

Leviticus-Numbers

July 12, 2009

“Re-Cycling Sin”

Leviticus 26-27

I. End of Leviticus

This is the fifth and last session directly on Leviticus. Today, we will look at the final two chapters. In many ways, Chapter 26 appears to be a reasonable ending to the book, but God saw fit to give us Chapter 27 as well on vows.

What have you learned from Leviticus? If you were reading it for the first time, what would you expect from its end?

What does it mean in Lev. 11:45b where it states “therefore be holy because I am holy”?

II. Leviticus 26:1-39 Blessings and Curses

For those who took the Deuteronomy class or who have studied it in any venue, you might remember the importance of blessings and curses from that study, especially Chapters 27-30.

Here is a brief outline of the chapter:

26:1-2 Three rules stated in 26:1-2 probably representing the entire law, but these are likely emphasized because they will be a stumbling block for the Israelites:

- No idols
- Observe Sabbaths
- Revere the sanctuary

26:3-13 Blessings

- Work will be easier
- Peace in the land
- No savage animals
- Enemies will fall by your sword
- God’s favor
- Fruitful/increase in numbers
- Throw away old food to make way for new food

26:14-39 Curses

14-17 General curses – illness, famine, defeat

18-20 Drought and bad harvest

21-22 Wild animals

23-26 Ware, leading to plague and famine

27-39 War, leading cannibalism, devastation and deportation from the land

As mentioned above, the curses and blessings are also in Deuteronomy and appear also in other parts of Scriptures as well. Why are they important?

Also, as here, the curses are longer than the blessings. In the NT, there is more on hell than on heaven. Why the emphasis on the negative?

Obviously, the Christian mind wants to emphasize the positive over the negative. For example, if you check the hymnals used by this church, you will not find hymns dwelling on hell, while many dwell on heaven. (Indeed, it will be a rare hymnal that has a hymn dwelling on hell.) Why this bias by Christians?

III. Lev. 26:40-46 Restoration

Lev. 26:40-42

40 " 'But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers—their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, 41 which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies—then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, 42 I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.

NIV

Even when all seems lost, God is still there if we search for Him. As James writes:

James 4:7-8

7Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

NIV

Why must we be humbled before we turn to God?

If God showed Himself more visibly (assuming for the moment that He is not already very visible), would it make a difference?

IV. Leviticus 27 Redeeming What is the LORD's

On first glance, it is not totally clear why God chooses to end the book this way. However, as we think about it, this chapter is an excellent reminder to the Israelites as to who is in control. If we owe something to God, or if we promise/vow something to Him, it is His. Since it is His, He can do with it as He pleases; it belongs no longer to the person (although in another sense, everything belongs to God). As the Israelites live their lives with God as their director, this is an extremely important lesson.

Leviticus 27:1-8

A pledge of self, an offspring, or a slave to the Lords service is apparently a voluntary vow. If made, then the person belongs to the LORD. The passage, however, does provide a method of redeeming the person, if one has money to do so. If not, or if there was no desire to redeem the person, then the person would apparently do works of service to the LORD, as in the case of Samuel in 1 Samuel 1:11. The wording

appears to assume that the dedicated person will normally be redeemed with money, and that this money would then be dedicated to supporting the LORD's work.

Leviticus 27:9-13

Any animal pledged had to be clean. An unclean one could not be substituted without penalty. In general, backing out of a vow of animals required a 20% "restocking" fee.

Leviticus 27:14-25

We see similar words for redemption with a few new twists. The 20% penalty would seem to indicate that redemption was not the normal outcome of these pledges.

Leviticus 27:26-29

Any person, animal, or thing "devoted to destruction" was non-redeemable because it belonged to Him already. When would a person or an animal be "devoted to destruction"?

Leviticus 27:30-33

The tithe (10%) expressed the conviction that everything they had was really God's.

Concept of Redeeming

The use of the word redeeming in this chapter cannot help but to bring to mind that it was Jesus who redeemed us.

Vows

Much of the chapter speaks of the ramification of vows being made to the LORD. We make "vows" today. What are some examples? Do we make any pledges to God?

What "vow" did Paul urge us to make in Rom. 12:1?

What other types of vows or pledges do you make today? How earnestly do we honor them?

V. Being Holy

We started the lesson by asking about being holy. Having gone through these two chapters, do we see any lessons that would apply to the Israelites as to the need or value of being holy?

As for you, what does it mean to be holy? What can you do to be more holy?

Certainly being holy has its basis in the work of the Lord in you, but it is also something that we should be working to be as well. After all, 1 Peter 1:15-16 is a command/imperative:

1 Peter 1:15-16

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do, for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

NIV

Obviously, the standard is extremely high, and we should have no doubt that we can do it on our own. So, what can you do to become more holy?