

11. Law & order in God's style

April 2, 2009

"In the justice system of God, the people who are created by God are represented and judged by one true God who perfectly judges everyone without an exception. He makes the law and judges according to His law with His infinite wisdom and gives out punishments exactly according to what the people have done and according to their motives. These are His commandments." Yes, I got an idea from the narration at the beginning of each episode of a long lasting TV court drama series "Law & Order".

In chapter 19, the Ten Commandments are applied to various areas of life. In chapter 20, the penalties are stated that must be imposed on those who disobey His commandments. God expected His people to take His law seriously and to apply the penalties obediently and without favoritism.

The regulations given in chapter 19 and 20 aren't arranged in any particular order, but the one thing that ties them together is their relationship to the Ten Commandments from Exodus 20 which is the basis for all Jewish law and should be the basis for all moral law.

To make more sense of these two chapters, we will combine them as we go over each segment.

A. HOLINESS

Leviticus 19:1-2 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

Leviticus 19:23; Leviticus 19:26

Leviticus 20:24-26 But I have said to you, "You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey." I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples. 25 You shall therefore distinguish between clean animals and unclean, between unclean birds and clean, and you shall not make yourselves abominable by beast or by bird, or by any kind of living thing that creeps on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. 26 And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine.

The Law of God can not produce the holiness which it demands. It revealed the righteousness of the Law, but the holiness could not be attained by human effort.

The idea behind the word 'holy' is "separate." God is different than man and from all other beings in the greatness and majesty of His attributes. He has righteousness, justice, purity, love, grace, and mercy none other.

Being holy means being like God, separating ourselves unto Him and His truth – and naturally, separating ourselves from those things that are not like Him and not according to His truth.

B. TAKING CARE OF YOUR PARENTS AND ELDERLY

Leviticus 19:3 'Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 19:32

Leviticus 20:9 'For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood shall be upon him.

Somebody might think it is strange that God should begin with the commandment to honor father and mother. But it is not so strange when we consider that the parent stands in the place of God for the child and that the child learns to obey God by first obeying the parent.

C. NO IDOLATRY

Leviticus 19:4 'Do not turn to idols, nor make for yourselves molded gods: I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 20:1-5 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Again, you shall say to the children of Israel: 'Whoever of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who gives any of his descendants to Molech, he shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. 3 I will set My face against that man, and will cut him off from his people, because he has given some of his descendants to Molech, to defile My sanctuary and profane My holy name. 4 And if the people of the land should in any way hide their eyes from the man, when he gives some of his descendants to Molech, and they do not kill him, 5 then I will set My face against that man and against his family; and I will cut him off from his people, and all who prostitute themselves with him to commit harlotry with Molech.

Many people talk about turning to God, but they don't talk about turning from their sins. Our lives should be turning from 'self-governed-life' to 'completely-relying-on-God-life'.

When people make God into our imagination, we are reducing our God within our thinking capacity. It all comes from losing the thought of who our God is. The person who constantly walks in the conscience of the presence of God in his life does not need some image to remind him about God.

One problem people can have is that they can not grasp the idea of our invisible God. Any image created by men obscures the glory of God. None of His attributes is unlimited. How are we going to make that into a painting or sculpture? We cannot.

Another problem is misleading people with limited images. An image of God that is created by a man can portray only a tiny portion of Him – four to five characteristics of God at the most. Then people would see those characteristics of God only and don't think that God can do anything else.

It is one thing to draw or sculpt the image of Jesus Christ to portray what He has done to us, but it is a completely different thing to make an image of God to worship it. It becomes an idol. God ridicules the idols because they are nothing and can do nothing.

I asked you to underline "*I will set My face against that man*". It is the strongest language possible. In Ezekiel 23:37-39, we find that the children of Israel did just this, and it was one of the reasons that God's judgment came upon them. Remember that idolatry was the highest treason in a nation that was a theocracy.

D. GOD'S INSTRUCTION FOR WORSHIP

Leviticus 19:5-8 'And if you offer a sacrifice of a peace offering to the LORD, you shall offer it of your own free will. 6 It shall be eaten the same day you offer it, and on the next day. And if any remains until the third day, it shall be burned in the fire. 7 And if it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an abomination. It shall not be accepted. 8 Therefore everyone who eats it shall bear his iniquity, because he has profaned the hallowed offering of the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from his people.

Leviticus 19:26-28 'You shall not eat anything with the blood, nor shall you practice divination or soothsaying. 27 You shall not shave around the sides of your head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard. 28 You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the Lord.

Leviticus 19:5-8 emphasizes the importance of following God's instructions for worship. He told them how to present the peace offering, and He expected them to obey.

We can also include 19:27-28, which are prohibitions against imitating the practices of unbelievers. I am not saying that we all should wear white robes or act like a bunch of the Medieval monks. We don't need to act or talk or think like the world. Christians today may consider styles and fashions morally neutral, but this isn't always the case.

While Christians shouldn't look like they are a part of this world, they certainly ought not to imitate the world.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

E. TAKING CARE OF POOR, HANDICAPPED AND STRANGERS

Leviticus 19:9-10 'When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 19:14 You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

Leviticus 19:19 'You shall keep My statutes. You shall not let your livestock breed with another kind. You shall not sow your field with mixed seed. Nor shall a garment of mixed linen and wool come upon you.

Leviticus 19:33-34 'And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. 34 The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

I really like God's welfare systems for the poor and the stranger. He never let anyone sit down and do nothing and receive a welfare check. The poor were taken care of by being given the opportunity to work. This was a marvelous balance between heartless capitalism and godless socialism. Whatever a farmer did not reap his first time around must be left for the poor. The ancient method of harvesting by hand left 10% to 20% of the grain in the field. The same law applied to their vineyards.

