: 19)
  - Special case for Adultery (Lv 19:20-22)
  - First fruits (Lv 19:23-25)
  - Eating blood again forbidden (Lv 19:26)
  - Magic and superstition (Lv 19:26-31)
  - Rules for Behavior (age and foreigners) (Lv 19:32-34)
  - Righteousness in judgment and honesty in trade (Lv 19:35-36)

# Leviticus (Cont)

- **Leviticus 19:18**

- We have heard this law to “**love your neighbor**” before
- The neighbor of the Israelite was understood to be the sons of their own people
- At the time of Jesus, the Jews did not seem to include the Samaritans as a neighbor
- Yet, Jesus knew that a later passage in Leviticus said: \*

# Leviticus (Cont)

- **Leviticus 19:33-34**

- Here the law called them to love the sojourner (similar to the Samaritan)
- This was why **Jesus** told the story of the **Good Samaritan**
- At that time, the Jews thought of the Samaritans as remnants of the pagan Northern Kingdom who were primarily gentiles
- Obviously, they did not treat the Samaritans in a very neighborly fashion \*

# Leviticus (Cont)

- **Leviticus 20-22**

- This section lists a series of things that were also prohibited to include:
    - Worshipping the pagan god *Molech*
    - Turning to mediums and wizards
    - Committing adultery with your neighbor's wife
    - Avoid defilement by touching a dead person
    - Physical deformities
    - Regulations concerning contact with holy things and sacrifices
- \*

# Leviticus (Cont)

- **Leviticus 23**

- Again, we are presented with the requirements for the Sabbath and the appointed feasts
- **Leviticus 23:26** gives the Day of Atonement
- **Leviticus 23:33** presents the Feast of Booths
- **Leviticus 23:43** highlights why they were dwelling in booths and huts while in the wilderness for 40 years
- We will see later in the Book of Zechariah how they understood that God came to dwell among them in a hut and how He took care of them for 40 years
- This made the Feast of Booths (Feast of Tabernacles) become the greatest feast \*

# Leviticus (Cont)

- **Leviticus 24**

- Here are some additional requirements for the maintenance of the Tabernacle to include:
  - The menorah
  - The showbread
- We also see the punishment for “blaspheming”
  - This was the major accusation against Jesus by the Sanhedrin \*

# Leviticus (Cont)

- **Leviticus 25**

- This section provides the various references to *Sabbath* including the weekly, annually, and Jubilee
- Every 7<sup>th</sup> year, they were required to let the fields lay fallow and live off of the land
- This is where the term *sabbatical* came from
- After the seventh sabbatical year they were to celebrate a Jubilee year (50<sup>th</sup> year) when:
  - All property was to be given back to its original owner
  - All slaves and indentured servants were to be released
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# Leviticus (Cont)

- For unknown reasons, they never implemented these requirements
- Of interest, this was the source Pope Saint John Paul II used for his Jubilee Year (in 2000) when he:
  - Established station churches all over the world to allow people to attain a daily indulgence (as happens when one visits a major basilica in Rome)
  - Invited to the rich nations to release the debts of the poor nations
  - Unfortunately, the rich nation did not comply and each one experienced a major economic crisis \*

# Leviticus (Cont)

- **Leviticus 26**

- Lists the blessings and curses that will arise based on compliance with God's commandments, statutes, and decrees
- This is very similar to the "blessing and curses" found in **Deuteronomy 28**
- The section also contains many references to the convental reference "sevenfold"
- This same word will be a major theme in the **Book of Revelation**
- The problem throughout Salvation History is the worship of gods other than Yahweh \*

# Leviticus (Cont)

- **Leviticus 27**

- This critical section ends with a reminder that the people of *Israel* were still located on *Mt. Sinai*
- They will not be leaving until somewhere in the **Book of Numbers** \*