



The Quarry Gospel Church

BIBLE STUDY - 12.05.21

BIBLE STUDY - LEVITICUS - 14.THE MANUAL OF HOLINESS - Leviticus 17-26

Part 4 - GOD'S WORD ON THE PENAL CODE - Ch.20

INTRODUCTION - OVERVIEW

Ch.20 seems like a repeat of *Ch.18*.

In *Ch.18* - God lays out the laws on family health and calls Israel to be holy in this;

In *Ch.20* - God sets out "What happens if" the Israelites break these laws.

This raises uncomfortable issues in 21st Century, especially when talking to non-believers.

- Many will say that these laws and accompanying punishments are "extreme".

- The "death penalty" issue is also debated and some Christians use *Leviticus Ch.20* to justify their position if they agree with it.

A) Extreme/Brutal Laws

You must consider "context" - how did the surrounding nations act?

By comparison - *Leviticus Ch.20* is considerably "humanitarian"!

- God treated crimes against people more seriously than those against property - in other nations there were death penalties for property crimes;
- In God's law only the guilty party could be punished - in other nations a substitute was often acceptable to receive punishment;
- Primary focus was on reconciliation and ending disputes;
Physical mutilation for punishment unknown in Israel unlike other nations.

Israel's penal code "different from" and "fairer than" their neighbours'.

B) The Death Penalty - Is it right to use *Leviticus Ch.20* in a debate today?

- Israel was a "theocracy" (Gk: theocratia - the rule of God)
God was their only ruler and authority through a covenant relationship.
- We are a pluralistic society - many religions mixing together - completely different from Israel.
- Israel were not instructed to apply these laws to other surrounding nations - the instruction was that "they" were to be different.
- New Testament perspective - no clear instruction either way.

BUT - The offenses and God's view of them remain the same;
- The command for God's people to be different remains the same.
- The laws of *Ch.18* & *20* should still govern our behaviour today;
- *Ch.20* - what about the punishment?

We live in an age of grace; but N.Testament message still the same - "The wages of sin is death"; God has extended grace to us in this time that we might be forgiven and reconciled to Him through Christ; but if we reject that grace, ultimately death will be our punishment.
1 Corinthians 6:9-11 - if we reject God's grace, He will in the end deliver the punishment.

CHAPTER 20

1. THE OFFENCES - laid out in accordance with severity of punishment they merit:

1. Sacrificing children to Molech - (vv1-5)
2. Necromancy (using mediums/spiritists) - (v6)
3. Cursing parents - (v9)
4. Adultery - (v10)
5. Incest - (vv11-12,17,19-21)
6. Practising homosexuality - (v13)
7. Marrying a woman and her mother - (v14)
8. Bestiality - (vv15-16)
9. Sex during a woman's menstruation - (v18)
10. Marriage to a sister-in-law (while husband still living) - (v21)

2. THE PUNISHMENTS

A) THE DOUBLE SENTENCE (only for Offences 1 and 2)

- Worship of Molech as described in *Lev.18:21*.
- "*shall surely be put to death*" - Hebrew: "dying he shall die".
- Execution to be carried out by the community (offence was against the community).
- Double Punishment: If the Israelites failed to punish the offender, God would "set His face against" the offender and his family.
- Same punishment for Necromancy - stoning not mentioned specifically, but implied.
- The mediums and spiritists also to be stoned to death - v.27.

B) THE DEATH PENALTY (Offences 4-8)

- General method of execution most likely to have been "stoning";
- Only explicit instruction as to method of execution is if someone marries a woman and her mother the offender is to be "burned".
"Burning" - possibly similar to the punishment of Achan - stoned, after which bodies burned and buried under stones. (i.e. not burned alive).
(Adam Clarke puts forward possible interpretation as that of "branding")
- It was a "community issue" - each individual responsible for their sacrifices to God - likewise each individual expected to join in with taking responsibility for administering the punishment give for offences against the community.
- Every party involved in an offence was put to death.

C) BEING CUT OFF (Killed in one way or another)

- Most likely a premature death or death of children before them;
- Idea was that the family line was brought to an end.
- v.17 - An act of God (no trial before the people) but punishment still in public view.

D) CHILDLESSNESS (vv20-21)

- To be stripped of children was to be stripped of God's blessing;
- Childlessness was often interpreted as evidence of sin against God.

3. THE APPLICATION OF CHAPTER 20

The key to looking for application is to look at the "principles" revealed in the chapter:

A) GOD IS IMPORTANT

- Obedience to God is a matter of life and death.
- God has a right to make these claims on their lives.
- The most severe penalties are aimed at IDOLATROUS offences - disloyalty to God.
- God must be first! in the New Testament - Christ must be first in our lives.

B) SIN IS SERIOUS

- The things that offend God must be taken seriously and will always incur a cost.
- We often choose to forget God's attitude to sin.
vv5-6 - "I will set my face against" - an expression of God's wrath!
- God has an unchanging attitude to sin - sin is always serious.
Matthew 15:3-10; Romans 1:18; 1 Cor.5:1-5; Colossians 3:5-6.

C) HUMANS ARE RESPONSIBLE

- Sin is always portrayed by sinful man as "someone else's fault" (e.g. Adam & Eve) - today we still excuse sin for various reasons.
- **BUT** if we turn a blind eye to sin God will deal with it. (*vv4-5*)
- God says we are NOT to tolerate sin or turn our back on the sin of others; this is still God's way for His people: *Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1; Colossians 3:16.*

D) HOLINESS IS THE IMPERATIVE FOR MANKIND

- *vv7-8,22-26* - God's command for His people to be holy.
- These scriptures clarify what holiness is all about:

Consecration	Commitment in heart and mind to follow God and abstain from that which offends Him;
Separation	You accept that to please God you will have to live a life contrary to the culture of the day;
Sanctification	This is the process of being made holy, which God brings about in our lives through the Holy Spirit;
Purification	God calls us to live pure lives in EVERY area of our lives;
Imitation	The Essence of Holiness - we are called to be like Him.

GOD IS HOLY, RIGHTEOUS AND JUST AND WILL ALWAYS DO WHAT IS RIGHT.