

THE "BOOK OF HOLINESS"

Chapter 17 begins the second half of the book of Leviticus. The first half dealt with the forgiveness of sins and cleansing through the system of sacrifices. With sins forgiven, however, one is urged not to turn back to the old sinful ways, but to walk in newness of life (Jas 2:26). These chapters emphasize that holy living.

Chapter 17

Three Prohibitions

- 1) Animals used for the sacrifices were not to be killed anywhere except at the tabernacle.

What was the reason for this regulation? (See vv6-7)

- 2) The foreigners living among Israel were also not to offer sacrifices anywhere but at the Tent of Meeting (the tabernacle).

- 3) It was wrong for Israelites and foreigners living among them to eat blood.

What reasons does God give for not eating the blood? (v11)

"In Old Testament times the heathen would often eat blood as part of their worship rituals in order to partake of its life-giving powers. For the people of Israel, the temptation was real to join them" (*Leviticus*, Lenz)

This chapter is really an expression of the first commandment ("Thou shalt have no other gods"). The people were to worship God and Him alone. Nothing was to detract from the worship of the true God. Idolatry was a wicked sin that would be met with punishment.

What are the various forms of idolatry?

What idols tempt us today?

Was Jesus ever tempted to idolatry?

For us in 21st century America, Israelite prohibitions such as not eating blood might not strike us as that big a deal (who would want to anyway?) But in this chapter concerning sexual sins, we find that we live in a world that has practices all this.

At this time the Israelites were surrounded by those living in foreign countries (they had not yet taken possession of their own land of Canaan). The of Canaan and Egypt engaged in much sexual immorality, often in connection with their religious worship. God did not want His people to become like them. Israel was expected to be holy.

To remain sexually pure, the people were not to have relations with:
any close relative, father or mother, sister or stepsisters, married women, daughter-in-law, other in-laws, etc.

Neither were children to be sacrificed on altars.
Neither was homosexual behavior to be practiced.
Neither was bestiality to be practiced.

Intermarriage between cousins was allowed, but any relation closer than that was forbidden for the Israelites. Relatives through marriage were considered as close as blood relatives. God's law also did not allow for bigamy or polygamy (v18) even though it came to be practiced even by prominent Israelites. Those who disobeyed the regulations given in this chapter, were considered defiled and to be punished (w26-29).

Unlike the laws in chapter 17, sexual immorality is condemned in the New Testament as well. Thus laws like these do not "disappear" at the coming of Christ. They provide a good definition of what the LORD means when He speaks of sexual immorality.

Romans 1:26-27
1 Corinthians 6:9, 18-20

Sexual sins are rampant in our society today. We pray that God lead those involved in them to repent and receive His forgiveness.

Notes: