

## **Bible Study Lesson Summary, Nov. 26, 2017**

*This Sunday, Nov. 26<sup>th</sup>, your readings should be Day 64: Chapters 21-22 of Leviticus, Psalm 66, and Acts 6.*

*I had a short presentation on the purpose of law in God's plan. Rules and laws are made because something went wrong. So they are put in place so it won't create the same problem again. God works in the same way. He saw the progression of sin starting with Adam and Eve and gave the Commandments. As people were dying unnecessarily in the desert he gave them the purity laws; like don't eat pork, shellfish, roadkill, wash your hands, keep those with open sores separate until there are no more open wounds, etc. These prevented more deaths. These laws also made the Israelites seem ahead of their time in terms of civilization. By the time Jesus came along he changed many of those things because they were not going to be as big a problem for the future. So he made all food clean so we can eat pork and shellfish, but I still don't recommend roadkill.*

### **ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**

**Acts 2:** The strong wind should remind you of the story of creation. This is a new creation, or at least the participation of the Holy Spirit in the creation of the church. Having all the people from different countries with different languages, all hearing the Good News, is the reversal of the Tower of Babel. With all that we now know about the message of the Gospel it is hard to imagine this speech by Peter and its impact. But having 3,000 join is an amazing sign of its influence. The results of the speech is also in the communal life mentioned in vs. 42-47.

**Acts 3:** The cure of the leper is the second sign to the people of the amazing power of the name of Jesus. Pentecost is the first. Peter's second speech give more details of the story. Notice in vs. 19 it is about repentance.

**Acts 4:** After Peter's second speech, there is a kick-back for the priests and the Sadducees. So now there is a follow-up trail after the nighttime trial of Jesus. They probably thought the crucifixion would have ended the followers spirit. But now it is growing. The warnings do no good. By vs. 31 their prayers are answered and more of them receive the Holy Spirit. Then we get another mention of the community life. This time we get some details because it is all about sharing.

**Acts 5:** Great gifts and signs have come to the people so great things are expected. Ananias and Sapphira think they can con Peter. It doesn't go well. Vs. 12-16 mentions even more signs, which bring a kickback again. This is a pattern for the church. The apostles are arrested and put in jail. An angel gets them out. This slows the bigwigs down.

### **THE BOOK OF PSALMS**

**Psalm 59:** Vs. 4, "For no offense or misdeed of mine, Lord, for no fault they hurry to take up arms. Vs. 13, "For the lies they have told under oath destroy them in anger, destroy this they are no more." These foretell the ways that the Scribes and Pharisees tried to trip up Jesus and also the trial of Jesus by the Sanhedrin.

**Psalm 60:** This whole psalm is spoken in the plural so Jesus is speaking with and for us.

**Psalm 61:** This is the prayer of Jesus as He descended into Hell. Vs. 3, “From the brink of Sheol I call; my heart grows faint. Raise me up, set me on a rock.”

**Psalm 62:** Another prayer of Jesus as He faced the scribes and Pharisees. Vs. 5, “They delight in lies; they bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse.”

**Psalm 63:** A prayer of Jesus at the trial. Vs. 10, “But those who seek my life will come to ruin; they shall go down to the depths of the earth! They shall be handed over to the sword and become the prey of jackals! But the king shall rejoice in God...” The prayer for violence always bothered me when reading the psalms. I wanted to be more forgiving and so be like Jesus. But as I have mentioned these are the prayers of Jesus so the question is Jesus praying for them to be condemned? The answer is not easily proven one way or another. Jesus preached repentance. I know that destruction was obviously the result of many sinful acts. The temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 66 and some believe it was because so many Jews did not accept Jesus. Others just think it was because God didn't need it anymore because Jesus replaced it. But we do not even know if those people were condemned for we don't know if they repented before death.

**Psalm 64:** This psalm is certainly one that Jesus would have prayed during His Passion.

**Psalm 65:** By speaking in the plural Jesus is bringing us into this prayer.

## THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

**Lev. 8:** This elaborate ordination ceremony is a reminder of how important the priesthood was to these people and to God. Everything that they did wrong, they had to go to the priest, who would make a sacrifice to atone for the sin. Everyone had to deal with God in this way from peasant to prince. I've mentioned the ritual washing and its foreshadowing of the washing of feet, the vestments, the anointing, and the mitre before. Note in vs. 14-15 the priests laid hands on the bullock. For Reconciliation priests extend their hand over the person. For ordination the bishop lays hands on the one to be ordained. This is all the foreshadowing of Holy Orders, Reconciliation and Eucharist.

**Lev. 9:** At the end of the ordination ceremony (vs. 23-24) the glory of the Lord was revealed. As much as that would still be a good sign today, the glory of the Lord is actually seen, especially by John, as the death or sacrifice of Jesus which proclaimed His love. It is all about the Father receiving the appropriate sacrifice, livestock or the Son.

