

If he wants to redeem it ...

The final chapter of Leviticus deals with the redemption of people (1–8), animals (9–13), houses (14–15) and land (16–25) after they had been dedicated to the Lord when vows had been made to him. Such vows were made as a token of gratitude for deliverance or blessing, or at a time of distress. The Lord warns against making hasty or rash vows (Deuteronomy 23:21–23; Ecclesiastes 5:2–5). Jephthah made a very foolish vow to God before fighting the Ammonites which led to great sorrow (Judges 11:30–40).

A man was permitted to sanctify (dedicate) himself or a family member to the Lord, but he may later *want to redeem* what he has dedicated (13–15,19). The cost of the redemption of humans from the vow was probably according to their earning potential (3–7). The redemption price of animals, houses and land was the original value plus one-fifth.

The obligation to give tithes (one tenth) of the produce of the land and of herds and flocks is also commanded (30–33). Animals were passed *under the rod* (the shepherds staff; 32) to be counted (cp. Jeremiah 33:13) and every tenth animal was given to the Lord. Firstlings, devoted things and tithes already belonged to the Lord and could not be dedicated to him when making vows (26–34; Exodus 22:29–30).

We may have made vows to God but have not kept those promises. We must do something about it! Remember also, that every Christian belongs to God, having been redeemed at tremendous cost. We have redemption through the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14). **It should be our delight to dedicate ourselves to serve the Lord, denying ourselves to follow him!**

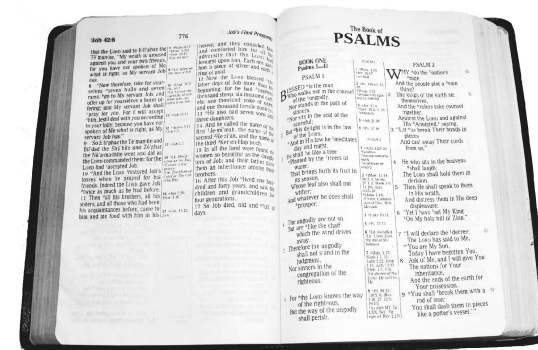
*Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.*

*Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all, for thee.*

(Frances R. Havergal)

PILGRIM BIBLE NOTES

God's holy Word simply explained and applied



June 2020

Bible readings from Leviticus chapters 11 to 27

If they confess their iniquity

Verses 4 to 13 contain ‘*I wills*’ which promised God’s blessing to Israel for obedience to his commandments. Now, in verses 14 to 36 we find a series of ‘*I wills*’ in which the Lord solemnly warns his people of the consequences of disobedience and rebellion against his laws. He would set his face against them, bringing terror, sickness, sorrow, famine and defeat by their enemies (14–17). If they still continued to disobey him, he would send a sevenfold increase in trouble (18, 21, 24, 28). To persist in walking contrary to God’s holy law would cause him to walk contrary to them in fury (27–28). The disasters described in these verses came upon rebellious Israel (see Judges 6:1–6; 2 Kings 6:24–30). God had decreed that the fields should have every seventh year as a sabbath (25:3–4). The land which was deprived of its sabbaths would be left desolate to have many enforced sabbaths during the captivity of the Jews (34–35; fulfilled – 2 Chronicles 36:15–21).

God never forgets his covenant however. He promised, ‘*If they confess their iniquity ... with their unfaithfulness ... and they accept their guilt — then I will remember my covenant*’ (40–45). The grace, patience and mercy of God shine in his dealings with rebellious Israel and surely, we know the same in our experience! Are you being disobedient to God in some area of your life? Why give Satan cause for satisfaction? He hates you! If you love the Lord, let it be seen by joyful obedience and be sure to repent of any rebellion that is lurking in your heart. **If you have grown cold in heart, confess your sin and guilt to God. He will freely heal your backsliding and restore to you the joy of your salvation (cp. Hosea 14:4).**

*Thou knowest the way to bring me back,
My fallen Spirit to restore;
O for thy truth and mercy’s sake
Forgive and bid me sin no more;
The ruins of my soul repair
And make my heart a house of prayer.*

(Charles Wesley)

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I will walk among you and be your God

This chapter is similar to Deuteronomy chapter 28 with promises of blessing for obedience to God and dire warnings concerning the consequences of disobedience. The Lord repeats his warning against idolatry and again urges the Israelites to keep his Sabbaths and to reverence his sanctuary (1–2; cp. 19:4,30).

God made some wonderful promises to the Israelites on condition that they kept his commandments (3). Notice the ‘*I wills*’ in verses 4–13 where God promises Israel rain and good harvests (4–5,10), peace, security and victory over their enemies (6–8), his favour and his presence (9, 11–12). A holy life which delights to obey God, is a life full of blessing! Righteousness exalts a nation and brings God’s smile but sin brings his judgment (see Proverbs 14:34).

Why are we now suffering the greatest economic problems known in hundreds of years? Why is violent crime increasing at an alarming rate? Why is there so much trouble and unrest among us? Great Britain and many countries in Europe once embraced laws based on the Bible, but now men and women have rebelled against God’s holy law, scorned it and rejected the gospel. In all the turmoil around us, we can know the blessing of God in our lives if only we will obey him. *For I will look on you favourably ... I will walk among you and be your God* (9,12). **To know God’s smile upon us and his presence with us is blessing indeed!**

*But we never can prove
The delights of his love
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favour he shows
And the joy he bestows
Are for those who will trust and obey.*

*Trust and obey, for there’s no other way
To be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.*

(James H. Samnis)

You shall be holy; for I am holy

These verses deal with the problem of ritual uncleanness brought about through contact with the carcasses of unclean animals (24–40), or a clean animal which dies (39). There are also more dietary laws (41–43) forbidding the eating of creatures without legs or those with many feet (eg. snakes, millipedes).

God told the people, ‘*I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy*’ (44). He is sovereign (‘*the LORD your God*’) and must be obeyed. He is holy and we too must be holy; the need for holiness is repeated throughout Leviticus (eg. 19:2; 20:7–8,26; 21:6–8,15,23, etc.). God had been merciful and good to the Israelites, bringing them out of slavery in Egypt to be a holy people, distinct from the people of the other nations. They were separated to God and this needed to be seen in their behaviour (45). They owed him so much for his great grace and it was quite reasonable for him to demand that they be holy.

