

BE YE HOLY
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We started looking a few weeks ago at the topic of the importance of the Old Testament scriptures.

That's all the early New Testament Church had for some decades. And they preached Jesus and the Kingdom of God very effectively ... with thousands of conversions ... and all they had was the Old Testament.

We need to value the Old Testament ... not treat it as of minor importance.

Most "church people" are actually very ignorant of most of the Bible ... can't name the first five books of the Old Testament ... think that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife. They are almost entirely ignorant of actual content. Partly why attitudes ... even amongst "Christians" ... are changing so very much. They are ignorant of the teachings of the Bible ... and end up yielding to opinions of media and experts all around them.

A "British Social Attitudes" survey this week reports identifying how moral attitudes amongst church goers are "easing". 73% of Anglicans say sex before marriage is acceptable ... apparently that's the same percentage as the general population. The Bible regards sex before marriage as fornication ... and that is not acceptable.

55% say same-sex relationships are acceptable (up from 31% five years ago ... that is nearly double in 5 years).

In early June ... the Scottish Episcopal Church approved same-sex marriage in church. How can a church that started in the late 1500s say that this is okay?

We shouldn't be ignorant of scripture and if the Old Testament takes a bit more effort to understand it ... so be it.

In the last couple of weeks ... we've focused on some of the areas that modern-day skeptics ... and even many modern-day churches ... criticise ... as being out-of-date and even absurd. By these means they tend to denigrate the Old Testament.

As a result ... many conclude that the Old Testament is an irrelevance ... and can safely be ignored. Many references (it seems) to Holy Wars to exterminate cities of Canaanites ... slavery ... death penalty for adultery ... homosexuality ... disobedient children ... not mixing seeds ... not wearing garments of mixed fibres. How can such a set of laws be useful to a New Testament believer who lives under grace?

The standard approach ... on both sides of the argument ... those who criticise the Old Testament and those who support it ... is ... unfortunately ... to pick and choose.

Some accept the prohibition on homosexuality in Leviticus Chapters 18 and 20 ... but then ... the self-same people ... say that the laws of Unclean Foods in Leviticus Chapter 11 don't apply ... but they don't support prohibition on mixed seeds/fibres of Leviticus Chapter 19.

Then there are those that say prohibition of homosexuality in Leviticus Chapters 18 and 20 do not apply any longer ... but the same people normally do want to uphold the prohibition of incest and bestiality in the very same chapters.

We shouldn't pick and choose. In general ... God's Word is fairly plain and clear ... at least to those who have God's spirit.

Not all laws are the same. They don't have the same weight. Some are eternal ... some are temporary. You don't have to guess. We don't pick and choose the ones we want and don't want.

Last week we looked at two sets of very important laws in the Old Testament ... that are no longer applicable and scriptures tell us so.

Circumcision

This was a key practice ... given to Abraham and his descendants ... as a seal of the Covenant. All Israelites subsequently circumcised.

Yet today ... is no longer applicable. How can we say that? Let's have a quick summary.

Acts 15:1-2 (NKJV)

1 And **certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."**

2 Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. ***(No problem to Paul ... he saw it was not necessary)***

Acts 15:5-12 (NKJV)

5 But **some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."**

6 Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.

7 And when there had been much dispute, **Peter rose up and said to them:** "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

8 **So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us,**
9 and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

10 **Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?**

11 But **we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.**"

12 **Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.**

Writing to the Corinthians ... many of whom would be Gentiles ... and not circumcised:

1 Corinthians 7:18-20 (NKJV)

18 **Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised.**

19 ***Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.* (That should be fairly obvious)**

20 Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.

Circumcision had a part to play in Old Testament times. A physical reminder ... every day ... of their covenant with God. If that was the case ... it wasn't of much effect. As we know ... Israel remained REBELLIOUS AND STIFF-NECKED TO THE BITTER END.

Essentially ... it didn't work. They were too carnal.

God always wanted a circumcised heart. In the New Testament ... He has achieved that! The next verse tells us this is what God wanted all along.

Colossians 2:8-12 (NKJV)

8 **Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.**

9 For **in Him** dwells all the fullness of the Godhead
bodily;

10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all
principality and power.

11 **In Him** you were also *circumcised with the*
circumcision made without hands, by putting off the
body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of
Christ,

12 **buried with Him in baptism**, in which you also were
raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who
raised Him from the dead.

WE ARE **COMPLETE IN CHRIST**.

As believers WE DO HAVE A CIRCUMCISED HEART.

The Sacrificial System

We also looked at the sacrificial system ... which was part of the
whole Temple (Tabernacle) Worship System. This was major in
Old Testament times. A temple ... thousands of Levites ... many
Priests ... Daily Sacrifices ... Offerings ... Rules and Regulations
... associated with being around the temple.

However. Now. It is all over. That entire system is now
finished.

