

A VERY BRIEF LOOK AT DEUTERONOMY

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It's several months ago that we started looking at whether or not the Old Testament is valuable for modern-day believers.

Many people scoff at or mock the Old Testament. They say its laws are antiquated and absurd. Some claim that the Old Testament is all done away. It portrays a God who is harsh ... vindictive and judgmental ... now all replaced by Jesus "meek and mild".

We've spent some time reviewing some of the key passages that people use to criticise and condemn. We have included a fairly thorough review of the Code of Holiness from Leviticus (chapters 17-26).

Although people fuss and fight over a few of the laws that you get in Leviticus ... the part that really offends them is the clear prohibition of homosexual conduct. God speaks directly to Moses ... says it is an abomination and offenders are to be put to death.

That's a red rag to a bull to much of modern-day society. Official government studies in the US and the UK show that less than 2% of people are LGBT ... yet we hear endlessly of gay rights ... gay pride events ... diversity ... equality ... re-definition of marriage. God's word is an affront to modern society ... they need to find reasons to ridicule and dismiss it (the Old Testament).

Hopefully ... over the past few weeks ... we have seen that all God's laws are valuable ... some are eternal ... some were temporary ... some only applied to the Levites ... some only to the priests ... some only to women ... some only to men.

But even those laws that were clearly temporary ... reveal to us God's mind ... how He thinks ... so they are still useful. The underlying principles often still apply.

In Leviticus Chapter 23 we reviewed the Feast Days and saw why sacrifices are no longer necessary ... yet the Holy Days still continue and

can be seen by the New Testament Church keeping them. In Leviticus Chapter 24 we spent some time on “Lex Talionis” ... the Law of Retaliation ... which is often quoted as “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”. This was a law to ensure fair and just compensation when someone was injured ... and to prevent people seeking wild revenge. Jesus referred to it in the Sermon on the Mount. In Leviticus Chapter 25 we saw the law of the Land Sabbath (every 7th year) and the Jubilee (every 50th year). If Israel had kept the Land Sabbaths and the Jubilee years as they came around ... it would have trained them to trust God and to have faith in Him. It is generally accepted that they were probably never kept?

In Leviticus Chapter 26 we had the blessings and curses. God’s promises were conditional. IF you obey ... and if you disobey ... these calamities will come upon you.

We ended by turning to Deuteronomy ... the greatest of the commandments ... per Jesus.

Deuteronomy 6:1-5 (NKJV)

- 1 **“Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess,**
- 2 **that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you,** you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.
- 3 **Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you,** and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you—‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’
- 4 **“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!**
- 5 **You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.**

Jesus confirmed this is the greatest. From the Old Testament. Still relevant!

Jesus also told us that man should live by “every word of God”. Where did Jesus get that principle?

Deuteronomy 8:2-3 (NKJV)

2 **And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.**

3 So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, **that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.**

Jesus used Deuteronomy in His battle with Satan. Jesus defending Himself falls back on verse 3 in this conflict. And this truth still applies today. God's words are important.

What about the 2nd greatest commandment? Where do we find it?

Leviticus 19:18 (NKJV)

18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but **you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.**

If the 2 greatest commandments of all are to be found in the Old Testament ... it should certainly help us to see that the Old Testament is valuable and important to Christians. Let's see again just what Jesus said about these 2 commandments.

Matthew 22:34-40 (NKJV)

34 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.

35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying,

36 **"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"**

37 **Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' (Quoting Deut 6:5)**

38 **This is the first and great commandment.**

39 **And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'**

40 **On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.** (= *The whole Bible = The whole Old Testament. They are that fundamental. Everything hangs on loving God and loving your neighbour*)

All of the other laws and practices that we've been looking at ... mostly in Leviticus ... hang on these 2 laws. The laws of sacrifices and offerings were about a physical people worshipping God ... showing love to Him in a practical manner. The laws of ceremonial cleanness were about showing respect for God's Holiness. The laws about incest ... adultery ... fornication ... homosexuality ... those laws are essentially about protecting marriage and family life where true love for neighbour is to be found (as opposed to people doing what they want out of lust and self-gratification).