Our current welfare system is loaded with a wasteful bureaucracy and it encourages the poor to stay in poverty since it hands out welfare checks instead of encouraging them to go out and work. People get self-respect while they are working rather than sitting and doing nothing.

God's way to helping the poor, the stranger and the handicapped is a great way to love one another.

F. NO CHEATING

Leviticus 19:11-13 'You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. 12 And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD. 13 'You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning.

Leviticus 19:35b-36 in measurement of length, weight, or volume. 36 You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

This restates the eighth and ninth commandments. Stealing, defrauding, lying and perjury are all included here.

G. NO IMPARTIAL JUDGMENT

Leviticus 19:15 'You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.

Leviticus 19:35a 'You shall do no injustice in judgment,

Here is a word for the judge sitting on the bench, and how our judges need this word today! The judge on the bench is to understand that he is to judge as God judges. I like what Socrates said, "Four things belong to a judge, to hear courteously, to answer wisely, to consider soberly, and to decide impartially."

H. NO GOSSIP

Leviticus 19:16-18 You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD. 17 'You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. 18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

A talebearer is essentially a gossip, someone who cannot mind their own business, and who delights in discussing the lives of others and spreading stories. They don't mind doing this as long as it is about someone else. But if it is about them, we have world war III here. The Lord tells us not to be one.

I. NO ADULTERY

Leviticus 19:20-22 'Whoever lies carnally with a woman who is betrothed to a man as a concubine, and who has not at all been redeemed nor given her freedom, for this there shall be scourging; but they shall not be put to death, because she was not free. 21 And he shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, a ram as a trespass offering. 22 The priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering before the LORD for his sin which he has committed. And the sin which he has committed shall be forgiven him.

Leviticus 20:10-21 'The man who commits adultery with another man's wife,

he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death. 11 The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them. 12 If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death. They have committed perversion. Their blood shall be upon them. 13 If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them. 14 If a man marries a woman and her mother, it is wickedness. They shall be burned with fire, both he and they, that there may be no wickedness among you. 15 If a man mates with an animal, he shall surely be put to death, and you shall kill the animal. 16 If a woman approaches any animal and mates with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood is upon them. 17 'If a man takes his sister, his father's daughter or his mother's daughter, and sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is a wicked thing. And they shall be cut off in the sight of their people. He has uncovered his sister's nakedness. He shall bear his guilt. 18 If a man lies with a woman during her sickness and uncovers her nakedness, he has exposed her flow, and she has uncovered the flow of her blood. Both of them shall be cut off from their people. 19 'You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister nor of your father's sister, for that would uncover his near of kin. They shall bear their guilt. 20 If a man lies with his uncle's wife, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness. They shall bear their sin; they shall die childless. 21 If a man takes his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing. He has uncovered his brother's nakedness. They shall be childless.

From what we read here, I don't think that it was any different than now when it comes to the wicked side of human sexuality – adultery, fornication, incest, homosexuality, bestiality, etc.

Adultery in every form and shape was punished with death. Sins of sex have caused the most powerful empires to topple. I would say that sex and liquor were the two causes of the fall of Babylon, Egypt, Greece, Rome and France. What a warning this is for our nation!

J. NO HARLOTRY

Leviticus 19:29 'Do not prostitute your daughter, to cause her to be a harlot, lest the land fall into harlotry, and the land become full of wickedness.

Leviticus 20:22-23 'You shall therefore keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them, that the land where I am bringing you to dwell may not vomit you out. 23 And you shall not walk in the statutes of the nation which I am casting out before you; for they commit all these things, and therefore I abhor them.

To prostitute your daughter in this context probably means to give her as a ritual prostitute at a pagan temple. This was, of course, forbidden, though in the eyes of the pagan culture, it was a religious thing to do.

The Canaanites who presently lived in the Promised Land were deeply involved in these sins, and because of that, God would use Israel to judge them and drive them out. God pleaded with Israel to obey Him, that the same fate would not befall Israel. Unfortunately, eventually it did – and the land did cast out Israel, resulting in the exile both for the northern nation of Israel and the southern nation of Judah.

Hindsight is good, because we can learn from our own mistakes. But the better hindsight is learning from other people's mistakes. We need to learn not to give ourselves to sins by obeying the Word of God.

K. KEEPING GOD'S STATUTES

Leviticus 19:3b keep My Sabbaths: I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 19:30 'You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the LORD.

Leviticus 19:37 'Therefore you shall observe all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them: I am the LORD.'"

Leviticus 20:7 Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. 8 And you shall keep My statutes, and perform them: I am the LORD who sanctifies you.

16 times in this chapter, God declared that He is the LORD – and the one with the right to tell us what to do. This is something that God expected ancient Israel to respect, and expects His modern day followers to also respect.

L. NO MEDIUMS

Leviticus 19:31 'Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 20:6 'And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people.

Leviticus 20:27 'A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them.'"

This is one of the many warnings against spiritism and demonism. The supernatural and satanic character of this practice is recognized in the Scriptures and rejected.

These were ways the pagans sought to contact the dead or other spirits. This was a doorway into the occult, and strictly forbidden by the Lord. The same goes for horoscope, Ouija board, Dungeon and Dragon games, tarot card, etc. Do not open yourselves up for massive trouble.

Don't you think that God's law is so practical?

Over two centuries ago, the American patriot Thomas Jefferson wrote in his Notes on the State of Virginia, "Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just."

M. APPLICATIONS

1) Being holy means being like God, separating ourselves unto Him and His truth – and naturally, separating ourselves from those things that are not like Him and not according to His truth.

2) The person who constantly walks in the conscience of the presence of God in his life does not need some image to remind him about God.

3) While Christians shouldn't look like they are a part of this world, they certainly ought not to imitate the world.