

LEVITICUS 22-24

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Leviticus chapter 22 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

As we have seen in our studies so far, God has given to Moses and the children of Israel the Moral Law or the Ten Commandments; the Civil Law or Judicial Law that dealt with how they were to function as a nation; and the Ceremonial Law or Religious Law that focused on the religious life of the people.

We have covered this in our study in Exodus and now here in Leviticus we continue to look at this.

Here is the problem. It is out of these Laws of God that the Jewish religious people came up with even more rules and regulations. But they are not of God; they came from the heart of man.

The Mishna, which is also called the Oral Torah or Oral Law was the oral tradition that was passed down over the years and there are volumes of these!

What does it all mean?

Don't worry because there is a commentary you might say on the Mishna, or the Oral Law known as the Talmud.

You think it is taking us a long time to get through Leviticus, you ain't seen nothing yet!

The Talmud is compilation of 63 books that contain 524 chapters to help explain the Oral Torah or Oral Law, which had volumes to it!

Several times in the New Testament Jesus said, **“You have heard that it was said . . .”** and He was speaking of this Oral Torah or Oral Law and then He corrects their wrong theology by telling them what God really desires!

First of all, in Matthew 5:38-42 we are told, **“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.”**

Jesus did not speak as other rabbis did. He did not say, *“As Rabbi so-and-so said”* but He, being God and speaking with authority said, **“But I tell you.”**

Then in Matthew 22:34-40 we are told, **“But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?’ Jesus said to him, ‘“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”**

In other words, we don’t need the Oral Torah or Law, the Mishna! We don’t need the 63 books, 524 chapters of the Talmud or this commentary on the Mishna. They are not of God. They are not inspired.

Jesus tells us we are to love God and love each other and that fulfills the Law! You see, loving God covers the first table of the Law, the first four commandments.

Loving our neighbor covers the second table of the Law or the last six commandments.

Thus, man's relationship with God and his relationship with his fellow man are covered.

But your relationship with God can never be established apart from Christ and your relationship with your fellow man can never be what God desires apart from submitting unto God!

As we move into Leviticus chapter 22 this evening, we are going to see some of the things that God said that the priests were not to do.

I like the way that Warren Wiersbe sums this up for us. He wrote,

For a priest to serve the Lord acceptably, it wasn't enough merely that he qualify as a son of Aaron without any physical defects. He also had to carry on his ministry in such a way that the Lord was pleased with him. The worshipers might look at the outward ritual, but God would look at his inner heart.

The phrase "separate themselves from the holy things" (v. 2) sets the theme for the chapter. It means "to treat with regard and respect" or "to be careful in handling."

The priests offered sacrifices all day long, all year long; it would be easy for them to develop an attitude of "professionalism" that would turn a sacred ritual into a shallow routine.

Novelist George MacDonald said, "Nothing is so deadening to the divine as an habitual dealing with the out-sides of holy things." That's what this warning is all about.

When I was a seminary student, one of my professors told us of his concern when he heard the conversation between two students calling to each other across the campus one afternoon.

“Where are you going?” the first one asked.

“Over to Madison Avenue!” came the reply.

“What’s going on there?”

“Oh, I have to read over a stiff!”

The professor was both angry and hurt to think that one of his students would describe a Christian funeral service as “reading over a stiff.”

This attitude is what Ralph G. Turnbull called “the specter of professionalism,” being able to go through the motions of ministry but your heart isn’t in it.

Outwardly, you do all the right things the right way, but when God looks at your heart, nothing there is right.

By the time of Malachi the prophet, the specter of professionalism overshadowed the work of all the priests (Mal 1:6-2:9).

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – OT, pp. 233-234

With that said, let’s begin reading in Leviticus chapter 22, starting in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study His Word.

LEVITICUS 22

VERSES 1-3

Once again God wanted His people, and especially the priests who were representing Him, that as they approached God, they needed to be pure.