So. I think we've covered quite a few of the laws of Leviticus ... tried to explain as best we can what still applies today ... and what lessons we can learn. We've dipped into Deuteronomy a couple of times here and there ... but I thought for completion ... I'd finish off a number of the remaining laws that can cause problems.

I don't think we often turn to these scriptures ... so it's probably useful to review them while we're "on a roll".

Having mentioned Deuteronomy ... however ... I do want to actually start in the book of Numbers with one law that I've been asked about before.

Numbers 15:30-36 (NKJV)

30 **But the person who does anything presumptuously**, whether he is native-born or a stranger, **that one brings reproach on the Lord**, and he shall be cut off from among his people.

31 **Because he has despised the word of the Lord, and has broken His commandment**, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt shall be upon him.' "

32 **Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day.**

33 **And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation.**

34 They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him. (They knew it was wrong but didn't know what the penalty should be)

35 Then the Lord said to Moses, "The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp."

36 So, as the Lord commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died.

The death penalty for gathering sticks on the Sabbath? Note: Verse 30. Presumptuously ... arrogantly defiant ... brazenly violating God's will. Showing his complete hostility to God ... in the camp of God.

The rest of the nation were at rest. The Sabbath rules were well-known. No manna that morning ... Friday's manna was still fresh. This is blatant arrogance and defiance right under God's nose! This man didn't care ... he thumbs his nose at God.

This is a reminder to us ... of both the sanctity of the Sabbath ... and secondly how God looks at deliberate blatant wilful sin.

Numbers 15:37-41 (NKJV)

37 Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

38 "Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners.

39 And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them,

and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined,

40 and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.

41 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God."

Tassels on our garments? Many Jews today ... and many "Hebrew Roots" believers ... some former Church of God members ... now wear these.

They are known today as Tzitzit. You can buy them from Amazon. Do we need to? Is this law for us? Do we need to wear our garments with tzitzits? No.

It was given after the Sabbath-breaking incident. It was to be a physical reminder ... to a very physical and unconverted people ... to remember God's commandments. They were carnal ... they quickly forgot ... they needed continuous reminding. You'd see your own tassels ... you'd look around and see many others. Hopefully ... it would help get the message across: "Obey God's commands". But ... they were soon forgotten.

Perhaps a bit like people today who wear WWJD bracelets? The theory is: It may help them occasionally to focus?

Israel was so carnal ...it probably didn't do much good.

I think we can see that in the next few verses.

Matthew 23:1-7 (NKJV)

- 1 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,
- 2 saying: "**The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. (More correctly: have sat themselves)**
- 3 **Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.**
- 4 **For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.**
- 5 **But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.**
- 6 **They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues,**
- 7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'

Matthew 23:13 (NKJV)

13 "But **woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For **you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.**

Matthew 23:15 (NKJV)

15 “**Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For **you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.**

Matthew 23:5 (KJV)

5 ... **and enlarge the borders of their garments,**

Matthew 23:5 (NASB)

5 ... **lengthen the tassels of their garments.**

Matthew 23:5 (NET)

5 **they make ... their tassels long.**

The main purpose of wearing tassels was to remind the people of God’s laws ... yet here are the religious leaders ... completely blind to God’s laws ... blind to the Messiah in their midst ... wearing special long tassels. They didn’t do them any good.

How good were long tassels? No good! Jesus said that these scribes and Pharisees weren’t going into His Kingdom. Jesus called them “sons of hell”. So would physical tassels on a physical garment make any impact on them? No!!

As New Testament believers ... we shouldn’t need physical reminders of God’s laws..

Hebrews 8:6-11 (NKJV)

6 But **now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, *inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant*, which was established on better promises.**

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.

