

## The Holiness Code

Leviticus 17-23

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Two months ago when I gave the sermon on "Halloween," I made a fleeting reference to the holiness code while I was explaining spiritism, and somebody out there picked up on it and began asking questions about what this holiness code is. That should teach me that no word in a sermon goes unnoticed, or maybe I should say that no sermon goes 'unpunished.' It was recommended to me that I give a sermon on the holiness code so that we can all understand what it is, and more importantly, what it means to us today.

I am going to attempt then to explain what the holiness code is, and its application to us as New Testament Christians. This is a very large subject. You do not go through ten chapters of the book of Leviticus in one sermon. I do not think I am going to try to even cover it in one sermon, but we will just have to see how far we get. We will attempt to at least give a good overview so that if you want to do your own study on the holiness code in the book of Leviticus, you will have somewhat of a background.

What is the holiness code? That is the first question we need to ask. This term, as you probably all are aware, is not found in the Bible. God does not say, "Okay Moses. Now I'm going to give you the holiness code." It is not there. It is something that men have applied to a section of Scripture. In fact, maybe the most Bible-hating men of all time gave this term to this section of Scripture. The people I am talking about are scholars of the liberal variety who are called "The German Higher Critics" of the last century. They were very much into deconstructing the Bible and trying to humanize it and explain it away. When they came to this section of Leviticus—specifically Leviticus 17 through 26—they saw this section of Scripture concentrated on sanctification, or holiness.

The word holiness came up quite frequently in these chapters, and they felt that it was a separate part of the book of Leviticus. They felt that maybe the earlier chapters of Leviticus could have been written much much earlier than this one. In fact they thought that the holiness code was written after the exile by priests who came back to Judea after they went into captivity in Babylon, and that they added it then—the way they would look at it—to gain control over the people. They put in a code whereby the people would have to live, and the priests then would have control over the laws and the things that these Jews who had come back from Babylon would live by.

On the other hand, it would supposedly keep them from going into exile again, because it would narrow them down, and they would not be breaking the Sabbath and would not be committing idolatry, which they recognized as the reasons why they had gone into captivity.

Well, that is all hogwash in my opinion, because this was given directly to Moses by God probably in the 15th century BC. But these scholars, thinking they know more than God, gave this name the holiness code to this section of Scripture, and it stuck, because most theologians adhere to the idea that the Pentateuch—the first five books of the Bible—was written by different people at different times and compiled later.

Those of you who know anything about this know this is called "The Documentary Hypothesis." They think that there was a priestly bunch of writers, and they have all these different acronyms

about who wrote what. If you are into all that, the holiness code is abbreviated "H," and it is a subset of "P." As far as they go, they say the priests wrote this, and this is a separate section called "H." Like I said, this is all hogwash. I just wanted you to understand where the term the holiness code came from.

I even do not agree with the section, that they are just limited it to chapters 17 through 26. They should have included chapter 27 because the whole chapter uses the word sanctify, or sanctified, or sanctifies, about a hundred times. I am exaggerating a little bit, but that whole chapter is about sanctification too. Why did they not include that? I do not know. There is no telling what scholars in their white towers will do. Probably it did not have the right sentence structure or something, and they gave it to some other group of people. That is liberal higher criticism for you.

However they derived this name, the title does fit the subject of these chapters. They are about holiness. It is the main subject of these chapters. Like I said, I would include chapter 27 in it. However, for my purposes in this sermon I think I will confine my study to chapters 17 through 23, because the later chapters deal with other things—a lot of judgments and things that I do not necessarily want to get into.

Chapter 23 is the famous chapter with the holy days in it. There is that word again, *holy* days. Most of what we have learned in the past out of these particular chapters comes between chapters 17 and 23 anyway. The other ones are, like I said, judgments and things later on, and things like the Year of Jubilee—the redemption of slaves, the redemption of property, slavery, and things like that.

Let us turn, first of all, to Leviticus 19, and we will read the first two verses here because this is the theme of this whole holiness code business.

**Leviticus 19:1-2** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

It is very important. This is the theme really of the whole Bible. We have been sanctified by God, and because He is holy, and because He is making man into His image, we must be holy like Him.

