

THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

"Sex Perversions"

Leviticus 18:1-30

Introduction

1. It is headline news these days to see what is happening in the area of morals. What would not have appeared, save in disreputable establishments, is now open and common in most communities. It is not necessary to dwell on the smut of the flesh!

2. The reason behind the events of the contemporary scene is easy to find. When one throws out God and His Word, man becomes a slave to his depraved nature. This opens the door for all sorts of amoral actions (cf. Rom. 1:18 with 21-32).

3. Since God knows the hearts of men, He warned Israel of their need to be different. This has always been God's claim: His own are delineated from the masses! God intends for there to be a line between His own and surrounding nations (Exodus 8:22, 23).

4. The key to all conduct for believers is the Word of God. Mark, then, how this is seriously set forth in the present text. God wants men to know that His own are governed by what He says and that alone! Here are some pertinent instances:

1. The SUPREMACY of God's Word:

What is given here is the Word of God (v. 1). This particular phrase is found at least 700 times in the Pentateuch alone. It is found another 3,100 times in the rest of the O.T. We need a return today to "thus saith the Lord". Too often we hear other sovereign words of men quoted!

The peculiar word given by God here is that of His relation to His people. Indeed, that is the crux of the whole matter (cf. vv. 2, 4, 5, 30). In the orig-

inal text, two basic names for God are used in this phrase: "I am the Lord your God."

One underscores God's covenant relation with Israel and the other His creative relationship. But the personal pronoun "your" bridges the yawning gap between all the false gods of the nations and the true living God of Israel!

Israel's actings were to take their character from the truth of a relationship with God. They were to be governed by the revelation which He had made of Himself. They were not to compare themselves odiously with others nor to flaunt their personal position. Ethics assumed a character and tone consistent and worthy of Him. This is an unspeakably important principle of the Word of God (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

Let God be God is the cry of these statements!

2. The AUTHORITY of God's Word.

a. Negatively.

Nothing could be more clear than this. Israel was not to find a pattern for conduct in Egypt or the heathen in Canaan. Indeed, they were not to walk in their ordinances. The word "ordinances" refers to the appointed activities of the heathen. Here is a direct strike against any sort of syncretism with outsiders! One might well comment that it is a sad commentary on the visible scene that many believers are violating this principle without fear! God have mercy upon them.

b. Positively.

Contrary to heeding the offerings of the nations, Israel is enjoined to hearken unto God. It is His "ordinances" and "judgments" which they must follow. Incidentally, although three

different words are found in the AV, there are only two in the Hebrew. It is clear, however, that the intent of God is the revelation which He has given in His Word. That is the standard by which action is to be judged? Those who say everyone is doing it and so on ad nauseum have fallen into the trap of Egypt and Canaan!

3. The INTENSITY of God's Word.

In view of the fact that the "Lord is your God" and His Word bears authority, Israel is given samples of conduct from Egypt and Canaan with which they are to be kept separate. The list is obviously not exhaustive, but it is suggestive. The similarity with modern happenings is more than idle curiosity. Study these matters with carefulness and sobriety.

a. Total v. 6.

Here is a basic principle for the entire section. God declares that incest of any sort is strictly not His will. The matter of conjugal relations is patent. There is concern here for moral purity and perfect confidences to prevail among those who are relatives. The enormity of Amnon's crime is clearly recognized (2 Sam. 13).

b. Personal vv. 7-18.

A long list of variant situations are given to show that the principle laid down obtains for all possible combinations.

i) Immediate families (vv. 7-11).

These verses cover the father, mother, and children of an immediate family. No conjugal relations are allowed. Instances of transgression are recorded in the Bible (Gen. 35:22; 49:4; 1 Cor. 6:1). It is to be marked that the covering of the body is for pur-

ity and in accord with God's Word. That which exposes it is opposed to the Word of God and is a shame.

2) Extended families (vv. 12-16).

Here are relationships which come by virtue of one's marriage. Aunts, uncles, step-relations are all brought in. An exception is made in the case of a brother's wife (cf. v. 16 with the levirate law in Deut. 25:5-10 and see Gen. 38).

3) Related families (vv. 17, 18).

In the long list of instances, this is the only one which has the additional comment that it is a "horrible wickedness" (v. 17). The matter concerns a woman, her daughter, and granddaughters. The enormity of inter-family conjugal relations is mentioned (v. 18). Although considerable struggle may be experienced in finding the meaning of this text, it surely is a strong argument against polygamy on the one hand, and the marriage of a sister-in-law on the other! The case of Jacob is well to remember (Gen. 29). The sorrows of this man point to the necessity of this instruction.

c. Individual

1) For women vv. 19, 20.

God provides a ground for continence within the marriage bond. A time is provided monthly when a woman is not to be approached by her husband. This peculiar situation is mentioned by Ezekiel as one of the marks of Israel's corruptions (cf. Ezek. 22:10). A strong word is given concerning extra marital relations (v. 20). To do such is to pollute oneself!

2) For men v. 22.

If any verse is needed to support God's hatred for homosexuality, here is one. (cf. Rom. 1:27). What men refer to as a psychological maladjustment, God labels as sin, hence a fruit of the depraved nature. Only blood redemption will make the difference. God abhors it!

3) For parents v. 21.

The practice referred to here concerns the offering of children to a heathen god. The sanctity of children is thereby taught. To be involved with Molech is to accede to profanation of God's Name, which means to bring it to public shame!

4) For beasts v. 23.

The horrendous thought that a man or a woman should actually find himself seeking sexual contacts with animals is in view here. Apparently Heroditus mentions this in secular history and the depths of modern debauchery may well include it also. It points the depths to which depraved human nature will go for self gratification. God's assessment of such action is "confusion" and in the Hebrew this means "foul pollution".

Conclusion

One is quick to give reply that all of these statutes are in the law of Moses. We are not under the law, hence they are totally inapplicable to us. It is true that we are not under the law of Moses (Rom. 6:14). One will readily accede that there is no legal injunction for one under a gracious system. But God gives a precious principle here which it is well to remember even under grace! It is just this: All that is mentioned here is the pattern of living established by

the heathen nations. God cast them out before the Israelites (v. 24). Israel could not involve herself in such sins without severe punishment (v. 29). God has called us to a life in the Spirit (Rom. 6-8). This life in the Spirit will not allow for a servitude to the flesh (Rom. 6:11-23). What God, therefore, said to Israel has current application. He still cries: defile not (v. 24); commit not (v. 26); and keep (vv. 26, 30). What the nations do outside of the Lord Jesus Christ is all an abomination and customs of their own. Since you belong to God, show it by every vestige of your being!

Ah, but someone says, "I have sinned, what do I do now?" God's gracious answer is the same in every age; admit you are a sinner; admit that you deserve punishment from God; admit that Jesus Christ bore your punishment on the Cross; admit that He alone can put righteousness to your account and provide forgiveness. Then receive Christ by simple faith into your life. Now you are accepted in the Beloved One (Eph. 1:6). Amen.

NOTES