

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

LEVITICUS 17-19

When Mel Gibson's movie, *"The Passion of the Christ"*, opened in Italy many parents felt the film was too violent for their kids. One Italian man named Riccardo Zucconi, also decided his kids wouldn't watch the film, but for a different reason...

In an interview with USA Today, Zucconi commented, "My children won't see the film because I want them to have this idea of the spirituality of Christ, not this idea of debauchery (or sin). The soul of Jesus is important, not his body."

Instead of *"The Passion"* his kids saw a 30 year old film about Jesus, entitled, *"The Gospel According to Matthew"*. Zucconi explained his choice of films for his children, "That film is very deep and you don't see a drop of blood."

Mr. Zucconi did plan to see *"The Passion"* himself, but not without taking a few precautions, "At times I'll shut my eyes to preserve myself from all this blood."

I bring up the interview, because Riccardo Zucconi is like many people today.

He wants *a bloodless Christianity - a Christ without a cross - salvation without a sacrifice - peace with God without pain on earth - mysticism not martyrdom.*

To Zucconi and others like him, the cross is an offense to human sensibilities. It's an embarrassment to modern tastes. *Who wants to think about sin, and moral accountability, and punishment?* Folks are interested in *happiness* - not *holiness*.

But the book of Leviticus, and particularly chapter 17, let's

us know there is no forgiveness for sin without the shedding of blood. *Forgiveness is expensive.*

From the beginning God said, *the wages of sin is death* – this is what drives up the high cost of forgiveness. God told Adam and Eve if they ate the forbidden fruit they would surely die. That's why to make amends for sin a death has to occur...

Sin requires either your own death, or the blood of an innocent proxy.

And fig leaves won't do. When Adam and Eve covered up with leaves – God said, *"You've got it all wrong"* – He slaughtered an animal instead, and clothed the guilty couple in the skins... Sin's debt had to be paid... blood had to be shed. *Sin had to be pelted with a sacrifice.* Spilt blood is the high cost of forgiveness.

Verse 1, **"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron, to his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them, 'This is the thing which the LORD has commanded, saying: "Whatever man of the house of Israel who kills an ox or lamb or goat in the camp, or who kills it outside the camp, and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting to offer an offering to the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD, the guilt of bloodshed shall be imputed to that man.""**

Before a Hebrew killed an animal for food it first needed be sacrificed to God.

Worship always preceded a meal. Whenever they ate together they brought God into their relationships... This is what we do when we pray before our meals.

Remember, while Israel was in the wilderness they ate mostly manna – *wonder bread*. At one point they complained because they didn't have any meat to eat.

But when they enter the Promised Land, God modifies this Law. Deuteronomy 12 will give the people permission to eat meat without bringing it to the tabernacle.

In the land of Canaan, not every steak will have to be a sacrifice. But while in the wilderness, God wanted to condition His people to offer these sacrifices.

Verse 4 speaks of the man who kills an animal without offering it to God as a sacrifice, “He has shed blood and that man shall be cut off from among his people, to the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they offer in the open field, that they may bring them to the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to the priest, and offer them as peace offerings to the LORD.

And the priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and burn the fat for a sweet aroma to the LORD.”

“They shall no more offer their sacrifices to demons, after whom they have played the harlot. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations.” Understand, Israel was not the only nation that practiced animal sacrifice. All the ancient, pagan cultures sacrificed animals to their idols.

Here, the word translated “demons” is the Hebrew word “*saiyr*” or “*he-goat*”.

It was a reference to the god the Greeks called “*Pan*”. The

half-man, half-goat always depicted playing a flute. *And Pan tormented his subjects.* He caused “*panic*” – that’s where we get the word, *Pan*. They sacrificed to avoid *panic*.

Here’s another picture of *Pan*...

And here’s the scary truth behind idolatry. 1 Corinthians teaches that behind the idol, *there is a demon?* Idolatry, sorcery, and paganism – today, many New Age practices – are demonically inspired. Your participation is spiritual harlotry.

Remember this when you consult a horoscope, or call the psychic hotline, or join a séance. God wants you to trust your future to Him, and to Him alone.