God the Father chose us in Christ before he created the world, *that we should be holy and without blame before him in love* (Ephesians 1:4). He has called us to be holy in all our conduct, and the words of verse 44 are repeated in 1 Peter 1:15–16. God has saved us from our sin and has heaped blessings upon us. If we love him, we will delight to obey him (John 14:15). We are to be different from those who are not Christians and not allow our behaviour to be influenced by the godless ways of the world around us (Romans 12:1–2). Biblical holiness brings great joy to our lives. **If we have no desire to be holy, we are either backslidden in heart or not truly saved (Hebrews 12:14).**

*Jesus, Master, whose I am,
Purchased thine alone to be
By thy blood, O spotless Lamb,
Shed so willingly for me,
Let my heart be all thine own,
Let me live to thee alone.*

(Frances R. Havergal)

Unclean

In childbirth a woman suffered loss of blood which brought ritual uncleanness (see also chapter 15). God told Moses that a woman giving birth to a male child would *be unclean seven days*. This also made the child unclean, hence circumcision was on the eighth day (1–3). There was then a further thirty-three days for purification during which she was not allowed to enter the sanctuary or to touch any hallowed thing (eg, to partake of peace offerings). When she gave birth to a girl, both periods were doubled (4–5).

When her purification was completed, she had to bring a lamb to the priest for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or turtle-dove as a sin offering which was to make atonement for her. If she was too poor to bring a lamb, she was to bring another young pigeon or turtle dove for the burnt offering (6–8).

The holy Son of God took human flesh and came into the world without any taint of sin. His mother, however, observed the ritual described in this chapter of Leviticus. The Lord Jesus was born under the law and was circumcised the eighth day from his birth (Luke 2:21–24; cp. Galatians 4:4). He perfectly fulfilled the demands of the law, and laid down his sinless life to save sinners who are condemned by God's law (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18). He died *to redeem those who were under the law that we might receive the adoption as sons* (Galatians 4:4–5). **He is worthy of our grateful praise and of our joyful obedience to his wise and holy will.**

*Extended on a cursèd tree,
Besmeared with dust, and sweat, and blood,
See there, the King of glory see!
Sinks and expires the Son of God.*

*My Saviour, how shall I proclaim?
How pay the mighty debt I owe?
Let all I have and all I am,
Ceaseless to all thy glory show.* (Paul Gerhardt; tr. J. Wesley)

They are my servants

Matthew Henry writes concerning these verses, 'We have here the laws concerning servitude, designed to preserve the honour of the Jewish nation as a free people, and rescued, by a divine power, out of the house of bondage, into the glorious liberty of God's sons, his first-born.'

Israelites were permitted to have foreigners as permanent slaves but not one of their own people (44–46). The man who sold himself to a fellow-Israelite was not to be compelled to serve as a slave, but as a bond-servant. He was to be treated with dignity and in the fear of God (39–43). An Israelite slave could be redeemed by a kinsman or redeem himself if able to do so (48–52). All Hebrew slaves were to be released after serving their master for six years, or in the Year of Jubilee which was for them a year of liberty (10,54; cp. Deuteronomy 15:12–18). A Hebrew slave who loved his master was able to commit himself to permanent servitude (Exodus 21:1–6).

God said of the Israelites, '*They are my servants*' (42,55). He had freed his people from cruel bondage in Egypt. He reminded the people that he had brought them out of Egypt and that they must never treat each other as the Egyptians had treated them (42–43). We must always treat others with respect and remember that fellow-Christians are also servants and children of God. We must also remember that we are answerable to our heavenly Master who hears our words and sees our actions (Ephesians 6:1–9).

We should often remind ourselves that we have been redeemed through the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18–19). We were once enslaved by our own sin (John 8:34) and under the domain of Satan, '*the prince of the power of the air*' (Ephesians 2:2), but the Lord Jesus has given us glorious liberty (John 8:36). We are free not to sin (Romans 6:14). **We have been bought at a price and we are God's servants. Let us therefore glorify him by leading holy lives.**

Redemption

The Israelites were not allowed to sell their land permanently because it belonged to the Lord (23). When a man was obliged to sell (lease) his land because of poverty to pay off his creditors, it could be redeemed in three ways (known as ‘*redemption of the land*’ (24; cp. Ruth 4:1–12):

- A relative could buy back the land on his behalf (25).
- He could buy back the land himself if he were able to raise the money (26–27).
- If he had no means of redeeming the land, it was restored to him in the Year of Jubilee (28).

When a house within a walled city was sold, the vendor was allowed to redeem it within a full year of the sale. After that time, the house became the permanent property of the purchaser and it was not returned to its former owner in the Year of Jubilee. Houses in villages, perhaps because of their close connection with the land, could be sold and redeemed under the same rules pertaining to fields. Levites were allowed to sell and to redeem their homes but were not permitted to sell their fields (29–34).

The word ‘*redemption*’ (24) means deliverance from captivity, slavery, or some other form of evil by payment of a price (ransom). **We have been released from a far greater debt than that of material poverty.** The Lord Jesus Christ gave his life to redeem us from our bondage to sin. We have redemption and forgiveness of sins through his blood (Isaiah 59:15–21; Romans 11:26; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14).

The Israelites were to help any fellow-Hebrew who fell on hard times by giving him an interest-free loan. They were not allowed to profit from his poverty. The Lord commanded, ‘*Take no usury or interest from him; but fear your God, that your brother may live with you*’ (36). They were to remember that he had showed compassion to them, bringing them out of Egypt to give them the land of Canaan, to be their God (35–38). He also expects us to have compassion on the poor (Galatians 6:10; 1 John 3:16–18).

Outside the camp

Leprosy was a dreaded disease which isolated the sufferer from his family and from the social and religious life of the community (Numbers 12:10–15). Where the diagnosis was not certain, the priest was to isolate the sufferer for seven days. He then checked the condition of his skin and if the sore had not spread, the person was isolated for a further seven days and examined again. If the sore had darkened and not spread, the priest pronounced the sufferer clean, but if the scab had spread, the person was declared unclean (1–8). The person with leprosy had to dwell *outside the camp* and warn anyone approaching him that he was unclean (45–46).