The priests were not to profane the holy name of God by taking what the people gave to the **LORD** or eating the sacred offering that was given to the **LORD!**

If they did, they would be cut off from serving! God was serious about how they approached Him and how they represented Him!

VERSES 4-9

The idea here is these things made the priest ceremonially unclean. It wasn't that they were kicked out of the ministry; they needed to wash and were unclean until evening, the start of the new day for the Jewish people. And then they could partake of the food and their service unto the Lord.

Being a priest carried with it great blessings but in their service to the Lord there are great responsibilities. They were more accountable just as we see today that the shepherd or pastor or leadership of the church is more responsible for what he is doing and sharing with the people.
(Luke 12:47-48, James 3:1)

What about for us?

It is similar to what God spoke to the priests.

For them back then and for us today, sin does separate us from service and ministry.

But if we repent, we are restored. We don't lose our salvation, but we do miss out on service and ministry.

Paul tells us in I Corinthians 9:24-27, **“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”**

Now, we tend to beat ourselves up, punish ourselves over our failures. But in Lamentations 3:22-23 we are told, **“Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.”**

The Living Bible puts these verses like this, **“his compassion never ends. It is only the Lord’s mercies that have kept us from complete destruction. Great is his faithfulness; his loving-kindness begins afresh each day.”**

In other words, we start anew in Christ every morning!

Yes, we need to confess and repent of our sin and then walk with the Lord!

We are not perfect and Paul, that great man of faith gives to us these encouraging words of where he was at and what he did in Philippians 3:12-14, **“Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”**

Paul is telling us to - ***PRESS ON!***

VERSES 10-16

Here we see those who were allowed to eat the holy things.

Why was God so strict?

Because He tells us, “**For I the LORD sanctify them.**”

Thus, by disobedience they would profane the holy name of God. His honor is on the line before others by what we say and what we do!

Thus, we too can profane the holy name of the Lord by coming before Him in an unworthy or unacceptable manner!

Also, if someone accidentally ate the holy offering, I’m not sure how but I guess it was possible, they had to restore it back by giving to the priests 20% more!

VERSES 17-25

Here God is telling them that He will not accept a blemished or deformed sacrifice. Thus, it was the priest’s responsibility to make sure these animal sacrifices were acceptable before God, that they meet God’s standards.

And this should just make sense. You would not bring a gift to a President, for instance, that was broken or damaged, and thus, why would you give something that was damaged to the Lord!

Now, by the time we get to Jesus’ day we see the priests abusing their role and extorting the people by selling them their sacrifices because as the people came with their own, the priests would find a spot or blemish and tell them they could not offer this to the Lord, but they could buy one of their sacrifices!

Also, they refused to accept any Roman money so the priests would exchange the Roman money for the Temple shekel at a high exchange rate and then this could be used as an offering.

We see what Jesus thought about this in Matthew 21:12-13 where we are told, **“Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, ‘It is written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer,” but you have made it a “den of thieves.”””**

Annas was the High Priest from 6 to 15 A. D. and then he was removed by Rome and one of his five sons occupied this position until finally it was given to his son-in-law, Caiaphas.

Even though Caiaphas was the High Priest, the power behind the position was still Annas; the people looked to him more than Caiaphas.

Annas was the one who set-up the booths in the Court of the Gentiles by the Temple to sell the certified animals for sacrifice and they exchanged the Temple money for high rates, as I have said.

And we see that as Jesus began and ended His ministry, we see Him in this area throwing out those who were ripping the people off who came to worship God, the men of Annas who were overseeing this, and He turned over their tables. He told them that the house of God is to be a place of prayer, a place where people can be touched by God, and they have made it into a den of thieves!

I think you can see why Annas didn't like Jesus as well as Caiaphas!

And tragically, people do the same today, that you have to pay this or that to approach God!

Folks, Christ has already paid it, don't add to the finished work for if you try, God is not pleased!