Two things show us that. The physical evidence ... the Temple
was destroyed in 70 AD. And ... secondly ... the scriptures
explain that to us:

Hebrews 9:6-10 (NKJV)

6 Now when these things had been thus prepared, **the priests**
always went into the first part of the tabernacle,
performing the services.

7 **But into the second part (The Holy of Holies) the high**
priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which
he offered for himself and for the people's sins
committed in ignorance;

8 **the Holy Spirit indicating this**, that **the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.**

9 **It was symbolic for the present time** in which **both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—**

10 concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed **until the time of reformation.** (*When Jesus came and gave His own blood*)

Jesus' shed blood and death was the perfect sacrifice ... once ... for all time. Jesus is now our High Priest ... serving in the Heavenly Holy of Holies ... where you and I are invited ... have easy access.

It's easy to see that even in Old Testament times ... God was much more interested in a humble and obedient heart ... rather than the smell of a burning lamb. Carnal people can't see that ... but ... with our spirit-filled mind ... you and I can.

Jeremiah 7:21-23 (NKJV)

21 **Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat meat.** (*Pile it high ... I'm not interested in your sacrifices*)

22 **For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them** in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, **concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices.**

23 But **this is what I commanded them**, saying, **'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.'**

There were no commands initially about sacrifices. That was not God's intention.

Micah 6:6-8 (NKJV)

6 With what shall I come before the Lord,
And bow myself before the High God? (***How shall I approach God?***)

Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings,
With calves a year old?

7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
Ten thousand rivers of oil?

Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (***Shall I bring Him any of those things? Is that what He wants?***)

8 ***He has shown you, O man, what is good;***
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?

He is still looking for that today. God is not interested in thousands of sacrifices.

It should be easy to understand God's mind ... what He really values ... and then see the plain teaching in the New Testament.

The physical temple worship system IS OVER! It was of very limited value in those days and of no value today.

John 4:15-24 (NKJV)

15 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband."

Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,'

18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly."

19 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.

20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.

22 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.

23 But **the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.**

24 **God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.**"

We worship the Father in SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH. Not tied to a physical temple ... physical altars ... human priests or animal sacrifices.

That whole Old Testament worship system is finished.

Remember the West Wing Episode and President Josiah Bartlet and his question about playing football? If the players wore gloves ... would it be permissible to handle and throw a football? (Implied that the football is made of pig skin when it is actually made of cowhide or vulcanised rubber). Let's look at that particular story:

Leviticus 11:8 (NKJV)

8 **Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch. They are unclean to you.**

Leviticus 11:24-25 (NKJV)

24 **"By these you shall become unclean; whoever touches the carcass of any of them shall be unclean until evening;**

25 whoever carries part of the carcass of any of them shall wash his clothes **and be unclean until evening**;

If you touch the carcass ... they ... back then ... became "unclean" (Heb: Tamē)

What was the penalty? Death? Stoning? No! They were ceremonially unclean till sunset. In some circumstances ... also

have a bath and wash your clothes ... so you're clean again. Sometimes that might be necessary. Maybe if your pet dog died ... you would have to carry him off. You would be "unclean" until evening.

Symbolically ... to be "clean" pictured being Holy. To be "unclean" ... to be unholy ... we'll see much of Leviticus is about being Holy. If in the presence of the Holy God ... The Temple ... you needed to be clean ... symbolically ... picturing being Holy.

But today ... no Temple Worship System ... no Priests. This instruction no longer has any direct application to us.

Here's another set of circumstances that used to apply.

Leviticus 12:1-4 (NKJV)

1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

2 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: '**If a woman has conceived, and borne a male child**, then **she shall be unclean seven days**; as in the days of her customary impurity **she shall be unclean**.

3 And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

4 **She shall then continue in the blood of her purification thirty-three days**. She shall not touch any hallowed thing, **nor come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are fulfilled**.

Ceremonial cleansing. So. Unclean for 7 days. Then purified for 33 days ... and not come into the sanctuary in that time.

For a girl baby ... 2 weeks plus 66 days.

Leviticus 12:6-7 (NKJV)

6 "**When the days of her purification are fulfilled**, whether for a son or a daughter, **she shall bring to the priest a lamb of the first year as a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove as a sin offering**, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

7 Then he shall offer it before the Lord, and make atonement for her. And she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. **This is the law for her who has borne a male or a female.**

So these rules were applicable ... when there was a temple. And ... 2 offerings were required.

No application for today ... wait 6 weeks to come to church? It makes sense to "recover" from childbirth!! But ... ritual impurity only applied to the physical temple or tabernacle and that worship system.