There were many skin disorders and some may have been mistaken for leprosy – boils (18–23), burns (24–28), itchy scabs (‘*scalls*’) on the head or chin (29–37), bright spots on the body (38–39), and bald areas (40–42). These verses give instructions for the priests who had to determine whether a person with sores, spots or a rash had leprosy or some other skin problem. *

God struck Miriam (Numbers 12:10–15), Gehazi (2 Kings 5:27) and Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:19–21) with leprosy as a punishment for their sin. It is significant that in the year that King Uzziah died, the prophet Isaiah had his great vision of God in which he felt the pollution of his own sin to be like that of leprosy (Isaiah 6:1,5).

When the Lord Jesus healed leprosy sufferers, they were described as being ‘cleansed’ (eg. Matthew 8:2–3; Luke 17:12–14). All mankind is polluted by the plague of sin which is to be more dreaded than leprosy. Sin isolates us from God and it leads to death and hell which is far more to be feared than being ‘*outside the camp*’ (Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23; Revelation 21:8). **Our confidence is that if we trust in Christ and follow him, his blood cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).**

*. John Currid points out that the Hebrew word translated ‘leprosy’ is generic, describing features common to a variety of skin diseases (COMMENTARY, page 168).

The law of the leprous plague (disease) in a garment

The law of the leprous plague in a garment (59) of wool, linen or leather is described in verses 47 to 59. Most Bible commentators are puzzled by these references to leprous plagues (diseases) in clothing and Matthew Henry writes, ‘It is a thing which to us now is altogether unaccountable.’ Others believe it to be nothing more than an infestation of mildew or fungus.

Those who wore unclean clothing became ritually unclean. Any such garment was examined by the priest and isolated for seven days. It was then destroyed and burned if the plague had spread (50–52). If it had not spread, the garment was washed and isolated for a further seven days (53–54). The following course of action then followed:

- If the plague had faded, that area of the garment was torn out (56).
- If the infection had broken out again on the garment, it was to be destroyed and burned (57).
- If the infection had disappeared, the garment was washed and then pronounced clean (58).

Our clothing represents whatever is closest to us, and we are to hate *even the garments defiled by the flesh* (Jude 23). If our friends or activities lead us into sin, they are like impure garments and we must remove them from us. Christ has given us a robe of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10). **God requires us to be holy (11:44); it is unthinkable that we should allow unclean garments to cling to us!**

*Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.*

*This spotless robe the same appears,
When ruined nature sinks in years!
No age can change its glorious hue;
The robe of Christ is ever new.*

(Nicholas von Zinzendorf; translated by John Wesley)

The Year of Jubilee

The Lord gave the instructions in chapters 25 and 26 to Moses on Mount Sinai (1; 26:46). **The sabbath principle was to be extended to all areas of life in Israel including farming practices.** Every seventh year was to be *a sabbath of solemn rest* for the land when no seed was to be sown. Whatever grew of *its own accord* refers to seeds which fell into the ground during that year, not sown by the farmer. He was not to harvest that crop solely for his own use, but leave it also for his servants, strangers staying with him, and for his animals (1–7).

There was also to be a sabbath following the cycle of seven sabbaths years. This fiftieth year was known as the ‘*Year of Jubilee*’ (13) and it was heralded by the blowing of a trumpet on the Day of Atonement (9). A ram’s horn was used as a trumpet in ancient Israel. The word ‘*jubilee*’ comes from the Latin word, ‘*jubilæus*’ which is derived from the Hebrew word for a ram’s horn, ‘*yobel*.’ The Year of Jubilee was:

- A Year of Release (10). All Hebrew slaves were to be released after serving their master for six years, or in the Year of Jubilee which was for them a year of liberty (10, 54).
- A Year of Return (10,13). Any land sold in previous years was returned to its original owner. The price of the land was determined by the number of years between the time of purchase and the Jubilee – the shorter the lease, the lower the price. The Year of Jubilee was given to promote justice for those obliged to sell their property owing to poverty and to prevent oppression (8–17).

Some may have objected that these sabbath laws would bring hardship but God promised to provide for them for the forty-ninth and fiftieth years. **He is sovereign over the harvests** and he promised, ‘*Then I will command my blessing on you in the sixth year, and it will bring forth produce enough for three years*’ (21–22). John Currid notes ‘that there are no texts that indicate that Israel ever celebrated the jubilee during her entire history!’ (COMMENTARY ON LEVITICUS, page 328).

Eye for eye, tooth for tooth

A man of mixed parentage was involved in a brawl with an Israelite. His mother was from the tribe of Dan and his father was an Egyptian. The man belonged to the '*mixed multitude*' who left Egypt with the Israelites (10–11; Exodus 12:38). While fighting, he blasphemed the Name (the words '*of the LORD*' are in italics, indicating that they are not in the original manuscript) and he cursed God. The name of God is holy ('set apart'; Matthew 6:9) and it must not be used carelessly (cp. Deuteronomy 28:58). The man was held in custody while Moses sought the will of God concerning the punishment to be imposed.

The Lord told Moses that the man should be taken outside the camp and those who had heard his blasphemy were to lay their hands on his head (14). Alfred Edersheim comments that they did this 'as it were to put away the blasphemy from themselves and lay it on the head of the guilty (compare Deuteronomy 21:6).' The death sentence imposed upon the man emphasises the gravity of this sin (14–16, 23) though it is no longer applied for blasphemy today.

There has been an alarming increase in blasphemy in Britain and the western world. God's holy name is blasphemed on television and in films and many children use bad language, having learned it in the home. We must be careful in our speech (Colossians 4:6; James 3:2–12) and when people say blasphemous things to us, point out that it is offensive to us because we love the One whom they blaspheme.