Also, the children of Israel did not obey the Lord in their giving.

In Malachi 1:7-8 we are told, **“You offer defiled food on My altar, But say, “In what way have we defiled You?” By saying, “The table of the Lord is contemptible.” And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?’ Says the Lord of hosts.”**

In other words,

“What are you going to do with this old, broken-down sofa?”

“Why don't we give it to the Lord?”

God does not need our cast-offs. He wants our best! And that is in our giving, in our time, in our service to Him. And I will guarantee you this. It may not be easy, but you will be blessed in so many ways as you give your best to the Lord!

Here in Leviticus 22:23 it seems to indicate that with a freewill offering you could offer an animal that was not perfect.

Possibly it was left up to you to decide what you wanted to give to the Lord for this freewill offering. But, if you think about it, why would you want to give the Lord second best?

It is like the story of the old farmer whose cow gave birth to twin calves and he was so excited. His wife was wondering what was going on and he told her and then he said, ***“You know dear, God has blessed us, and I am going to give to him one of these calves?”***

“Which one?” she asked.

“It doesn't matter, it is all His anyway!”

A few days later the farmer came into the house very sad, and his wife asked him what was wrong, and he said, *“The Lord’s calf died!”*

That is how it is many times, and it should not be! He is the creator of heaven and earth, and He deserves our best!

VERSES 26-30

Here we see God prohibit the sacrificing of an animal that was less than eight days old, and you were not to sacrifice the animal and its offspring on the same day.

I think the Lord wanted them to understand that these animal sacrifices that were made were innocent and they should have compassion for them. They should realize that they are sacrificing their lives for the guilt of the people.

I think the same is true with our Lord. We can get so lackadaisical or apathetic about the death and resurrection of our Lord for our sins that we don’t think much about it.

Peter makes this point about how our Righteous God died for unrighteous man. He tells us in I Peter 3:18, **“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”**

And The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“For Christ [the Messiah Himself] died for sins once for all, the Righteous for the unrighteous (the Just for the unjust, the Innocent for the guilty), that He might bring us to God. In His human body He was put to death, but He was made alive in the spirit.”**

May we never forget or take for granted what our Lord has done for us!

VERSES 31-33

Why were they to keep His commandments?

Because of who He is (***I am the LORD***).

Also, because of what He is, (***My holy name***).

Not only that, but because of what He is doing in their lives, (***I am the LORD who sanctifies you***).

And lastly, because of what He has done, (***who brought you out of the land of Egypt***).

God's desire is the same for us because He is ***YAHWEH***. Because He is holy. Because He has sanctified us in a positional sense and is sanctifying us in a practical sense. And because He has taken us out of the kingdom of darkness, out of this world and placed us into His beautiful Kingdom! And just to put an exclamation point on this, He concludes by saying, "**I am the LORD.**"

LEVITICUS 23VERSES 1-2

Here in Leviticus chapter 23 we see seven feasts that Israel celebrated.

Three of these feasts were in the spring: the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Firstfruits.

Then, less than two months later was the Feast of Pentecost or Weeks.

Then there was a long break until the three fall feasts: the Feast of Trumpets, the Feast of Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

And as we will see these feasts all point prophetically, they are significant to us!

Also, keep in mind that *“The Feasts of Purim and Hanukkah are not addressed in this chapter since these feasts celebrate events that occurred after Moses’ time.”* (Rooker)

VERSE 3

Yes, the Sabbath day, which began at sundown on Friday and continued through sundown on Saturday, was not actually a feast. But it was a time of resting in the Lord, a day set apart to worship the Lord.

Let me share this with you regarding what took place when they were in exile in Babylon. We are told,

Centuries after this, when the Jewish people were scattered in exile, they started to meet in synagogues on the morning of the Sabbath.