Verse 8, “Also you shall say to them: ‘Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to offer it to the LORD, that man shall be cut off from among his people.’” Again we’re warned of idolatry.

Imagine, if everyone was free to make up their own sacrifices - eventually pagan ideas would creep into the worship. This is why God regulated and centralized the sacrifices to the tabernacle. It kept their worship pure.

And there’s a principle here for us. When you divorce worship from the tabernacle it gets diluted and polluted. Errors creep in. Worship gets warped.

Here’s what I mean... When you stop coming to church – *for we are the Tabernacle, the Temple* – and decide you can worship just as well on the golf course, or at the lake house,

or in the campground your faith will lose focus.

It's a principle. God said bring your sacrifice to the Tabernacle... Worship God anywhere and everywhere, but you maintain purity and passion at the Tabernacle.

Verse 10, "And whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people."

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul." Last week we talked about the Day of Atonement, but let's make sure we understand this word, "*atonement*". Define it as you see it – take a cue from its spelling – *at one(ment)*. Atonement reunites us, and makes us one with God.

The Hebrew word was "*kaphar*" which means "*to cover*". We're connected with God because He no longer sees our sin. It's been covered by the blood.

This is why there is no salvation without the cross. Your good works, your religious rituals, your charitable offerings are not what atones for sin. We're covered by the blood of Jesus. And Jesus shed that blood on the cross.

In August 2003 thieves broke into the Church of the Holy Cross Church in New York City, and stole a statue of Jesus. But the thieves took an odd approach...

The statue of Jesus was a crucifix, but they took the statue – not the cross to which it was attached. They took Jesus, but left behind the cross. That's what folks today want to do.

Leave out the cross. But it's the blood of Jesus that cleanses us.

Notice too, this phrase, **“For the life of the flesh is in the blood”**. Leviticus 17 was written 3500 years ago, but it assumes modern medical information.

Today's doctor couldn't describe the importance of blood any better than verse 11. It's the blood that brings oxygen, and protein, and nutrients to the organs and tissues of the body. Last week I went in for my annual physical, and had my blood work done. The tests revealed everything that was going in my body. Health and nourishment flow through the blood. Quite literally, **“the life... is in the blood.”**

Verse 12, **“Therefore I said to the children of Israel, 'No one among you shall eat blood, nor shall any stranger who dwells among you eat blood.' Whatever man of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who hunts and catches any animal or bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust; for it is the life of all flesh. Its blood sustains its life.”**

When an animal was butchered the Hebrews drained the blood from the meat. It was against the Law to eat or drink the blood. The blood was only for sacrifice.

If you like a rare steak, be thankful that in Christ you're set free from the Law.

“Therefore I said to the children of Israel, 'You shall not eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off.'

Hey, this is why the Roman Catholic doctrine of communion is unbiblical. Catholics believe at the Lord's Table the bread and wine literally become the body and blood of Christ. If this is true then we're drinking blood and breaking the Law.

When Jesus told us, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him." He was speaking figuratively, not literally. He was using eating and drinking as metaphors for faith. Jesus never meant for us to violate Leviticus 17.

Verse 15, "And every person who eats what died naturally or what was torn by beasts, whether he is a native of your own country or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. Then he shall be clean. But if he does not wash them or bathe his body, then he shall bear his guilt." If you pick up some road kill for dinner you know the blood was not properly drained from the meat. You can eat it, but you're ceremonially unclean for the day.

One more comment about the blood. Jehovah Witnesses take these verses as a prohibition against blood transfusions. As a result some of their members have died. Theirs is a tragic misrepresentation of this verse. This Law does not forbid a medical procedure. It's was a dietary restriction. It's ceremonial not a moral law.

Chapter 18, on the other hand, deals with moral laws that still apply today.

Verse 1, "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'I am the LORD your

God. According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances. You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.”

If Israel looked backwards to Egypt they saw a bad example. If they looked forward to Canaan they saw a worse example. Where they left, and where they were headed – were both pagan cultures, with sexually permissive practices.

The perversions of the Egyptians and Canaanites were shocking and damaging. God wanted to erect sexual boundaries around His people.