Murderers should still be executed (17, 21); this law pre-dates the law given to Moses for Israel (cp. Genesis 9:5–6). It is also just that any harm done to another person's animals should be compensated (18). *Eye for eye, tooth for tooth* (20) is a law that has been greatly misunderstood. It was given to ensure that punishment was not excessive, but that it fitted the crime. This law was given to restrain us from seeking personal revenge. **If we have been wronged, we must not seek to get even but commit our cause to God, the great Judge of all the earth (Matthew 5:38–39; Romans 12:19–21).**

Clean

Leprosy was not assumed to be incurable and God in his mercy did heal some who suffered with the disease (Numbers 12:13–15; 2 Kings 5:14). Some who had been pronounced to be leprosy may have found that the symptoms had disappeared long after the seven or fourteen days period when they first went to the priest (cp. 13:4–5). Chapter 13 described the law covering uncleanness in leprosy and other skin diseases. This chapter describes the elaborate ritual required for the cleansing of a diseased person before he was admitted back into the camp to be with his family and people.

The priest had to go out of the camp to examine the person whose disease had cleared. He then took *two living and clean birds*, one of which was *killed in an earthen vessel over running water* (5). The priest then took cedar wood, scarlet wool, hyssop and the living bird, and dipped them into the blood of the dead bird. The blood was then sprinkled seven times on the one who had recovered from his disease. The living bird was released into the open field (6–7; cp. the sending away of the scapegoat, 16:21–22). The former unclean man then had to wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and bathe himself in water. He was then *clean* and was admitted into the camp (8). After a further seven days he repeated this ritual (9).

We can imagine the great joy of the person when he was pronounced 'clean'. The release of the living bird may have signified his new found freedom. **Christian, do you rejoice when you consider all that the Lord Jesus has done for you. When Jesus sets us free, we are free indeed (John 8:36)!**

*Has Jesus made you free?
Then you are free indeed;
Ye sons of liberty,
Ye chosen royal seed,
Walk worthy of your Lord and view
Your glorious head in all you do.*

(William Gadsby)

So the priest shall make atonement for him and he shall be clean

On the eighth day, the recovered leprosy sufferer had to take to the door of the tabernacle, two male lambs and a female lamb plus fine flower mixed with oil for a grain offering and a log of oil (10).

A male lamb was sacrificed as a trespass offering and the priest took some of its blood and put it on the extremities of the person's body – the tip of his right ear, the thumb of his right hand and the big toe of his right foot (14); a similar ritual was involved in the consecration of a priest (8:23–24). The priest then took some of the oil and sprinkled it before the Lord. He also applied oil to the same parts of the body to which the blood had been applied (15–16). Some point out that the blood was a token of forgiveness and the oil a token of healing. The female lamb was sacrificed as a sin offering (19; cp 4:32). The remaining male lamb was sacrificed as a burnt offering. *So the priest shall make atonement for him and he shall be clean* (18, 20).

A poor man was only required to bring a male lamb as a trespass offering. He was allowed to offer turtledoves or pigeons for the other offerings *such as he is able to afford* (22, 31–32). The Lord Jesus told a leper whom he had healed, *'Show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them'* (Matthew 8:4; cp. Luke 17:11–19).

The Lord Jesus has made an end to all the sacrifices and ritual described in these verses through his death and resurrection. Since the destruction of the temple, the Jews have not sacrificed animals or observed the ritual described in Leviticus 14. **The one sacrifice of the Lord Jesus is sufficient to cover all kinds of sin and conditions. There is no distinction between rich and poor; we all have the same sacrifice.** Jesus has made atonement for us and he is our great High Priest who makes us clean when we repent of our sins and trust in him to save us. We are *redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot* (1 Peter 1:18–19).

Continually

The golden lampstand and the table of showbread were located in the Holy Place of the tabernacle with the altar of incense (Exodus 25:23–40; 30:1–10). The lampstand was made of pure gold and had seven lamps, one on its main stem and the others on each of the six branches coming from that stem which provided light for the Holy Place (Exodus 25:37).



We no longer have a tabernacle or temple but the seven churches of Asia are depicted as seven golden lampstands (Revelation 1:20). We are to shine as lights in this dark world (Matthew 5:16; Ephesians 5:8).

Pure olive oil was given by the people for the lamps which were tended by Aaron and his sons (2–4; Exodus 27:21). **Oil in Scripture is a symbol of the Holy Spirit whose presence is vital in our worship and in our work for God.** Just as the lamp needed to be supplied with oil continually in order to give its light, we must depend on the Holy Spirit at all times.

The showbread consisted of twelve loaves laid in two rows of six which were eaten by the priests after being changed each Sabbath (5–9). Each loaf represented a tribe of Israel. The Hebrew words translated *'showbread'* mean *'bread of the Presence'* (as in most modern translations, eg. Exodus 25:30 – ESV). The showbread was a sign of the covenant between God and the twelve tribes of Israel.

Notice the word *'continually'* (2–4, 8). The lamps were to be kept burning *continually* and the showbread was to be set in order *continually*. This was a reminder that the daily and weekly activities in the tabernacle had to be maintained as well as the observance of the annual feasts recorded in chapter 23. Let us *be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord* (! Corinthians 15:58).

You shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days

The seventh day was very important in the life of Israel (3) and the seventh month was the most important month of the Jewish calendar. Three autumn feasts were held in the seventh month:

- The Feast of Trumpets on the first day was announced with trumpet blasts; it was a day of sabbath rest and offerings were made (24–25; Numbers 29:1–6).
- The Day of Atonement on the tenth day (26–32) was the most solemn of all the feasts, when the Jews were to ‘afflict’ their souls (27, 29, 32). This probably included fasting and prayer; see notes on chapter 16 for details.
- The Feast of Tabernacles (or ‘Booths’; 33–44) which began five days after the Day of Atonement continued for seven days; it was a time of great rejoicing in recognition of God’s goodness to their ancestors in bringing them out of Egypt (41–43): ‘*You shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days*’ (40). The people were to rejoice. Do you ever think about God’s goodness to you and rejoice? The feast ran from the fifteenth to the twenty-second day of the seventh month. By this time the harvest had been gathered and the Israelites were required to live in booths made from tree boughs and branches of palm trees during the festival (40–42). The booths emphasised the temporary nature of the dwellings of the Israelites during their wilderness wandering. Various offerings were made throughout the feast (see Numbers 29:12–40).