The only appointed place for *sacrifice* was the altar at the tabernacle (or temple). Yet it may be that even before the establishment of the synagogue in exile, Israelites gathered on the Sabbath in a holy convocation, meeting to pray together and hear from the teaching Levites spread around the land of Israel.

- David Guzik

Now what about us? What about the Sabbath day?

For us, our Sabbath is Jesus, and we are to spend time every day with Him! Keep in mind that this was observed by Israel, but it was a shadow of what was to come. You see, as Paul tells us in Colossians 2:16-17, the substance of this picture or shadow is Christ! And thus, every day is a Sabbath rest for us in that we rest in the finished work of Christ on the cross of Calvary for us! What that means is that we can gather together to worship the Lord any day of the week!

VERSES 4-5

On the fourteenth day of the first month or Abib, which later was called Nisan, the Feast of Passover was celebrated.

This feast was celebrated to commemorate Israel's deliverance from Egypt as the lamb was slain and the blood placed on the door in the shape of a cross so that the angel of death would pass over their home. So the first time this was celebrated was in Egypt.

Next, it was first celebrated after the exodus at Mount Sinai, (Numbers 9:1-5).

But this feast was not celebrated again until they entered the Promise Land under the leadership of Joshua, when they were in Gilgal, (Joshua 5:10-12).

Prophetically speaking, I think we all have this one. It is a picture of our Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ who died for our sins and thus, the judgment of God passed over us!

VERSES 6-8

On the day after Passover the Feast of Unleavened Bread began, and it ran for seven days with a holy convocation on the first and last day of this feast.

Thus, this feast ran from the 15th to the 21st of Nisan.

This feast spoke of purity as there was no leaven used in the bread, leaven being a type of sin.

And Paul makes that point for us in I Corinthians 5:7-8 where he wrote, "**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. 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.**"

Prophetically speaking, this is a picture of Jesus, the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He was without spot or blemish, there was no sin to be found in Him at all!

You see, if He had sin in His life, He could not pay the penalty for our sins, He would have to deal with His own, but He was sinless!

VERSES 9-14

This was not the wheat harvest, which occurred in June or July, but the barley harvest and it was during this barley harvest that the Feast of Firstfruits, also called the Feast of Harvest, was celebrated. (Exodus 23:16)

The idea here is that the firstfruits of the harvest belonged to the Lord and by giving to Him their firstfruits; they were guaranteeing a bountiful harvest.

And this feast was celebrated on Sunday.

Prophetically speaking, Jesus rose from the grave on the Feast of Firstfruits, on Sunday morning.

So we see that Jesus was sacrificed on Passover. He was placed in the tomb on the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And He rose from the grave on the Feast of Firstfruits, ensuring a bountiful harvest of souls that was to come!

Paul makes that point in I Corinthians 15:20-24 as he wrote, **“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.”**

Jesus is the firstfruits and because He offered Himself to God for us and rose from the grave the third day, it speaks of a bountiful harvest of souls that will come into the Kingdom of God!

VERSES 15-21

Now, fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits, during the wheat harvest, came the Feast of Weeks or the Feast of Pentecost.

It is on this day, we are told, that Moses received the Law on Mount Sinai.

This feast was celebrated by bringing a new grain offering to the Lord and waving two loaves of leavened bread to the Lord.

Interestingly enough, here we see leaven mentioned in this feast, which should catch our attention.

Why is that important?

Because, prophetically speaking the Feast of Weeks or the Feast of Pentecost points to the birth of the church, where both Jew and Gentile, sinners, were brought together in Christ, the leavened bread!

Now there is a four-month or so gap from this feast to the next one and that gap we call the Church Age!

VERSE 22

This verse seems almost out of place. We are talking about feast days and now how to harvest your fields so the poor can glean what was left over!

What is the Lord trying to tell us here?

Maybe the picture here is that the Jews were God's people and yet they were to leave the blessings of God for others, for Gentiles.

Thus, all can partake of the blessings of God if they come through the sacrifice of Jesus!

