

**April 20**

**Scriptures:** Read Leviticus 17 & 18

**Key Verse:** “You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 18:5)

## **Overview**

Two strict laws were given by God in chapter 17. Firstly, all sacrifices were to be slaughtered at the door of the tabernacle. The result of this restriction would be: (1) to unify the nation around one place of worship; (2) to remind the people that proper worship of God was done through following His commands; and (3) to prevent any independent worship or sacrificing which could lead to bad influences of pagan practices, such as sacrificing to devils or pagan gods (17:7). Israel had adopted much idolatry in Egypt and this had to stop; therefore, precautions were taken that they may not easily fall into this sin. They were said to have “played the harlot” (17:7), for idolatry was a breach of the covenant, just as adultery is a breach of the marriage covenant. It is in this context that God called Himself “a jealous God” (Ex.20:5).

The main reason for such restriction is to show Israel as different from the pagan nations; as holy unto the Lord God and acceptable to Him. This same holiness is required of believers today, though these Old Covenant ceremonial regulations gladly do not apply to us. Nonetheless, we may learn from their principles. Jesus is our altar; He is the true tabernacle (Heb.8:2), and to Him our sacrifices acceptable to God. God demands that we go to the place He has prescribed and ordained. We find that place in Jesus.

A second strict law in chapter 17 stressed the prohibition of eating blood (17:10-14; cf.3:17; 7:26). The reason was clearly stated: “the life of the flesh is in the blood” (17:11, 14), but the main reason is that it was the means of atonement; it is the basis of the whole sacrificial system. Blood is vital to life, be it a human’s or an animal’s, and since life is sacred, blood had to be treated with respect (17:13’ Gen.9:5-6). Even one of the four rulings of the New Covenant church was to abstain from blood (Acts 15:29). The blood belongs to God, since He is the real life-giver. This fact ties into the first law given in this chapter (17:1-9). The blood of the sacrificed animal was to be brought to the prescribed place under the oversight of a priest (17:6). If this was disobeyed, the person was guilty of shedding blood wrongly and was given the severe penalty of being “cut off” (17:4), a reference to either death or exile. God used the blood to show mankind that it is only through the shedding of blood that remission for sin and communion with Him is made possible (Heb.9:14, 22).

Chapter 18 deals with the sacredness of people and relationships. We may wonder why some of these things (incest, 18:6-18; adultery, 18:21; homosexuality, 18:22; bestiality, 18:23; human sacrifice, 18:21) were even mentioned, but these were commonly practiced in the surrounding heathen nations, including Canaan. As the Lord’s covenant people, the Israelites were to be drastically different from the heathen. Six times in chapter 18 they were warned against following their example (two times in verse 3, also in verses 24, 26, 27). They were to be pure and undefiled and to walk in the ways of the Lord, thus fulfilling their covenant obligation. God declared, “I am the Lord your God” (18:2) and as such He had the authority to make these

commands. They were not given without a promise, for the one who followed them would “live by them”. The Old Testament does not clarify what exactly this “living” entails, but the New Testament may shed some light on the meaning: abundant, full, true, and eternal life, found only through Christ’s redemption and by following His ways.

Although the Old Covenant ceremonial laws no longer apply to us today, since they were fulfilled in Christ, the moral laws such as these still do. The “abominations” listed in this chapter are contrary to the ways of the Lord and to nature. The practice of such things leads to ruin and death (18:29). God hates these sins, but loves the sinner and desires to see him come to repentance that he may have life. But if one continues in sin, he will surely be punished, if not in this lifetime, then in the life hereafter with eternal death and hell-fire. The Canaanites and Amorites had not repented of their evil practices, thus their punishment was that they were to be vomited out of the land. (18:24; 25, 28; cf. Gen. 15:16) and replaced by the Israelites.

### **Prayer**

Lord God, please give us Your grace so that we may live in obedience to You, always doing those things that please You and not those things that displease You.