It was on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles that the Lord Jesus cried out, ‘*If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink*’ (John 7:2,37). Jesus was speaking of the Holy Spirit. By that time religion for many had become very formal, lacking in reality and joy. **Is your religion like that? Are you thirsting to know God better? Come to Jesus, repenting of any sin in your life and ask him to revive you.**

*Breathe on me, Breath of God. Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what thou dost love.
And do what thou wouldst do.*

(Edwin Hatch)

It seems to me that there is some plague in the house

When God gave Moses the laws of Leviticus, the Israelites were living in tents. The legislation concerning leprous plagues in houses was for the future: ‘*When you have come into the land of Canaan*’ (34). We cannot be certain as to the nature of the leprous plague in a building. The margin of the NKJV reference Bible suggests ‘decomposition by mildew, mould, dry rot, etc.’ John Currid uses the word ‘fungus’ instead of ‘*leprous plague*’ (COMMENTARY ON LEVITICUS, page 197). There is a suggestion of divine judgment in verse 34: ‘*and I put a leprous plague in a house*’ (cp. Zechariah 5:4).

When the owner of a property detected some fungal growth on the walls of his house, he was to go to the priest and say, ‘*It seems to me that there is some plague in the house*’ (35). The priest was to examine the house and put it into quarantine for seven days. If the infestation had spread during that time, the stones affected and all the mortar and plaster in the house were removed and taken to *an unclean place outside the city* and were replaced with fresh materials (36–42). If the plague returned to the building, it was to be demolished and all the debris was to be removed to the *unclean place outside the city* (43–47). The ritual for cleansing the house is described in verses 48–53.

We are not under these Levitical laws, but a vital spiritual lesson can be drawn from them. Could it be said that ‘*there is some plague in the house*’ in which you live, things that should be removed from the building because they keep you away from any meaningful communion with God? Does it contain unseemly books or magazines which pollute your mind? Do you allow into your house unedifying television programmes, or do you download pornography and violence from the internet? Oh, be sure that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Lord over your home? **The physical structure of a house must be protected but it is far more important to attend to the spiritual structure of a home because this has eternal consequences (cp. Genesis 35:2).**

Lest they die in their uncleanness

This chapter deals with uncleanness on account of discharges from the sexual organs through disease, menstruation or sexual intercourse. Conditions covered are: persistent discharges in a male (2–15); short-term discharges in a male (16–17); male and female together (18), menstruation (19–24) and persistent female discharges (25–30).

When a persistent discharge had healed, the ritual for cleansing lasted for seven days. On the eighth day two turtledoves or young pigeons were sacrificed, one as a sin offering, the other as a burnt offering (13–15, 28–30). Attention was paid to personal hygiene, but the ritual uncleanness is also an illustration of our uncleanness through sin.

The woman who was healed by the Lord Jesus after touching the hem of his garment had suffered twelve years of weakness through loss of blood. She also suffered the indignity of being ritually unclean for all those years (Luke 8:43–48). In order to make us righteous, the sinless Son of God was made to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Lord concluded these instructions by saying to Moses and Aaron, ‘*Thus you shall separate the children of Israel from all their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness when they defile my tabernacle which is among them*’ (1, 31). This was a severe warning against polluting the place where God was specially present on account of ritual uncleanness. **There is no hope for cleansing from sin after we die, and to die in our sins is to be shut out of heaven (Revelation 21:27; 22:11).** If you are not a Christian, I urge you to come to Christ now, praying for forgiveness and cleansing from your sin. He will then hear your prayer and will freely accept you.

*I need thee, precious Jesus! For I am full of sin;
My soul is dark and guilty, my heart is dead within:
I need the cleansing fountain, where I can always flee,
The blood of Christ most precious, the sinner’s perfect plea.*

(Frederick Whitfield)

When you reap the harvest of your land

The Israelites were still travelling to the promised land and the Lord here gives instructions for the time when they *come into the land* and settle, farm and reap harvests.

Harvest time had a special significance:

- It was a special time of thanksgiving to God. When the very first of the sheaves were gathered in, the people were to bring a sheaf to the priest who waved it before God as a token of thanksgiving (hence the title, ‘Feast of Firstfruits’). A lamb was sacrificed as a burnt offering and a grain offering was also burned. The Feast of Firstfruits of the barley harvest in Israel began in March/April at the time of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, on the day after the Sabbath (9–14). The firstfruits of the wheat harvest were offered during the Feast of Weeks (20; cp. Exodus 34:22; Numbers 28:26). This one-day festival was later known as Pentecost because it was celebrated on the fiftieth day from the Sabbath which began the Passover (15–16).

- It provided an opportunity to show compassion to those in need. *When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleanings from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the LORD your God* (22; cp. 19:9–10). Jehovah (*the LORD*) requires those who belong to him to be people of compassion. The corners of the fields were not to be completely reaped, and the barley or wheat that was dropped in harvesting was to be left for the poor to gather. Ruth was able to take advantage of this when she and Naomi were destitute (Ruth chapter 2).

Christians are not commanded to observe harvest festivals, but they do provide a good witness to a godless world to remind them that we worship God, who is Lord over our harvests and on whom we depend. We can also show our gratitude to the Lord with our gifts which can be passed on to those in need. **God is good and merciful to us and we too must show compassion to those in need.**

Holy convocations

This chapter gives us a list of the feasts that the Lord commanded the people of Israel to observe. The nature of the weekly Sabbath is described (3) and the Sabbaths in the feasts were to be kept in the same manner. The spring feasts are then listed (4–22) followed by the autumn feasts (23–44). They are described as ‘*holy convocations*’ (‘pilgrim festivals’; 2), which were special gatherings to which all the Israelites were summoned. They were the Feast of Unleavened Bread (6–8), the Feast of Firstfruits (9–11) and the Feast of Tabernacles (or ‘Booths’ – 33–36).

The only holy day given for us in the New Testament is the first day of the week, the Lord’s Day (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10). Many professing Christians disregard the Lord’s Day as a Sabbath. The Sabbath principle that we abstain from our usual work enables us to worship God with minds free from the demands of everyday business. Those who have essential work in hospitals and power stations should have one rest day in every seven. **The more that we prepare ourselves and give ourselves to the worship of God on his day, the more precious each Lord’s Day will become to us.**

The Passover began on the fourteenth day of the first month and continued for a further seven days as the Feast of Unleavened Bread. During this week, no leavened bread was to be eaten (Exodus 12:14–20). It began and ended with a Sabbath on which the Israelites were to *do no customary* (‘ordinary’) *work* (4–8).