Now, like I have said, there are some four months between feasts here, why?

Again, I believe the picture here is that of the Church Age, a pause between the next three feasts and you will see this as we look at the last three Feasts of Israel.

I believe that Pentecost is speaking of the Church and the first three feasts are related to Israel and the last three are related to Israel, specifically speaking, as you will see. And they do go along with Daniel 9:24 where we read, **“Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.”**

Yes, this could have all happened when Jesus came the first time, but the Jews, as a nation rejected Him. But, as we will see, when He comes again, they will receive Him and it is related to the last three Feasts of Israel or at the end of those 490 years that are determined upon God's people and His holy city, Jerusalem!

Yes, what Jesus did in the pictures of the first three feasts is related to all of humanity for He died for the sins of the world. But keep in mind that He came first to the Jews even though we as Gentiles have benefited greatly from what the Lord has done!

Let's look at these last three feasts.

VERSES 23-25

Here we see the Feast of Trumpets or Rosh Hashanah that occurred on the first day of the month of Tishri on the Jewish Ceremonial or religious calendar.

That means it would take place in September or October on the Gregorian calendar.

According to the Jewish Civil calendar this is the first day of their new year.

As the trumpets were blown it called God's people together for this celebration and it was a 10-day period of reflection until the next feast.

Prophetically speaking, I believe this is not speaking of the rapture of the church but of the re-gathering of the Jewish people that has begun now, but it will reach its climax at the end of the Tribulation Period with the return of Jesus Christ!

And, after they are re-gathered, what do they do? We will see that in the next feast that is spoken of.

VERSES 26-32

Back in Leviticus chapter 16 we covered the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur in detail.

It began on the 10th day of the 7th month of Tishri. This was more of a day of affliction you might say over your sin and the need for atonement that was made by the shedding of the blood of the sacrificed animal.

Prophetically speaking I see this as the time Israel will recognize Jesus as their Messiah and that He is the Lamb of God who has come to take away the sins of the world.

This will occur at the end of the Tribulation Period, as the nation of Israel will be saved!

I believe the picture of the Day of Atonement is a picture of Israel's national repentance. That they receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior, the atonement that is only found in Him!

And the picture fits perfectly. In Luke 13:34-35 we are told, **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’”**

Also, in Isaiah 25:9 we are told, **“And it will be said in that day: ‘Behold, this is our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; We have waited for Him; We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.’”**

Who is their God?

Jesus is their God!

Who have they been waiting for?

They have been waiting for the Messiah to come, Jesus!

They missed Him the first time, but they will receive Him when He comes again.

What are they rejoicing in?

They are rejoicing in the salvation that the Messiah, that Jesus brings them, the freedom from sin!

And notice, they will not see Jesus until they say “... **Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!**” In other words, they will call upon Jesus as their Lord and Savior as they repent of their sins!

And that brings us to the last feast. Listen to how this all fits together.

VERSES 33-44

This last feast is called the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths, Succoth. It too was a fall feast that began on the 15th day of the 7th month of Tishri and lasted for seven days.

This feast celebrated how God provided for the children of Israel during their wilderness wanderings as they lived in tents or booths you might say.

And then, how God brought them into the Promise Land fulfilling His promise to them.

Even today in Israel many Jews will construct these little lean-tos or booths.

What they did before is that they would set up a Sabbath day's journey from the Temple or about ½ mile if they were from out of town, these booths.

But now they will set them up on the roofs of their homes. And these families will live in these booths for the week, looking up at night through the holes in the roof and remembering all that God has done for them and is doing for them!

And I love how this plays out, prophetically speaking. I believe this is a picture of the Jewish people entering into the Millennial Kingdom with Christ.

They were gathered together from all over the world – the Feast of Trumpets.

The blood of the Lamb saved them, they received the atonement from Jesus – Yom Kippur.

And now they have entered into the ultimate Promise Land – the Feast of Tabernacles!