Another example:

Leviticus 15:19-23 (NKJV)

19 **"If a woman has a discharge, and the discharge from her body is blood, she shall be set apart seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening.**

20 **Everything that she lies on during her impurity shall be unclean;** also **everything that she sits on shall be unclean.**

21 Whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, **and be unclean until evening.**

22 And whoever touches anything that she sat on shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and **be unclean until evening.**

23 If anything is on her bed or on anything on which she sits, when he touches it, he shall **be unclean until evening.**

Leviticus 15:19 (NLT)

19 **"Whenever a woman has her menstrual period, she will be ceremonially unclean for seven days.**

Is that applicable today? Women not to come to church at "that time of the month"? Not relevant now. These were regulations associated with Temple Worship. When God was in the camp ... His Temple was Holy ... He had a Holy Priesthood ... and His people were to appear before Him ceremonially pure and Holy.

Remember:

Hebrews 9:10 (NKJV)

10 **concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.**

The regulations of the 1st tabernacle couldn't make worshippers perfect "concerned only with food and drinks and various washings* ... imposed until the time of reformation". (*NIV: "various ceremonial washings")

The Jews count 613 commandments that they can find in the Torah.

Many/most ... do not apply today. For example ... circumcision. Then ... all of the laws to do with physical worship associated with the temple and Old Testament Priesthood ... sacrifices ... washings ... etc. The clean/unclean statements. Then ... many commandments relate to the physical Priesthood ... or Levites.

Here's another one addressed to the priests (not the Levites):

Leviticus 21:16-23 (NKJV)

16 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

17 "Speak to Aaron, saying: '**No man of your descendants in succeeding generations, who has any defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God.**

18 **For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred face or any limb too long,**

19 a man who has a broken foot or broken hand,

20 or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch.

21 **No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the Lord.** He has a defect; he shall not come near

to offer the bread of his God.

22 He may eat the bread of his God, both the most holy and the holy;

23 only **he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar, because he has a defect, lest he profane My sanctuaries; for I the Lord sanctify them.**’ ”

These are commandments to the priests ... serving in the physical temple where there were Holy Altars ... Holy Services. They had to be “Holy” ... not unclean ... defiled or with defect.

God is Holy ... those who approach Him must be Holy.

Those physical laws are not applicable today. Ministers today are not “priests” ... not physical descendants of Aaron. We had a minister who had a hand missing. He was not disqualified from serving God today!

If we continue to look through Leviticus ... we will see a whole variety of laws. We’d probably prefer them to be neatly categorised ... temple ... civil statutes ... criminal ... eternal ... moral ... etc. Unfortunately ... all are woven together in and out. But ... for a spirit-filled believer ... it is fairly easy to differentiate ... to see what applies to us today.

We’re not just picking and choosing to suit our prejudices.

And if we look at the laws closely ... even those that no longer apply ... there are still underlying lessons ... that are benefit to you and me. They show us something of God’s mind. One of the things that God is trying to get across is ... He is Holy.

Circumcision pointed to a fleshly carnal mind and attitude ... being cut away. In the New Testament ... our hearts are circumcised. Great lesson!

The Old Testament sacrifices pointed to Jesus ... His shed blood and death for the forgiveness of sins. There are some books out there ... written by scholarly people ... that examine the smallest details of physical sacrifices ... to see shadows and types of the Lord Jesus.

We've just seen several laws about seeking to avoid being unclean ... or in some way ... defiled. The Israelites were living in the presence of a Holy God. They needed to maintain conduct which was clean ... Holy.

That underlying lesson ... being Holy ... still applies today. He wants us to be Holy in our lives.

We are admonished to be clean of heart and spirit. To avoid spiritual uncleanness.

Ephesians 5:1-7 (NKJV)

1 **Therefore be imitators of God** as dear children.

2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

3 But **fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;**

4 **neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting,** but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this you know, that **no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.**

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

7 **Therefore do not be partakers with them.**

Unclean people will not be in God's Kingdom. In other words ... we need to be clean. God expects sexual purity before marriage. Language can be filthy ... dirty thoughts ... dirty words ... spending time in this world's darkness. You and I should not be conformed to this world. Separate from this world and its ways.

2 Corinthians 6:14 - 7:1 (NKJV)

14 **Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?**

15 And ***what accord has Christ with Belial?*** ***Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?***

16 And ***what agreement has the temple of God with idols?*** ***For you are the temple of the living God.*** As God has said:

"I will dwell in them
And walk among them.
I will be their God,
And they shall be My people."

17 Therefore
***"Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,***
And I will receive you."

18 "I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the Lord Almighty."

Chapter 7

1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, ***let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.***

1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 (NKJV)

3 For ***this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;***
4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honour,

5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;
6 that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.

7 For ***God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.***

Our objective should be to keep our minds clean and pure ... in our lives. Not associating with impure people. Not engaging in dirty talk ... not being too close to this world. This world's ways are not God's ways. Its values are not God's values.

We are supposed to pursue a Holy lifestyle ... separated from the worst of this society.

Mark 7:17-23 (NKJV)

17 When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable.

18 So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? **Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him,**

19 because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?"

20 And **He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man.**

21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.

23 All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

Jesus explains what really causes uncleanness and defilement ... it's the heart ... not touching physical things.

From the beginning ... God has always wanted our hearts to be humble ... and converted.