We do not keep Jewish feasts, but we must observe the ordinance (or sacrament) of the Lord’s Supper. Christ is described as ‘*our Passover*’ (1 Corinthians 5:7) and at the communion service we break bread and drink from the cup to remember his death for us (1 Corinthians 11:23–26). If we love the Lord, we cannot be indifferent to his command that we should meet ‘*often*’ around his table.

Atonement

The Lord gave Moses instructions for the Day of Atonement after the death of Nadab and Abihu (1; cp. 10:1–2). The word ‘*atonement*’ is found throughout this chapter; it means ‘a covering’. The Old Testament sacrifices covered sin so that it no longer provoked God’s wrath. There can be no atonement or forgiveness of sin without blood sacrifice (17:11; cp. Hebrews 9:22). The Day of Atonement is the most solemn of all Jewish holy days. It was the only day of the year when:

- Aaron, the high priest, entered the Holy of Holies which contained the ark of the covenant, the symbol of God’s presence.
- Atonement was made for all the sins of all the congregation of Israel (16–17, 21–22, 30–34), who were to humble themselves (‘*afflict*’, 29) was an expression of sorrow for sin and repentance from it, accompanied by fasting (cp. Psalm 35:13; Isaiah 58:3).

The Day of Atonement (‘Yom Kippur’) was to be observed on the seventh day of the tenth month and was to be kept as *a sabbath of solemn rest* when work was forbidden (29–31). The high priest first sacrificed a bullock as a sin offering for himself (3, 6,11). He then entered the Holy of Holies (‘*the Holy Place*’), burned incense, and sprinkled some of the blood on the mercy seat (the lid of the ark of the covenant) and in front of the mercy seat (12–14). **The Lord Jesus is far greater than the Levitical high priest** (see Hebrews chapters 9–10 and comparisons below). The Old Testament sacrifices brought outer cleansing (‘*purifying of the flesh*’) but they could not bring inward cleansing to a guilty conscience (Hebrews 9:9,13–14; 10:4,11).

| Levitical High Priest | Jesus, our great High Priest |
|--|---|
| Offered sacrifices for his own sin (3,6,11). | He is sinless and did not need to offer sacrifices for himself (Heb. 7:26–27). |
| Sacrifice repeated every year (29–31) and other sacrifices were offered daily. | Sacrificed himself once, never to be repeated (Hebrews 7:27; 9:25,28; 10:10–12). |
| Appeared in <i>the Holy Place</i> to represent the people (15–16). | Appears in ‘ <i>the Most Holy Place</i> ’ of heaven to represent us (Heb. 9:12,24). |

The scapegoat

Aaron was told to take two goats on the Day of Atonement and lots were cast to determine which should be killed as a sin offering for the people, and which should be the ‘scapegoat’ (7–10). The blood of the sacrificial goat was sprinkled in the Holy of Holies (*inside the veil*) in the same manner as the blood of the bullock (15). Aaron then laid his hands on the ‘scapegoat’ (i.e. ‘the escape-goat’); this symbolised the transfer of the sins of the people to the animal. With both hands on the scapegoat, he confessed over it the sins of Israel. He then sent it *away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man* who had been set apart to do this (20–21). This symbolised the removal of Israel’s sins (cp. Psalm 103:12). Aaron then sacrificed burnt offerings for himself and for the people (3, 24).

The Hebrew word ‘azazel’ which is translated ‘scapegoat’ (8) is thought by many to refer to a demonic ruler in the wilderness. John Currid comments, ‘On this view, the word is used in contradistinction to “Yahweh”; one goat is presented to the good and one is given to the evil. However, no biblical textual support exists for this interpretation. A more likely proposal says that the word literally means in translation the “goat that goes away”, and also the name simply describes the function of the animal’ (COMMENTARY ON LEVITICUS, pages 216–217).

The Day of Atonement showed the necessity of blood sacrifice to atone for sins and of confession of sin. Unless we acknowledge our sins and accept responsibility for our sins, there can be no forgiveness. Sacrifice and confession are brought together in 1 John 1:7–9: ***The blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***

It must be perfect to be accepted

The Israelites were not allowed to sacrifice animals with physical defects. They were later condemned for doing this very thing (Malachi 1:7–8). An exception was a bull or a lamb with a limb too long or too short which could be sacrificed as a freewill offering (23). Some of the defects are described in verses 22 to 24 (*‘bruised or crushed’* refers to animals which had been castrated). A mutilated animal was not acceptable, nor was a newborn animal which was to be left with its mother for at least seven days before it was allowed to be sacrificed. It was also forbidden to sacrifice a cow or ewe with her young on the same day (27–28).

The Lord reminded Israel that he had brought them out of Egypt to be their God and to be hallowed among them (31–33). He said that their sacrifices *‘must be perfect to be accepted’* (21)? The wonderful message of the gospel is that God provided the perfect sacrifice to save us from our sins. The Lord Jesus is the Lamb of God who has no blemish or sin (John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18–19; 1 John 3:5).

Seeing that God has given us the best possible sacrifice to save us from our sins, dare we offer him our second-best in serving him with our time and money? Whatever we do for him, we must be determined to do well. **We should always remember that only our best is good enough for the Lord in all that we do for him.**

*Oh not for thee my weak desires,
My poorer, baser part!
O not for thee my fading fires,
The ashes of my heart!*

*O choose me in my golden time,
In my dear joys have part;
For thee the glory of my prime,
The fullness of my heart!*

(Thomas Hornblower Gill)

No outsider shall eat it

The instructions given for all Israel concerning ceremonial uncleanness in chapters 11 to 15 are now applied to the priesthood. A priest was not allowed to exercise his ministry or to eat his portion of the sacrifices when he became unclean through skin disease, body discharges, contact with the dead or with unclean animals (2–7).

John Currid writes, ‘The priests of Israel had to prepare themselves carefully and diligently in order to serve in the house of God. I often mourn when I see the lack of preparation of pastors who proclaim the Word of God from the pulpit and lead worship in the church. I understand the many duties of the pastor and how these easily crowd out preparation time for preaching and worship. But this is no excuse! The time of worship and preaching is the centre of a church’s activity, and it must be done well and properly’ (COMMENTARY, page 289).