I hope you realize God knows more about sex than we do. He created it and knows how it can best be enjoyed. God knows how to minimize its dangers and maximize its pleasures. God’s boundaries are a reflection of *love* not *repression*.

Hey, try to navigate today’s sexual landscape on your own – come up with your own designer morality – and you’re headed for trouble. We need God’s guidance.

God didn’t want the Israelites to experience the emotional and physical pain that came with the perversions of the Gentiles, so He gave them Leviticus 18. God wanted them to be different - holy. And despite what we’re told by this world it’s *holiness* that produces *happiness*. Holiness assures you of lasting happiness.

But the Hebrews had to be committed to take their sexual cues only from God. If they looked to the world – behind or in front – they would be misled.

And the same is true for you and me...

Let Oprah, or Abercrombie and Fitch, or Desperate Housewives, or Dr. Phil, or Friends reruns, or Brittany Spears, or Howard Stern, or Playboy shape the morality in your house - and you and your family will end up horribly confused. As someone put it, "I cannot and will not cut my conscience to suit this year's fashions."

God's Word is the only authority on sex we can trust.

Verse 6 begins God's prohibitions, "None of you shall approach anyone who is near of kin to him, to uncover his nakedness: I am the LORD." Uncover a person's nakedness was a euphemism for sexual relationships. Here God forbids incest.

Did you hear about the redneck who went to the family reunion to pick up girls. This is what God forbids in chapter 18:6. He defines incestuous relationships.

"The nakedness of your father or the nakedness of your mother you shall not uncover. She is your mother; you shall not uncover her nakedness." These verses deal with both adult choices and child abuse. Any parent / child sexual encounter is evil and sick. *Yet there are people today advocating incest and pedophilia.*

In the 1950s the taboos in America were premarital sex and adultery. But the free love and sex of the 60s removed the

marital boundary, and brought a social acceptance to what previously was immoral. And the argument followed... if any two heterosexual adults are free to have sex why not homosexual adults?

Hey, once the door was opened it was tough to shut.

And now people are suggesting that sex between children and adults can be healthy. A NY Times article several years ago called incest the "*Last Taboo*".

Groups like NAMBLA, the *North American Man / Boy Love Association*, and SIECUS, the *Sex Information & Education Council of the US* – push this agenda.

Acceptance of pedophilia is growing in academic and psychological circles...

Dr. John Money of John Hopkins University says, "[pedophilia should be viewed as a sexual orientation, not a disease of a disorder.](#)" SIECUS chairman Dr. Deryck Calderwood writes, "[When no one gives the child a bad conscience... intercourse between adults and children causes no mental harm.](#)" Dr. Wayne Dynes of Hunter College writes, "[I'm not sure a seven year old can give informed consent. That doesn't mean one should necessarily exclude sexual relations from them.](#)"

Obviously this is appalling. It's nauseating. Incest and pedophilia are harmful to kids. They create emotional and sexual confusion that scar a child for life.

Children are not designed for the intense emotions – let alone the spiritual connotations - that come with sex. No child is mature enough to give their consent. Society today is being manipulated by sexual predators. Our kids are targets.

Verse 8, “The nakedness of your father's wife you shall not uncover; it is your father's nakedness.” In 1 Corinthians 5 Paul writes to the church in Corinth and rebukes them for allowing a man in their church to live with his step-mom.

“The nakedness of your sister, the daughter of your father, or the daughter of your mother, whether born at home or elsewhere, their nakedness you shall not uncover.” Here’s another kind of incest - don’t be attracted to you sister.

Verse 10, “The nakedness of your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter, their nakedness you shall not uncover; for theirs is your own nakedness.” This is incest between a grandparent and a grandchild. *And let me warn those of you who were victims of abuse growing up.* If your father did it to you, he’ll do it to your kids.

“The nakedness of your father's wife's daughter, begotten by your father - she is your sister - you shall not uncover her nakedness.” This is a half-sister.

Remember this was the relationship between Abraham and Sarah.