8 Because **finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— (quoting from Jeremiah. Again the importance yet again of the Old Testament)**

9 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because **they did not continue in My covenant**, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. **(Despite wearing the tassels!)**

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: ***I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.***

11 ***None of them shall teach his neighbour, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.***

A new and better covenant ... putting God's laws in our hearts and minds.

Unlike carnal Ancient Israel ... we have God's spirit in us ... we are taught directly by God. Jesus lives in us! So. We don't need to have tassels hanging from our garments.

We will not have a brief look at some of Deuteronomy's laws.

Deuteronomy 13:1-11 (NKJV)

1 ***"If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder,***

2 and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, "Let us go after other gods"—which you have not known—'and let us serve them,'

3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

4 You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.

5 But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.

6 "If your brother, the son of your mother, your son or your daughter, the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, secretly entices you, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers,

7 of the gods of the people which are all around you, near to you or far off from you, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth,

8 you shall not consent to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him;

9 but **you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people.**

10 And you shall stone him with stones until he dies, because he sought to entice you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

11 **So all Israel shall hear and fear, and not again do such wickedness as this among you.**

An authentic prophet? With signs or claimed signs? But ... DANGEROUS! God is not going to have someone spread false doctrine ... false teaching ... idolatry. Verse 11 is important. The death penalty gives a lesson to the whole nation ... and hopefully ... “nips it in the bud”? It’s such a good warning that it prevents many people from committing these sins.

Many today argue that the death penalty is ineffective. They may have a point ... but a large part of the problem is probably the long delays in carrying it out ... and the Bible itself warns us about that.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 (NKJV)

11 **Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.**

Ecclesiastes 8:11 (NIV)

11 **When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, people’s hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong.**

The USA has its “death rows” ... people waiting to be executed. On average ... people wait 15 years ... often served in solitary confinement for that whole time. That is not really the Bible example.

Deuteronomy 17:2-7 (NKJV)

2 **"If there is found among you, within any of your gates which the Lord your God gives you, a man or a woman who has been wicked in the sight of the Lord your God, in transgressing His covenant,**

3 who has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, either the sun or moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded, (*idolatry*)

4 and it is told you, and you hear of it, then you shall inquire diligently. And **if it is indeed true and certain that such an abomination has been committed in Israel,**

5 then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has committed that wicked thing, and shall stone to death that man or woman with stones.

6 **Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness.**

7 The hands of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put away the evil from among you.

It takes 2 or 3 witnesses for capital punishment.

There was a proper legal system. Judges would evaluate circumstances and would require clear testimony from at least 2 ... preferably 3 ... witnesses. They would have to be sure and certain.

Often the circumstances can vary widely ... so if difficulties arose ... the judges could go to the priests at the sanctuary (as the experts). See the next few verses.

Deuteronomy 17:8-10 (NKJV)

8 **"If a matter arises which is too hard for you to judge,** between degrees of guilt for bloodshed, between one judgment or another, or between one punishment or another, matters of controversy within your gates, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the Lord your God chooses.

9 And **you shall come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge there in those days, and inquire of them; they shall pronounce upon you the sentence of judgment.**

10 You shall do according to the sentence which they pronounce upon you in that place which the Lord chooses. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they order you.

Not really an “appeals court” ... as local judges would not have given any judgment as yet. Straight to the “Supreme Court”.

As a general Biblical principle ... the admonition about 2 or 3 witnesses is often used by many Bible scholars as a test of true doctrine. Because there is a risk of someone building a doctrine on one single Bible verse ... especially if it is unclear! As a rule of thumb ... it’s good to look for at least 2 or 3 or more scriptures backing up a particular point of view. God is likely to follow His own principles ... 2 or 3 witnesses!

For example ... we mentioned tattoos a couple of weeks ago ... that’s a good example. Only ½ a verse in the whole Bible! Nowhere else in the 30,000+ verses in the Bibles.