Members of the priest’s family, including slaves, were allowed to share the priest’s food (his portion of the sacrifices) as long as they lived under his roof. Hired labourers or those visiting the priest were not allowed to eat this holy food – *no outsider shall eat it* (10–13). If anyone ate of it unwittingly, they were to repay the equivalent of what they had eaten plus one fifth (13–14).

If great care was to be taken regarding the eating of the holy offerings, how much greater care must be exercised regarding the Lord’s Table! Those who are not Christians must not be allowed to partake of this holy ordinance – *no outsider shall eat it*. Matthew Henry comments, ‘Holy things are for holy persons, for those who are holy, at least, in profession (Matt. 7:6).’ If we know that we are defiled by sin and have not repented of that sin, our hearts are not right with God. We must then abstain from eating the bread and drinking the cup when our urgent need is to repent. If we come to the Lord’s Table in an unworthy manner we will be chastened by God (1 Corinthians 11:27–32). **Christian, do you examine your own heart before coming to the Lord’s Table?**

It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul

The Lord here gives instructions to all the children of Israel as well as to Aaron and his sons (1–2). All sacrificial animals were to be killed at the door of the tabernacle. The blood of these animals had to be sprinkled *on the altar of the LORD at the door of the tabernacle* (6). The penalty for disobedience was severe (4). God had provided the priesthood and the tabernacle for the administration of worship and sacrifices. Now that the tabernacle had been erected, the Israelites were forbidden to kill their sacrifices in the open field. This was perhaps to prevent the ritual from degenerating into idol worship with its sacrifice to demons (5,7). All these instructions cover animals for sacrifice; the law concerning animals slaughtered for food is found in Deuteronomy 12:10–15).

The eating of meat with its blood was strictly forbidden (10–12). The blood of animals killed in hunting had to be poured out in the field (13). Verses 15 and 16 would appear to cover those who had eaten flesh of animals that had been killed by beasts without realising that the blood had not been drained because of the way in which the animal had died. They were to bathe themselves and were unclean until evening.

Why were the people forbidden to eat blood (cp. Genesis 9:4)? Blood is sacred because God required it to be poured out on the altar to atone for sin. Blood sustains life (11,14) and when poured out in sacrifice, it symbolised a life given on behalf of the guilty sinner. *It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul* (11). **God graciously gave the sacrificial system to Israel in anticipation of the perfect sacrifice of Christ who shed his own precious blood to save us from our sins (Hebrews 9:14,22; 1 John 1:7; 1 Peter 1:19).**

*There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.*

(William Cowper)

Nor shall you walk in their ordinances

This chapter contains laws given by God which forbid incest (6–19), adultery (20), child sacrifice (21), homosexuality (22) and bestiality (23). God repeatedly reminded the Israelites of his lordship over them and the words, ‘*I am the LORD*’ are found six times in this chapter and fifteen times in chapter 19. The Israelites were not to take their moral standards from the Egyptians among whom they had lived, nor from the Canaanites whose land they were to possess. God said, ‘*The doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances.*’ They were to keep God’s commandments and walk in them (3–4).

The sexual behaviour in our society is not far removed from that of ancient Egypt or Canaan. To approach any relative to engage in sexual activity is wicked (6–20). These sins are now so commonplace that they do not shock our generation. Many of those who are admired for their success in business, sport or the arts, regularly break the seventh commandment which forbids adultery. God’s holy standards set down here are confirmed in the New Testament and we need to be reminded of them.

John Currid observes, ‘We often forget to measure the results of such unrestricted freedom of sexual appetites: the spread of sexual diseases is at its greatest height in the history of mankind; divorce is at all-time highs; abortion is common; births out of wedlock have skyrocketed ... As Leviticus demonstrates, laws governing sexual activity are absolutely necessary for the good of society’ (COMMENTARY, page 247).

We must not allow the wicked standards of the world to influence our behaviour. Let us remember that we are not our own but have been bought with the precious blood of Christ. He expects us to *present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God* (Romans 12:1–2; cp. 1 Corinthians 6:19–20). **Pure and undefiled religion demands that we keep ourselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27).**

They shall be holy to their God

If the people of God were to be holy, how much more their priests who served God in the tabernacle! *They shall be holy to their God ... therefore you shall sanctify him ... he shall be holy to you* (6, 8). The priest was not to defile himself by contact with the dead, except when their nearest relatives died (1–4). The rules for the high priest were far more stringent than for the other priests because he alone was able to go into the Holy of Holies (‘*the Holy Place*’) on the Day of Atonement (16:14–16). He was not to go near to any dead person or to be engaged in mourning ritual for relatives (except presumably for his wife, with whom he was *one flesh*; (10–12; cp. Genesis 2:24). Priest and people alike were to abstain from pagan mourning ritual (5; cp. 19:27–28). The priests were also restricted in their choice of marriage partner (7,13–14) and the punishment for a priest’s daughter who disgraced him by prostitution was very severe (9).

Animals offered as sacrifices had to be without physical blemish and so were the priests who offered them (17–21). Those who were not allowed to serve through some physical defect were, however, allowed to eat of the holy things, the priest’s portion of the sacrifices (22).

What spiritual lessons are to be found in these verses?

- The Lord Jesus is our perfect, holy, undefiled High Priest. He is far superior to any Levitical high priest (Hebrews 7:25–27).
- The Lord demanded higher standards from the priests than from the people: *They shall be holy to their God* (6). **God demands exemplary standards of character and behaviour from those who serve him as pastors (elders) or deacons.** Those holding office in the church must be *an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity* (1 Timothy 4:12; cp. 1 Timothy 3:1–13). When a church leader falls into serious sin, it brings great damage to the church.
- Much is expected of the children of elders just as it was of the priests (9; Titus 1:6). They face pressures unknown to other children and they need our understanding and prayers.

