

**LEVITICUS 19 – 23 LAWS AGAINST PAGANISM; GOD'S HOLY DAYS**



We continue our study in Lev. 19, where God gives very important laws, still binding today, prohibiting pagan and demonic practices.

One of those laws prohibits cutting and shaping the hair because of religious symbolism. Lev. 19:27 says, "You shall not *shave around the sides of your head*, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard." Yet this is done by Catholic priests today when they allow the tonsure. The word "tonsure" means "to shear, and is the shaven crown or patch worn by monks and other clerics." The Catholic Encyclopedia says, "Historically the tonsure was not in use in the primitive Church during the age of persecution. Even later, St. Jerome disapproves of clerics shaving their heads." Yet it is still done.

The Catholic Cardinal and historian, John Newman, admits the practice is of pagan origin. He says, "temples, incense, oil lamps, votive offerings, holy water, holidays, and seasons of devotion, processions, blessings of the fields, sacerdotal vestments, *the tonsure (of priests, monks and nuns)*, images, and statues... *are all of pagan origin*" (*The Development of the Christian Religion*, p. 359).

Hislop adds, "'It was the mark," says Merle D'Aubigne, "that Popes stamped not on the forehead, but on the crown. A royal proclamation, and a few clips of the scissors, placed the Scotch, like a flock of sheep, beneath the crook of the shepherd of the Tiber...All over the world, where the traces of the Chaldean system are found, this tonsure of shaving of the head is always found along with it" (*The Two Babylons*, p. 222).

Next, God prohibits making marks or tattoos in your body, something the pagans often did and has become a fad today. "You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you. I am the Lord" (19:28).

*The JFB Commentary* says, "The practice of making deep gashes on the face and arms and legs, in time of bereavement, was universal among the heathen...or tattooing, imprinting figures of flowers, leaves, stars, and other fanciful devices on various parts of their person. The impression was made sometimes by means of a hot iron, sometimes by ink or paint." We should remember that we should take care of our bodies, as the temple of God's spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), and not deface it.

Tattooing is also dangerous because it can lead

to blood poisoning or hepatitis from contaminated needles. Besides, years later, one can regret it when children arrive and later ask about it. It is also very costly and even impossible at times to remove.

God also prohibits us from dealing in spiritism, such as consulting mediums, Houia boards, palm readers or witches. He says, "You shall not...practice divination or soothsaying...Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits, do not seek after them, to be defiled by them" (19:26, 31).

Unfortunately, people do not know the dangers of consulting or listening to mediums and being seduced by their powers. These mediums are on TV and the radio and make a fortune at it. God tells us to avoid them and not participate in their acts, that many have demonic origins. If an Israelite practiced such a profession, he was to be put to death (20:27).

God also commands us to respect the elderly among us, something not done by many youths today. "You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God" (19:32). In the Bible, it is an honor to be elderly, not a curse. Proverbs 20:29 says, "The glory of young men is their strength, and the splendor of old men is their gray head." It is, however, true that not all the elderly deserve praise. The Bible adds, "The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, *if it is found in the way of righteousness*" (Pr. 16:31).

Not only should we respect the elderly, but also the stranger among us. God says, "The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you and you shall *love him as yourself*, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (19:34). This is incredibly modern legislature, and is still not applied today by many countries where there is so much discrimination. World War II occurred mainly because of Nazi racism and nationalism, a clear breaking of this law.

Finally, God establishes the basic economic laws for the nation--still a wonder for modern times: "You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurements of length, weight, or volume. You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah (a measure of grain), and an honest hin (a measure of liquid)" (19:35-36). Here, God introduces national standards for measuring economic activities, avoiding corruption and

condemns the arbitrary changing of economic standards (see Dt. 25:13).

Howard Rand mentions, “The only foundation on which true prosperity can rest, with an unlimited expansion of industry and enterprise and an increase in production—without having a corresponding increase in poverty in the midst of plenty—is an adequate and equitable medium of exchange. This medium must be a perfect weight and measure regarding the value of goods....These changing values end to enrich the seller at the expense of the buyer. Because of these arbitrary variations in values it makes the possession of money to be more desirable than the possession of goods and is a contributing factor in increasing poverty in the midst of plenty....Because of our failure to establish a fixed standard of value in relation to gold and silver, rather than gold alone, the producer receives little for his labor. Also, the consumer must pay dearly for that which the laborer has produced. It is a convenient sliding scale which is always in favor of the few against the many” (*Digest of Divine Law*, 1943, p. 88)

In chapter 20, God mentions other laws based on the Ten Commandments. Israelites should avoid sacrificing their children to Molech, as already mentioned in Lev. 18:21, nor should they harbor such a person, or they will suffer the same results.