Now God uses a shorthand form of this throughout the holiness code. He does not say, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." He simply says, "I am the Lord." If you go through chapter 19, it says, "I am the LORD your God." And then He will give another way, and at the end He will say, "I am the LORD your God." Then He will give another one, and say, "I am the LORD." He will go on and on like this, and what He is doing is restating His theme in a shorthand way. "You shall do this. To remind you, I am God, and this, as being God, is the way I act, and because you are My people and I have made you holy, this is how you will act." And He reminds them: "I am God."

He not only reminds them of the way they should be, but He has the definite power to make and enforce these laws. So every time you see this 'I am the Lord' running through this section, He is repeating in shorthand form chapter 19 verse 2, "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy." It is a reminder. "I am the LORD, and I am holy. Because I am the LORD, this is the way you should act."

As I kind of hinted at, the purpose of these dozens of laws and statutes and ordinances that are in this holiness code is to teach us how God lives. He is a holy God, and a holy God lives this way. Since

we have been commanded to become holy as He is, this is how we should live. These laws are designed to teach us how God lives. Everything God does is holy. That is His essential nature—holiness, purity; ultimate purity; purity beyond what we could imagine.

Before we go any further, I want to make sure that something is absolutely clear to everyone who hears this sermon. This section of Scripture does not tell us that we will be holy solely because we do these things. That is a misunderstanding of this. It puts the cart before the horse. Just think about people in history who have taken this approach, who have thought that if they only do what is here, they will be holy people. Can you think of one? What about the Pharisees in Jesus' time? They would avoid even looking at a woman, because there are certain laws that seem to imply that is what they should do—because women were more unclean than men.

So in order to be holy, as they interpreted these scriptures, they would do everything to avoid looking at a woman, or coming in contact with her, just in case she was in a state of impurity. Let us say she was having her menstrual period, or what have you, or she had just had a baby. They avoided touching people who were sick. They avoided touching dead things with ritualistic fervor and abstinence, thinking they would be holy—and they were not holy at all.

There is a vital component missing when you approach the holiness code this way, because only a holy person can make something holy. You have to be sanctified first before you can become holy. The only one who can make anything holy is God Himself, because only He is holy.

If you approach this thing with just the attitude of I am going to do these, and therefore become holy, that is legalism—strict legalism like the Pharisees tried to do. That component that sanctification and growing in God's character by His Spirit is missing. That is the most vital part of becoming holy—God's involvement in our lives, to be holy people. No human has the power to make anything holy. Only God has that power because He is holy. It is His whole character/personality—the essence of what He is—His holiness.

A person can set something apart for holy use. They could dedicate something, but that just makes it different. It does not make it different in the sense that God is different. He would then have to add to that by making it holy of His own accord. The holiness that God forms in us is a reflection of His perfect, righteous, and pure character. That is the holiness that God is. Like I said before, it is His essential nature.

If you want to put it in terms that maybe a scientist would understand, His holiness is the quantum difference between what we are and what He is. It is that wide gulf between human and divine. We cannot even imagine what He is. He is just so different, so pure. If you want a scripture that, to me, defines what holiness is, it is Isaiah 55:8-9. Even this does not come close enough.

**Isaiah 55:8-9** For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.

It is like the difference between the height of the earth as compared to the height of the heavens. Have you ever tried to jump a chasm that wide? Well, that is the difference between God's holiness and any kind of purity that we might have. That is the purity that we are striving to grow into. Obviously, in this life, we will never have it. It is probably a quality that human flesh, except in the person of Jesus Christ, could not handle. We are all tainted by sin and impurity. Jesus was not.

It is mind-boggling to think of God's holiness. That is why Isaiah could not hold his bowels in when he saw God in the flesh. That is why Peter cowered in terror when he saw Jesus Christ in all His holy grandeur as Creator there on the Sea of Galilee. That is why the prophets quailed. Ezekiel could not stand the sight of God. It was too awesome. That is the holiness that we are talking about here.

Let us go through a series of scriptures and prove this point that God is the One who sanctifies. There are several scriptures here even in the holiness code, but I want to start in Exodus 31. One of the ways that God sanctifies us is through His Sabbath. He sets us apart, and in keeping the Sabbath we remain set apart as His people.

**Exodus 31:12-13** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak also to the children of Israel saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.' "

It is one of His names—Yahweh Mekaddishkem, the Lord who sanctifies you, the One who sets you apart. He set apart Israel as His people, as His nation, and He set apart the church as His own holy people. You will find that in I Peter 2. We are a holy nation, set aside to do good works.