On the topic of witnesses:

Deuteronomy 19:15-21 (NKJV)

15 “**One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.**

16 **If a false witness rises against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing,**

17 **then both men in the controversy shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who serve in those days.**

18 And **the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, (a proper legal system)**

19 **then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother;** so you shall put away the evil from among you.

20 And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you.

21 Your eye shall not pity: life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. **(Fair compensation ... fair punishment)**

The false witness receives the penalty that the alleged guilty person would have got ... even death.

Deuteronomy 21:18-23 (NKJV)

18 **"If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them,**

19 **then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city.**

20 And they shall say to the elders of his city, '**This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.**'

21 **Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.**

22 **"If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree,**

23 **his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day,** so that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God.

Disobedient son ... as we saw in Leviticus. Someone who is rebellious ... stubborn ... unwilling to be corrected ... breaking the 5th commandment and putting the nation and society at risk.

The word would "get around"!

Deuteronomy 22:5 (NKJV)

5 **"A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the Lord your God.**

Don't wear garments of the opposite sex. As you'd expect ... plenty of debate! This upsets "Christian" transsexuals ... or those who are gender-fluid! Or Caitlyn Jenner perhaps?

In modern times it is often phrased as: "Can a woman wear pants"? (Trousers)

Back in the WCG years ... women were told it was okay to wear pants (trousers in the UK) ... as long as there were zips or buttons at the side.

I believe the main intent is to ensure that men and women are clearly distinct ... avoid blurring. God made male and female ... just two

genders ... as we've already seen in Leviticus that God wants things kept separate. Don't mix breeds ... or seeds ... or fibres. The principle is fairly plain.

Deuteronomy 25:4 (NKJV)

4 **"You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.**

Quoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:9 as applicable "for our sakes". Paul should be allowed to have some reward for his preaching.

Deuteronomy 25:5-6 (NKJV)

5 **"If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.**

6 **And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.**

Levirate law ... keeping the family line going was very important. It was to be protected. It's important to God too. Key fundamental to God's plan and purpose.

That might possibly explain our next passage.

Deuteronomy 25:11-12 (NKJV)

11 **"If two men fight together, and the wife of one draws near to rescue her husband from the hand of the one attacking him, and puts out her hand and seizes him by the genitals,**

12 **then you shall cut off her hand;** your eye shall not pity her.

Probably lots of people don't know this verse is in the Bible! I saw a Christian guy on YouTube criticising Islam because they cut off the hands of thieves ... "Barbaric". Well ...

Some 3,500 years later ... it is difficult to unravel what this situation was about.

It seems tied to Levirate law ... so may be an implication that any damage caused might prevent the man having any lineage. Also in Deuteronomy 23:1 (NKJV) "He who is emasculated by crushing or

mutilation shall not enter the assembly of the Lord.” ... so could see him lose the main benefits of his citizenship.

It is very serious for a man and his potential family ... so a serious punishment called for (a bit like Lex Talionis ... an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth).

It is unlikely it was ever practised ... but a sufficiently strong warning to women!

There are lots of debates about whether it's figurative ... like when Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount ... “if your hand causes you to sin ... cut it off”. Do something to stop sinning.

But ... it may be literal?

The Jewish Soncino Commentary. “The interpretation is that she has to pay monetary compensation for the shame that she has caused the man ... even if she be poor ... she must pay the fine”. But ... are they correct? Who knows?

Definitely an awkward scripture. We probably don't know enough today about the exact background and circumstances to properly interpret it.

But ... best to know it's there ... before someone springs it on you ... catching you unawares! Especially if arguing with a Muslim about their custom of chopping off hands ... though to be fair ... it is still fairly rare there. In Saudi Arabia ... the main Islamic nation on the earth today ... which follows Sharia Law ... this punishment is carried out less than once a year!

Okay. I think that will do for our review of the Old Testament and its laws.

When you and I look at the scriptures ... particularly the Old Testament ... we shouldn't find them absurd and antiquated. Please put the effort out to read all of God's Word.