It seems for centuries marriage between siblings was a practice common in the ancient world. Apparently, in the beginning it was even accepted by God. Where else could Cain have gotten his wife? At the time, Adam and Eve were the only family on earth. *Cain obviously married his sister.* But as sin took its toll on the human gene pool interbreeding began to cause problems. And by the time Moses laid down the Law God had decided to outlaw the practice.

Verse 12, “You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's sister; she is near of kin to your father.” You can't marry your aunt – or even your aunt.

“You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister, for she is near of kin to your mother. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother. You shall not approach his wife; she is your aunt.

You shall not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law - she is your son's wife - you shall not uncover her nakedness. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness.” When it came to a sister-in-law there was one exception. Deuteronomy 25 explains if a man died with no kids to carry on his inheritance, it was his brother's duty to sire a child.

This was called a *Levirate marriage*. We'll talk more about it in Deuteronomy.

Verse 17, “You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, nor shall you take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness. They are near of kin to her. It is wickedness.” “Nor shall you take a woman as a rival to her sister, to uncover her nakedness while the other is alive.”

Just ask Jacob if marrying both Leah and Rachel was a good idea? It was torture. Hey, ole Jake lived out his days between two warring women.

“Also you shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness as long as she is in her customary impurity. More-

over you shall not lie carnally with your neighbor's wife, to defile yourself with her.” This was a case of adultery.

Verse 21 is a reference to the worship of a Canaanite idol, “And you shall not let any of your descendants pass through the fire to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.” Molech had the face of an ox and body of a man. He was a fertility god, and kinds of lewd and perverse practices were done in his honor. To appease the evil idol the Canaanites offered a child sacrifice.

The idol itself was hollowed out brass. The Canaanites would light a fire within the image - heat the medal until it was glowing hot – then lay a baby in Molech’s outstretched arms. The priests beat their drums to drown out the baby’s screams.

Human, infant sacrifice sounds so barbaric - far removed from modern culture - until we consider today’s abortion industry. Are we not sacrificing our unborn to the god of sexual pleasure? Millions have died in the wake of the sexual revolution.

Then we allow a liberal media bias to drown out the silent screams of the murdered babies. We want the pleasure of sex without its responsibilities.

Leviticus 18:22 says it as clearly as possible. “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.” The word “*abomination*” means “*disgusting or revolting*”. Understand the Bible is not ambiguous here. God is not confused over this issue. Homosexuality is not just a sin, but an abomination in His sight.

Call it *an alternative lifestyle*, or a *sexual orientation* if you

like, but God calls the gay lifestyle an abomination. Understand, just because you feel an impulse toward a person of the same sex doesn't make it right or moral. When I'm on Highway 78 in rush hour traffic I feel all kinds of impulses - but if I acted on them I'd hurt somebody. I'd cause a major accident and end up in jail.

And though I'm convinced there's zero evidence linking homosexuality with a genetic condition - even if there were it would mean nothing... Genetic disorders cause downs syndrome, but that doesn't make it desirable. We do all we can to help a downs syndrome patient live a normal life. *Why not the homosexual?*

Dr. Dennis Praegar comments on a reason why Western culture flourished.

“When Judaism demanded that all sexual activity be channeled into marriage, it changed the world. The subsequent dominance of the West can be attributed to the sexual revolution initiated by Judaism and later carried forward by Christianity. This revolution consisted of forcing the sexual genie into the marital bottle.”

Praegar goes on to describe the “utterly wild” nature of sex as practiced by the pagan cultures in Bible times. It was unbridled – anything goes – grossly perverse.

This is why it's no excuse for a homosexual to claim that he's only following his natural desires. We are by nature evil. God wants us to channel all our desires in godly and biblical directions. It all goes back to who knows best... me or God.

Let me get to what I really want to say on the subject of ho-

mosexuality...

God loves sinners - and that includes homosexuals... *but He hates the sin.*

And if a homosexual wants to know God - he or she has to do exactly what I have to do with my sin... they have to repent. They have to renounce their sinful lifestyle - present to God a willingness to change – then trust God for His help.

If they do they'll be born again. God gives them a brand new start. And God is even able to help them redirect their sexuality in a way that will please Him.

Verse 23, “Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It is perversion.”