**Leviticus 20:8** And you shall keep My statutes, and perform them: I am the LORD who sanctifies you.

He just basically repeats what He said in Exodus 31. How many times does He have to say it before we get it?

**Leviticus 21:8** Therefore you shall consecrate him, for he offers the bread of your God. . .

He is talking about the conduct of priests, and is saying that the priesthood will set this priest aside for the reasons of offering the bread to God. That was part of his duties. He was set apart from all Israel, because that was the line God chose to do this work, and no one else was allowed to do it. So he was different. He was set apart for this holy work.

**Leviticus 21:8** . . . He shall be holy to you, for I the LORD, who sanctify you, am holy.

He resets the theme, and He makes us all understand that God is the One who does the real sanctifying. He is the One it begins with.

How about a New Testament scripture?

**I Thessalonians 5:23** Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely. . .

Not just set you apart initially, but to make you holy through and through to the end. This reminds me of Philippians 1:6, where Paul says to the Philippians that the God who started this work is going to finish it.

**I Thessalonians 5:23** . . . And may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless [pure, undefiled] at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is God that sanctifies.

Let us see how God's sanctification of us works with the law, because what we are talking about in the holiness code is a bunch of laws: "You shall not do this. You shall do this. I am the Lord."

Let us go to Exodus 19. We are trying to combine these ideas that God is the One that sanctifies with the law. This is just before God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses up on Mount Sinai, and He told the people to get ready. This is the prelude to all that, and making the people of Israel God's people. Remember, just after He gives the Ten Commandments, they go through the Old Covenant, and by chapter 24, everything is signed, sealed, and delivered, and they are then set aside as God's people. This is the prelude to all that.

**Exodus 19:3-8** And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the LORD commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." So Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD.

Verse 5 seems to say that if you keep the law and the covenant, then you will be holy. But that is kind of backwards. It is really not what it says, because by making the covenant, God made them holy. He set them apart. And then the keeping of the law that they did was a response to being God's sanctified people, set apart. We do not want to get the cart before the horse here. God was the One that set them apart, sanctified them to be His holy people, and then the keeping of the law kept them in that position.

You do not keep the law and become holy. You become holy because God sets you apart, and in response and great thanks to God, you keep His law, and then you grow in holiness. There is a difference. When we first hear of God's Word, you have a period what we have called "initial repentance," and you become baptized, and God washes away your sins. He forgives you completely. Are you through repenting? No. You spend the rest of your life repenting.

Holiness is very similar. When God calls you, and you decide to live by the terms of the covenant, you are made holy. But are you finished being holy? No. You spend the rest of your life becoming holy. It is a process that lasts throughout your life.

So there is an initial holiness that God does as an act of sheer legal pronouncement, because you have come under the covenant. And then you spend the rest of your life trying to live up to that in learning how to be that way—the way He is, because He is the Lord, and He is holy, and so we shall be holy too.

Maybe when you are going through these scriptures you might ask yourself: Which part of holiness is the scripture actually talking about? Because with a physical people like Israel, that is as far as they got. They got as far as the initial legal declaration by God that they were holy, because they had decided to come under the covenant. They did not have the right tools after that point to do the other, to really become holy. They refused.

One way we see that is because they refused to keep the law. They broke the law left and right, and by breaking the law they became impure, which is the opposite of holiness. I just wanted to make sure you understood that distinction. There is a legal declaration of holiness that happens when we become set apart to God by accepting the covenant. And then there is a much longer and more difficult period of our lives where we become holy through God's help, and doing His ways. This is what the New Testament writers call "sanctification."

Let us see this in the right order. Go to Deuteronomy 7. This is the second law that God gave, about forty years later, to the descendants of those that He spoke to at Mount Sinai. He wanted to make sure that they had everything re-told to them before they went into the land, so that everybody was nice and square on what was supposed to happen. Verse 6 puts things in the right order.

**Deuteronomy 7:6** For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.

That was God's doing. He made them holy. He chose them out. They became special.

**Deuteronomy 7:7-8** The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

It was a matter of His grace that He did this, and because He was keeping His promise to the patriarchs.

**Deuteronomy 7:9-11** Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God [This sounds like the theme of the holiness code], the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face. Therefore [because of all this that God has done and because of who He is and what He can do] you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them.