16 JUNE

Leviticus 20:1–27

I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine

Molech worship is again denounced (1–5; cp. 18:21). Molech was the god of the Ammonites (1 Kings 11:7) and the worship of this foul idol involved the sacrifice of children. God hates spiritism and those who indulge in its practices will not go unpunished (6,27; cp. 19:31). He said, ‘*I will set my face against that man*’ (3,5,6). The warnings in chapter 18 against sexual impurity and perversion are repeated (10–21). Those guilty of some of these heinous sins were to be put to death (2,9,13,15–16). Offenders were to bear the consequences of their guilt: *Their blood shall be upon them* (9,11–13,16,17,27). Death was to be by stoning (2,27) and in some circumstances, the corpses of those executed were to be burned (verse 14 does not mean that the offender was to be burned alive; cp. Joshua 7:15,25).

Many people say that the death penalty is a barbaric form of punishment. We must remember that God ordained the death penalty for certain crimes; dare we accuse the Lord of barbarism? Though the death penalty is not presently administered for the sins described in these verses, it does not alter the fact that these sins are very grave in the sight of God.

The sins described in this chapter were common in the land of Canaan which the Israelites were to possess. The Lord warned the Jews that if they fell into these sins when they settled in the land, they would be vomited out (18:25). As a nation chosen by him, they had to be holy (separate) to him and to keep his commandments (7–8). God said, ‘*You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine*’ (26).

Christians are also chosen by God to lead holy lives (1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:15–16). **When we see that God gave his beloved Son to be crucified to save us from our sin and to make us his own, we will never take any sin lightly.**

13 JUNE

Leviticus 18:21–30

Do not defile yourselves with any of these things

The people of Canaan and the surrounding nations sacrificed children to appease gods such as Molech and to gain favour in times of trouble (21; cp. 20:2–5; 2 Kings 3:27). Western society would rightly condemn such practices as barbaric and yet it sanctions the slaughter of millions of unborn infants in its abortion clinics. There were 209,519 abortions in one year (2019) in Great Britain.

The Bible is also quite clear in its teaching that homosexual behaviour is wicked. It is an abomination in the sight of God (22; cp. 20:13). The homosexual, lesbian, transgender rights movement has become increasingly bold and strident in its defiance of God’s holy law. We must not become intimidated by their verbal abuse which is directed against those they consider to be ‘homophobic’.

Some who profess to be Christians have twisted the plain teaching of the Bible to accommodate homosexual behaviour. Wicked practices are not sanitised when professing Christians engage in them. The New Testament is also quite clear in stating that homosexuality is vile, shameful and against nature (Romans 1:26–27). This is not an unpardonable sin, however! Homosexuals can be saved and transformed by the grace of God so that they will loathe their perversion and turn from it (1 Corinthians 6:9–11). Bestiality is another dreadful sin that we are warned against (23).

The whole thrust of this chapter is that God’s people must not behave like those in the world. The Bible is quite clear: ‘*Do not defile yourselves with any of these things*’ (24). Those who defy God’s Word in these matters are warned that they will come under divine judgment (25–30).

We must keep ourselves from the filth of the world if we are to please and honour our precious Saviour! We will want to be different if we truly love the Lord! We live *in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation* among whom we must *shine as lights in the world* (Philippians 2:15).

You shall love your neighbour as yourself

The Lord again reminded the Israelites that they must be a holy people because he who is their Lord is holy (2; cp. 11:45). He repeats, ‘*I am the LORD your God*’ (2,3,4,10). Holiness is a beautiful thing which should be seen in our lives. These verses describe the effects of holy living. We will observe the ten commandments; the third, fourth and fifth commandments – shunning idolatry, keeping the Sabbath and honouring parents are found in verses 3 and 4.

Those who are holy do not opt out of life in the world around them. They not only love God but take seriously his command, ‘*You shall love your neighbour as yourself*’ (18). We are also to love strangers as we love ourselves (34; cp. the parable of the good Samaritan, Luke 10:29–37). Love for others is seen in various ways:

- The farmer was to leave the harvest in the corners of his field for the poor to glean. (9–10).
- In honesty, integrity and a refusal to engage in tale-bearing (11–13,16; cp. Exodus 20:15–16; eighth and ninth commandments).
- Compassion for the disabled (14).
- Prompt payment of wages to employees (13; cp. Deut. 24:15).
- Fair and impartial treatment of others, whether poor or rich (15).
- Being prepared to rebuke wrong-doers without hatred, grudging or seeking revenge. *You shall love your neighbour as yourself*’ (17–18). **If everyone loved his neighbour as himself, the church and the world would be far better. How are you showing that you love your neighbour?**

*Give me a faithful heart,
Likeness to thee,
That each departing day
Henceforth may see
Some work of love begun,
Some deed of kindness done,
Some wanderer sought and won,
Something for thee.*

(Sylvanus O. Phelps)

Honour the presence of an old man

Verse 19 contains a law that prohibited the mixing of things that were separated at creation such as the cross-breeding of a horse and an ass which would produce a mule. Adultery with a slave-woman was to be punished and a trespass offering sacrificed (20–22). The word ‘*scourging*’ (20) should be translated ‘*punishment*’. When fruit trees were planted, fruit from them was not be eaten until the fifth year (23–25). Most of these laws which set Israel apart from other nations are not binding upon Christians, except where they are endorsed in the New Testament (Galatians 4:8 to 5:1). Both the Westminster Confession of Faith (chapter 20) and the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith (chapter 21) state the church has ‘freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish church was subjected.’

The practices described in verses 26, 28–29 and verse 31 were very common among the heathen nations and were strictly forbidden. There has been an alarming increase in sexual permissiveness and in occult practices in Britain and the western world. These sins are condemned throughout the Bible. Some astrologers and spiritist mediums who dabble with evil spirits have celebrity status and are consulted by many people who are rich and famous. At the same time the Bible is despised and its teaching rejected. May God have mercy on us! Oh, let us pray fervently for our land and proclaim the glorious gospel of Christ!

There has also been a dramatic increase in violent crimes against the elderly but those who fear God will respect the aged and *honour the presence of an old man* (32). Let us be sure that we always have a caring attitude towards those who are advanced in years.

A wholesome society is marked by compassion and consideration for others as well as honesty and integrity in business (34–36). **Those who despise God’s laws are foolish indeed!** Their folly is also shown when they bemoan the instability and wickedness around us but refuse to listen to the teaching of the Bible.