**Lev. 10:** The first verses of this chapter are a reminder that the priest had to do things correctly or he would be punished. In the case of Nadab and Abihu death was swift. These sons of Aaron did not follow the law. This might be a good time to mention that there is a difference in the death penalty from the OT to the NT. God showed in the OT how deadly each sin was in His eyes. In the NT these sins are still deadly so we call them mortal sin, but God's mercy allows for the sinner to repent. In vs. 14-15, notice that since these priests were married and had families, their families

would also partake of the priestly portions. Also notice that it is important for the priest to eat his part of the sacrifice to complete it. Just like receiving communion completes the crucifixion.

**Lev. 11:** As the footnotes mention, these laws may not be based on great science but they are the best hygiene information that they had and they took it very seriously. Being a person with a shellfish allergy I appreciate the restriction from eating water creatures without fins, vs. 10.

**Lev. 12:** These are the instructions that Mary and Joseph followed for the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple.

**Lev. 13:** It is important to realize that the Jews were concerned about the health consequences of bodily fluids. It did not matter to them whether they came because of normal activity like childbirth or sickness or violence. All bodily fluids were scary for them. Blood was the most important for they saw it as the sign of life, but puss or spit were just as scary. They didn't understand germs but they had observed the consequences. Jesus dealt with these laws when He cured the sick. I'm wondering if in vs. 42 they might have also been dealing with skin cancer along with leprosy

**Lev. 14:** Vs. 14, "Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the tip of the man's right ear, the thumb of his right hand, and the big toe of his right foot." The right side was the side of strength and was to be kept clean. So to this day in many parts of the Middle East the left hand is for the handling of toilet paper, if you know what I mean. With vs. 33 and on, you have infections of houses which seems weird unless you realize how many buildings have been torn down or totally redone because of mold.

**Lev. 15:** Vs. 32-33, "This is the law for the man who is afflicted with a chronic flow, or who has an emission of seed, and thereby becomes unclean; as well as for the woman who has her menstrual period, or who is afflicted with a chronic flow; the law for male and female; and also for the man who lies with an unclean woman." Bladder control and other problems with illness and aging could be a cause of becoming a social outcast. Even normal menstruations, with its blood flow, is dangerous when you don't understand germs.

**Lev. 16:** In this chapter we have their concept of the scapegoat. This creature would have the sins of the people put on it and its slow death in the desert would make up for those sins. In this way the sins were removed from the people so that they would not pay the price for them. Jesus was our "sin-offering goat" (vs. 15) so we just have to go to Confession. In the movie, "The Passion of the Christ", Judas saw the dead scapegoat and thought he would have to carry the weight of the sins like the goat did. Azazel is another unique word. The footnotes refer it to the goat which may be why a goat's head is many times a symbol of Satan in literature.

**Lev. 17:** Vs. 11, "Since the life of the living body is in its blood, I have made you put it on the altar, so that atonement may thereby be made for your own lives, because it is the blood, as the seat of life, that makes atonement." This sets up the shedding of the blood of Jesus as the Father's plan for our atonement.

**Lev. 18:** Vs. 18, "While your wife is still living, you shall not marry her sister as her rival; for thus you would disgrace your first wife." Obviously they practiced polygamy, but they already saw the problems with it in terms of jealousy. Vs. 22, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; such a thing is an abomination." Some of these rules are still held by the church. The question that always comes up is why hold some and disregard others? The answer is natural law. People like St. Thomas Aquinas did the work to figure out what we were made for and why God would have

made us in this way. These natural laws will not change unless God actually changes our bodies. Our changing them will not change what the church feels is God's will that comes from this set of laws of nature. Molech, who is mentioned in vs. 21, is the Canaanite god whose people offered to him a sacrifice by which they burned their children alive.

**Lev. 19:** Vs. 9-10 speaks of not being too thorough about the harvest so that there is something left for the poor to go out and get. This was their way of helping the poor but not humiliating them by simply giving them charity. The poor had to go out and work to get the leavings. You will see the result of this in the book of Ruth. Vs. 26-28 get into some interesting practices, like divination, hair cutting, body cutting or tattoos. These are seen as bad because they are the practices of the Canaanites. So our prayer to saints is not affected, and I am sorry to say that this would not forbid tattoos, but the blood rules might. Vs. 31 condemns mediums and fortune-tellers because they might not be listening to God, but other spirits. I personally like vs. 32 more and more for it lets us know that we should show respect to the aged.

**Lev. 20:** Vs. 10 condemns adulterers to death, men and women. Vs. 13 condemns sodomites to death. Some people want one or both of these to be changed, most of us are glad that Jesus stopped the death sentence. As mentioned before Jesus' still saw these as mortal sins but gives us a chance for repentance. But without that repentance it becomes an eternal punishment after death, for He said they could not enter heaven. Adultery and sodomy have the same rationale in the Church's mind and laws. Sex is at least partly for procreation. When that part of the equation is removed, there will be problems coming. Vs. 21, "If a man marries his brother's wife and thus disgraces his brother, they shall be childless because of this incest." This would be hard to legislate, but does explain John the Baptist's concern with Herod.