It is also worth noting that the Jews added two extra rituals to their celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles to remind them of God's wilderness blessings.

The first was the pouring out of the water from the pool of Siloam, recalling God's provision of water in the desert.

The second was the placing of four large lighted candlesticks to recall the pillar of fire that led the people by night.

Jesus related both of these traditions to Himself.

It was during the Feast of Tabernacles, when the water was being poured out, that He cried out, "**If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.**" (John 7:37).

He also said to the Temple crowd, "**I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.**" (John 8:12).

What a tragedy that the Jews were so careful to maintain their traditions and yet they completely missed the Messiah who was in their midst! I wonder how many people today miss the Messiah because of the traditions they hold on to!

One last point here. Back then they worked six days and rested on the seventh and there was no other time off for them except these feast days, which all focused on the Lord, and they were actually centered upon Christ and the work He was to do and has now done, except for these last three feasts, which relate to Israel, the Jews!

It is as Paul said in Romans 11:25-27, "**For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.'**"

When that last Gentile gets saved, **“the fullness of the Gentiles has come in”** and the Rapture happens, God will be dealing with the Jewish people once again and He alone can take away sin and thus, they must turn to Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins, and they will!

LEVITICUS 24

VERSES 1-4

Remember from Exodus that the Seven-Branched Oil-Burning Lamp stood in the Holy Place, on the left side, just before the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, the place where God dwelt.

In fact, it was the only source of light in the Holy Place, this Seven-Branched Oil-Burning Lamp and Aaron’s responsibility was to make sure that the light never went out by trimming the wicks and making sure there was enough oil in the bowls.

In John 8:12 we are told, **“Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’”**

And then in Matthew 5:14 Jesus tells us, **“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.”**

In other words, we are now to reflect the light of Jesus in a dark world and the only way we are going to do that is if we take our wicks and trim them or make sure we are walking as God would have us. We must crucify the flesh and be filled with the oil of the Holy Spirit!

Keep in mind that if God indwells us, then it is His light that is shining, not our light, which would never work!

Also, in John 10:22 we are told, **“Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter.”**

When you read the Scriptures there is no feast in Israel that God instructed His people to observe that fell in the winter. All the feasts were in spring, summer and fall.

So what’s this feast all about?

The Feast of Dedication or the Feast of Lights we call today, Hanukkah. And this feast begins this year at sunset on Thursday, December 7, 2023, and it will end on nightfall of Friday, December 15, 2023.

This feast commemorated the rededication of the Temple by the Maccabees in 165 B. C. after Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the temple several years earlier.

The story goes that as they began to light the lamps of the Seven-Branched Oil-Burning Lamp, they only had enough oil to last one day, and it would take several days to make this pure oil for the lamps.

Also, once the lamps were lit, they were not allowed to go out.

But a miracle took place and the lamps burned for eight days and thus, they celebrated this feast as a memorial of that day - the Feast of Lights or Hanukah!

VERSES 5-9

Also, in the Holy Place, before the veil, was the Table of Showbread on the right side.

And on it were 12 loaves of bread representing the 12 tribes of Israel.

This speaks of fellowship and communion with God as we partake of Him through His Word.

And every Sabbath the loaves from the previous week were eaten by the priests and new loaves of bread were placed on this table.

Interestingly enough, the word “**showbread**” means “*bread of faces*” and it speaks of being eaten before the face of God, and like I have said, it speaks of fellowship, communion with God.

God doesn't want our fellowship to become stale, but He wants it fresh!

VERSES 10-12

This man was part of the mixed multitude that left Egypt with the children of Israel.

His mom was Jewish, and his dad was Egyptian.

And as he fought with this Jewish man he blasphemed God, verbally attacked the true and living God.

Now to his defense, this was a common practice in Egypt, they did curse the many gods they had but it was something that God said He would not tolerate!

