

**April 21**

**Scriptures:** Read Leviticus 19

**Key Verse:** "...You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord." (Leviticus 19:18)

### **Overview**

This is a very important chapter among those dealing with the Law. This is evident by the Lord's command for Moses to tell these words to "all the congregation of the children of Israel." This is only the second time the Lord said these specific words; the first was with the instructions of the Passover (Es.12:3). Also, in verse two we are given the main reason for the precepts and the motivation for obedience: "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy". These laws are based on the fact of God's holiness, which they were repeatedly told to exemplify.

This chapter emphasizes that the Lord (Yahweh) is the God of Israel. The phrase, "I am the Lord your God", occurs 15 times here. This is stressed to express His authority and to impress on the Israelites that they were His people and were to represent Him. They were also to clearly show other nations they were different and separated unto God. As such they were not to mix with other heathen nations (illustrated in 19:19), nor even be like them in the way they cut their hair and beards (19:27). They were forbidden participation in the common heathen practices of being tattooed, cutting themselves during a period of mourning (19:28), and prostitution which causes the land to be full of wickedness as well as breaking down the family unit.

Within this chapter, seven of the ten commandments are specifically reiterated: We find in verse 3, (1) honor your parents; and (2) keep the Sabbath. In verse 4—(3) do not turn to idols (have no other gods before me); and (4) do not make "molded gods". In verse 11 we find (5) do no steal; (6) do not "deal falsely, nor lie"; and in verse 12—(7) do not swear by God's name falsely, not profane His name. There are also two other commandments implied throughout this chapter: in verse 18—do not take vengeance, implying not to murder; and do not "bear any grudge", implying not to covet. The only one remaining is the commandment, "do not commit adultery", and it is thoroughly dealt with in the previous and following chapters. So we can see that these chapters have much to say to us today, for they concern morality, and these laws of God have never changed. The ten commandments are still valid for today.

What is the key to keeping the Lord commandments and keeping ourselves pure? Jesus answered this with His response to the question concerning the greatest commandment in the Law. He quoted the last phrase of our key verse as the second greatest, the first being, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:23-39; cf. Deut. 6:5). If one loves God with all his being, the natural outcome is obedience to Him (resulting in purity or holiness) and love for his neighbor. Jesus expressed that the long-range outcome of these two great commandments, which sum up all others, is eternal life (Luke 10:25-28). It is evident from His response with the parable of the Good Samaritan that a neighbor is defined as anyone with whom one comes in contact, not just those who live nearby (Luke 10:29-27). Jesus not only taught new things, but reflected the true spirit of the Old Covenant as well.

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount reflects much of what we read in Leviticus 19. God is concerned with the well being of each individual in society, and we should be too, as well as being concerned about sharing the message of salvation. To care for the poor and the traveler, God commanded that the edges of the harvest and the gleanings remain for these needy people to gather (19:9, 10; cf. Ruth 2:1-7). In this chapter, the people are encouraged to practice economic fairness (v.13) and respect all people including the handicapped, senior citizens, and strangers (vv.14, 32, 33-34). There should be equal justice for all (v.15), truthfulness and honesty in business affairs (vv.16, 35-36), and brotherly love for all, including the foreigner (vv.16-18, 34).

### **Prayer**

O Lord, we again ask for Your undeserved favor so that by Your power within us we can keep from doing wrong and keep doing right.