Also, a son or daughter should not curse his parents, thus breaking the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment. Nor should someone commit adultery, breaking the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment. Then God explains another way to break the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment—practicing homosexuality. God says here: “If a man lies with a man as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death” (20:13). Then, God describes other perverted sexual practices that are prohibited as well and says this will prevent all types of plagues and diseases of nature from coming upon the land. “You shall therefore keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them, that the land where I am bringing you to dwell may not vomit you out. And you shall not walk in the statutes of the nations which I am casting out before you; for they commit all these things, and therefore I abhor them” (20:22-23). Here again, God prohibits copying the behavior and practices of the nations around them.

Then, God reiterates the keeping of His food laws, something the pagan nations did not follow as a whole. “You shall therefore distinguish between clean animals and unclean, between unclean birds and clean...and you shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine” (20:25-26).

In chapter 21, God establishes some holiness regulations for the priests. The priests represented a type of Christ, so they had more stringent measures to be met. Again it is mentioned they are not to shave their heads in a religious way. He says, “They shall not make any bald place on their heads, nor shall they shave the edges of their beards nor make any cuttings in their flesh” (21:5). Here again is prohibited the priestly tonsure, that is nonetheless practiced today by Catholic priests.

After covering the regulations for the priests, God explains how to make an offering to Him, and the animal sacrificed should not have defects (21:21).

The next section, found in Lev. 23, covers the seven annual Holy Days in the fullest exposition found in the Bible. It is interesting to note here that the first holy day is the Sabbath: “The Feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations [reunions], these are My feasts. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do not work on it, it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings” (23:2-3).

Next comes the Passover: “On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the Lord’s Passover” (23:4). This is our doctrinal position: “The United Church of God, an *International Association*, teaches the observance of the New Testament Passover on the evening at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup>, following the example of Jesus Christ. On the night prior to His death, Christ observed what is called the Passover in the synoptic Gospels and instituted the symbols of bread and wine as well as foot washing.

“It is important to note that whether the Passover of Exodus 12 was eaten on the night of the 14<sup>th</sup> or the night of the 15<sup>th</sup> is a question of history and chronology. The proper understanding of the timing of the Passover in the Old Testament is not listed as one of the fundamental beliefs of the United Church of God as defined in the Constitution. Our fundamental belief on the subject of the Passover is quite short and simply states: “We believe in observing the New Testament

Passover on the night of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Abib, the anniversary of the death of our Savior” (“The Passover of Exodus 12”).

The term twilight means: “*evening twilight*; time of concealment; of refreshment; of stumbling, in dim light.” Twilight is not in the afternoon, but is when the light grows dim, after sunset, but before complete darkness.

Going on to the second Holy Day, the Days of Unleavened Bread, it says, “And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation, you shall do no customary work on it...The seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it” (23:6-8).

Next comes Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks, as it is mentioned in the Old Testament. “And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath...seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty [from where we get the term Pentecost] to the day after the seventh Sabbath” (23:15-16).

Then comes the Feast of Trumpets: “In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation” (23:24).

Afterwards comes the Day of Atonement: “Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you, you shall afflict your souls...And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the Lord your God. For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people” (23:27-29).

Next comes the Feast of Tabernacles: “The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the Lord. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it” (23:34-35).

Finally, the Last Great Day is mentioned: “On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation...It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it” (23:36).

Each one of these Feasts has a symbolic meaning. Paul says about the symbolic nature of the first feast, the Passover: “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7).

We see the OT ceremony of the Passover was symbolic of Christ’s sacrifice, as a lamb slain for our sins.

The Days of Unleavened Bread symbolize the removal our sins, and our intention to keep eliminating sin from our lives. Paul says, “Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven,

nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:8).

The feast of Pentecost symbolizes the receiving of God’s spirit (Acts 2:1-4). The New Testament church received God’s spirit on the day of Pentecost.

The Feast of Trumpets symbolizes the sounding of the trumpets when Christ returns (1 Thes. 4:16).

The Day of Atonement represents the putting away of Satan at the start of the Millennium. “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years” (Rev. 20:3).

The Feast of Tabernacles depicts the thousand year rule of Christ and His saints upon the earth. “This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Rev. 20:5-6).

Finally, we have the Last Great Day, picturing the judgment period after the Millennium. “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it...And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books” (Rev. 20:11-12).