Now I do like what they did here. They did not rush to judgment but waited and wanted to know what the Lord wanted them to do or “**that the mind of the LORD might be shown to them.**”

May we learn that lesson, to seek God before we rush to judgment or action!

VERSES 13-16

The penalty for his actions was that he was to be stoned to death.

Now that may seem severe, but it was a deterrent or incentive for others not to blaspheme God but to respect who He is, His holiness and-so-on.

Did it work?

For the Jew, they would not even say the name of God.

They would write *ADONAI* or “*lord*” instead of *YAHWEH* or “*LORD.*”

They would write “*G-D*” instead of “*GOD*” and when they would speak of the name of God, they would say, “*the name.*”

I guess their thinking was that you could not blaspheme the name of God if you never said the name of God, but what about their actions?

Now the question may be, “*Is punishment like this really a deterrent or incentive for others not to commit the crime?*”

Look at the evidence. In Singapore they don’t have a big drug problem in their country like we do here in America, why?

Because if someone is caught with drugs on them, there is no court case, no lawyers, you are shot on the spot, end of story.

In many of the Middle Eastern countries if you steal and they catch you, your hand will be cut off. I guess if you get caught more than once, your stealing days are over!

In this country, we tend to protect the criminals instead of the victims and we are reaping the consequences of that. People are on death row for years before they are put to death for a capital crime, so that is not a deterrent!

It is as Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 8:11, “**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.**”

VERSES 17-22

Once again God is establishing laws to keep order within a society.

If you kill a man, premeditated murder, you would be put to death for your crime. You see, crimes must be punished but they must also be punished in proportion to the crime they have committed, not more and not less!

God did this to help keep order.

Think about it. If someone knocked out your tooth you would want to knock their block off!

God is telling them, ***“No, the punishment must be equivalent to the crime!”***

That just makes sense, doesn't it?

You see, human nature wants to get back even more, but God is fair in His judgments and thus, to keep order, He tells them what they need to do when a crime is committed, how it is to be handled!

VERSE 23

Keep in mind that these were not suggestions to Israel but laws they were to practice for the health of their society, their people. God expected them to obey it and here they did, they put to death this man who blasphemed God!

As I close this evening, let me leave you with these words from Allen P. Ross from his book, *Holiness to the LORD*. He wrote,

The idea of the passage could be turned to positive instruction from the negative example:

God's people must sanctify the name of the LORD (i.e., ensure that the LORD'S holy and sovereign character is preserved in the world) because the LORD'S righteous demands that the blasphemer be judged.

The exposition of this passage has to provide positive instructions about how believers should treat the name of the LORD. They must speak and live as if God's reputation is at stake. Part of the application should be to be on guard against the improper use of the name of the LORD; but the primary application is to sanctify the name of the LORD, for it is a holy name, a name above every name, a name before which every knee will bow.

The punishment aspect of this passage is part of the regulation of Israel's law that does not belong to the church. For matters such as blasphemy, which is so prevalent in the culture today, Christians can only warn blasphemers that God will not hold them guiltless. Christians leave vengeance up to God but pray for his name to be hallowed and for the divine will to be worked out on earth.

Judgment is certain for unbelievers who blaspheme unless they repent. In Matt. 12 Jesus told the Pharisees that every sin and blasphemy could be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit would not be forgiven. The sin that would not be forgiven was not only rejecting the Son of Man but also attributing his mighty works to Satan. In short, both the words and works of Jesus were being discredited. Such blasphemy, therefore, is not a sin that a true believer can commit because it involves the total rejection of the Son of God.

In an ironic twist in the gospel narrative, the charge against Jesus that sent him to the cross was blasphemy (Matt. 26:65-66). In condemning the Son of God to death, his accusers were in fact guilty of blaspheming, and if they did not repent they would have no share in the world to come.

- Allen P. Ross, *Holiness to the LORD*, pp. 448-449

May we obey the Lord and His instructions for us for He wants us to be holy as He is holy!