Right on the heels of homosexuality God mentions another perversion - bestiality – *or sex with animals*. And here's the warning... when sex is stripped of its spirituality... when sex is no longer considered sacred - a gift from God... when sex is seen as simply an instinctive, animalistic act – *then again, anything goes.*

Every unimaginable perversion results... even bestiality. And this was not just true in ancient Canaan. Log on to the internet today and you'll find this kind of vulgarity. It's the result of a seared conscience. Indulge in pornography – start down this path – and the consequences are unimaginable.

Resort to this kind of titillation – and there's no telling what will come next...

Verse 24, “Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out

before you.” God will use Israel to judge the Canaanites for their perversity. He doesn’t want Israel to fall into the same sin.

“For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled), lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you. For whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit them shall be cut off from among their people.

Therefore you shall keep My ordinance, so that you do not commit any of these abominable customs which were committed before you, and that you do not defile yourselves by them: I am the LORD your God.” God loved His people and wanted to protect them. Israel was to be a different people – with a different set of rules.

Chapter 19, “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to all the congregaion of the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.” God is the only whole person in the universe. The rest of us are chipped – stained - missing pieces... Only God is a complete person.

But when we give ourselves wholly to God, He makes us whole like Him. This is why He says, “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.”

“Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths:” Not just the weekly Sabbath, but the every Seventh year Sabbath. There was also the year of Jubilee – the every fiftieth year Sabbath.

“I am the LORD your God. Do not turn to idols, nor make for yourselves molded gods: I am the LORD your God.” Both the first and second commandments...

“And if you offer a sacrifice of a peace offering to the LORD, you shall offer it of your own free will. 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.

And if it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an abomination. It shall not be accepted. 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.” Remember, God wants us to feed on fresh sacrifices. Don't rely on yesterday's prayer time, or last week's praise. *Fellowship with Him daily...*

Verse 9-10 instituted a very wise welfare system.

“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. 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.”

When the Israelites enter their land, and harvest their fields they aren't to go over every inch with a fine-tooth comb. They

should leave a little for the poor and needy. But note, the poor are required to go out into the field, and pick up the leftovers themselves. The welfare wasn't given to them – they had to work.

Verse 11, “You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another.

And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.” In other words, never use *God's name* to get *your way*. Be a bold witness for Jesus, but not just when it might gain you an advantage.

“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.” When a man works pay him as soon as possible. I use to work a job where I got paid once a month. It was a challenge to manage my money wisely. I wish I'd quoted this verse to my boss.

“You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God: I am the LORD.” This is not only *cruelty*, but *cowardice*.

If you're going to be a jerk at least curse a guy who can hear you. Try and trip a guy who can see you. We all need to show respect the plight of the disabled.

Verse 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.” Be even-handed. Show no partiality to either the poor or the rich.

“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.” Don’t gossip or slander.

“Great minds talk about ideas. Average minds talk about events. Small minds talk about people.” They buy a People magazine or subscribe to the National Inquirer. Don’t be a little person and talk about other people. Don’t gossip.

“You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.” Hey, if you truly love your neighbor, and see him in some error, you won’t neglect to lovingly rebuke and correct him.

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.” When the scholar approached Jesus, he asked Him to name the greatest commandment...

Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy 6, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it...” And here Jesus quotes our text, verse 18, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” By coupling the two verses Jesus was teaching us if you really love God you’ll love your neighbor.

Of the 613 laws Jesus says verse 18 is the second most important.

Verse 19 guards against wrong mixtures, “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.”

When God created the natural order He engineered all living things to reproduce after their kind - according to their species. The Law ordered the Hebrews to respect and maintain these genetic groupings and boundaries.

Obviously, a disaster is not likely to occur from mixing thread, but this could be an illustration. *God may have bigger fish to fry!* Interbreeding animals can result in unhealthy tendencies and traits. Go a step further, and the manipulating of genetic codes could result in dangerous and uncontrollable mutations. It's all mixing seed.

Some of what's going on today in the field of genetic engineering is scary. Where does it stop? Verse 19 may be a lot more relevant that we think.

By the way, *know what you get when you breed Lassie with a pit bull?*

You get a dog who mauls you, then runs to get help.

Hey, there are other mixtures that are dangerous... mixing truth with error, mixing a believer with an unbeliever, mixing grace and law, mixing flesh and Spirit, mixing Yellow Jackets and Bulldogs... *mixtures can be dangerous.*

“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.”

Just because a woman fell into slavery it doesn't mean she can be sexually abused.

And just because a man sins sexually it doesn't mean

there's no forgiveness.

“He shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, a ram as a trespass offering. 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.”

Verses 23-24 may sound strange to us, but they target specific Canaanite practices that related to idolatry. “When you come into the land, and have planted all kinds of trees for food, then you shall count their fruit as uncircumcised. Three years it shall be as uncircumcised to you. It shall not be eaten.”

The Canaanites ate the initial harvest as a sacrifice to their idols, so when the Israelites entered the land they waited until the fifth year before they ate the fruit. This was God's way of keeping His people from any appearance of evil. “But in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, a praise to the LORD. And in the fifth year you may eat its fruit, that it may yield to you its increase: I am the LORD your God.”

Verse 26, “You shall not eat anything with the blood, nor shall you practice divination or soothsaying.” Divination is any attempt to link up with the spiritual realm through means apart from direct communication with God.

Here're a few examples of divination... *Ouiji boards, horoscopes, séances, palm-readers, new age channelers, crystal balls, imaging, psychic healing, house hauntings, astrology, ghosts* – these are all occult practices and forbidden by God.

Participate in divination, and you invite Satan to use his deceptions on you.

And understand the popularity of these practices is growing. In 1990, 29% of Americans believed in haunted houses. In 2001 the number was up to 42%. In 1990, 18% of people believed you could communicate with the dead. In 2001, the number had grown to 28%. In 1990, 23% believed in fortune telling. In 2001, the number was at 35%. *We need to warn our neighbors that God forbids divination.*

Verse 27, “**You shall not shave around the sides of your head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard.**” These are references to Canaanite practices that were associated with idolatry. The Hebrews were not to look like idolaters.

Orthodox Jews today still take these instructions very literally... **(pic)**

“**You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the LORD.**” Personally, I’m not crazy about body piercing or tattoos. I’ve told my boys if they want pierced I’ll be the one who pierces them.

But as much as I’d like to make this verse a blanket prohibition I can’t.

God is not talking about tattooing as an art - or body piercing as a fashion statement – in the context of Canaanite culture these were acts of idolatry.

It would’ve been wrong for a Hebrew to walk into the Canaanite hair salon, and trim the edges of his beard. Or go to the ink shop for a new tattoo. In Canaan you get a *new do* or a *new to* and people thought you were an idol worshipper.

If you do it today, they'll just think you've got weird hair and tattoos. So if your name isn't Adams and *you want a tattoo... its up to you!* Just remember they don't wash off...

Verse 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.” Hey, one way to prostitute a daughter is to dress her like one - or pay for her to dress like one.

“You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the LORD.”

Our sanctuary is not a building – it's us corporately. And we need to reverence our times or worship - come together with anticipation, seriousness, faithfulness...

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

Any attempt at communicating with the dead is forbidden. If a voice claims to be a dead guy – it's either a hoax or demon.

It reminds me of the time I was witnessing to a fortune teller. She just kept smiling at me, and it made me mad. I slapped her with the back of my hand. Of course, I was arrested, and brought before the judge. And when he asked me to explain my actions, I told him, “Judge, I always try to strike a happy medium.”

Verse 32, “You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the LORD.” Tragically, we're the first society in history that praises youth, and disrespects the elderly. We've got it topsy-turvy.

We should honor our elders. We need their wisdom and advice.

Verse 33, “And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. 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.” Be kind to strangers and first time visitors to CCSM.

“You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or volume.” Observe fair business practices. “You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah (*about a bushel*), and an honest hin (*six quarts*):”

In ancient times business was done with scales. Payments and portions were weighed out... Moses says *don't fudge*. Don't cheat. Be a person of integrity.

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them: I am the LORD.” Chapter 20 dishes out penalties for the sins we've looked at tonight.