Do you see how it all works now? He calls us by His grace. He sets us apart. He lets us know that the buck stops with Him. He lets us know that He is the One that provides for us. He lets us know that He is the Sovereign of all the universe. He lets us know that He has worked in the lives of His prophets, and His apostles, and church members down through the ages. He lets us know that He is the One who will bring everything to pass throughout all time to make sure that all the prophecies will be fulfilled, because He is a God who keeps His word.

Because He is all these things, and can squash us like a gnat, we should keep His commandments, His statutes, and all His laws and His judgments, and observe them, because that is the kind of God we have. We owe it to Him to do these things. He is God; therefore, we shall be holy as He is holy.

We have made an oath through our baptism that we are going to keep this covenant, and so the covenant demands that we keep these words of the Book, and so we shall, or we fail in keeping the covenant.

By doing that then, we learn to become holy, like God is. It is not without benefit. It is not like God is standing there with a hammer over our heads because He is God and has the power to do it, but because we want to. We want to be like Him. That is why we entered into the covenant in the first place, because we know all the rewards and promises that come with it too, like eternal life, living and ruling with Jesus Christ for a thousand years, and then for all eternity beyond, and for living in perfection forever and being able to help God in His creation forever. All the promises far outweigh the dangers and sufferings, like Paul says in Romans 8. So we should be holy, because He is holy.

Let us look at one nuance in Deuteronomy 26. This will just backup something I said before. My New King James titles this section, A Special People of God. They could have said "a holy people," "a set-apart people."

**Deuteronomy 26:16** This day the LORD your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments; therefore you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.

Everything that is within us should be motivated or moving toward keeping these laws.

**Deuteronomy 26:17** Today you have proclaimed the LORD to be your God, . . .

In a sense, every Sabbath we again proclaim that we are going to be doing these things, that God is our God.

**Deuteronomy 26:17** . . . and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice.

Boy! That covers everything, does it not?

**Deuteronomy 26:18-19** Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He has promised you, that you should keep all His commandments, and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken.

The nuance there is in verse 18. This is the initial proclamation of holiness that I mentioned earlier. The nuance is in the word 'proclaimed' in verse 18, "The Lord has proclaimed you to be His special people," and then in verse 19, the words 'may be,' "that you may be a holy people to the Lord your God." He goes to both the initial holiness, and the other—the sanctification throughout our lives.

He set them apart. He proclaimed them to be His special people to get the ball rolling, and He would give them all these things in the hopes that they may be, in time, at some point in the future, a holy people—really holy, not just proclaimed as a king would proclaim: "This will be done. So it is written, so it shall be done." He proclaimed that from His imperial Majesty, as King, and the ultimate law of the land, let us say, that this is so.

God says, "The reason I've proclaimed this is so that I can shower you with blessings and so that I can make you the greatest nation on earth, so I could do all these things and, most importantly, that you may be a holy people—a really holy people" (through growth and becoming like He is).

This is a legal maneuver whereby God pronounces an immediate change of status. This change in status breaks down into three different categories. First, it brings the people under the King's law. Since He made this proclamation that "you are My people," they immediately came under the King's law. God is the King. "If you're going to be My people, then you obey My voice."

The second thing it does is that it binds the King to the promises that He makes under the covenant. If He says He is going to bless them if they do their part, well then, He is honor-bound by the covenant to keep His part of it.

The third one is the interesting one. It sets up conditions whereby the people may indeed become holy; not just *pronounced* holy, but really and truly holy, just like God is.

We know that only a few in Israel were called to take up that challenge: the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets, some of the kings, and a few others. Some of them had schools of the prophets. We do not know how many in the Old Testament were able to take this holiness throughout their lives, but it was really opened up to us with the coming of Jesus Christ, and our being proclaimed holy, and our being given the same set of circumstances, plus His Spirit. So we have a great advantage then, that we could truly become holy; not just be pronounced holy, but become holy by growing in character. God says in Deuteronomy 29 He never gave them the right heart to obey Him.

**Deuteronomy 29:4** Yet the LORD has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day.

They did not have the tool. They did not have God's Spirit, and so they failed. They only got as far as being pronounced a holy people. They never truly became holy. They were as carnal as all get out, and that is the end that we are warned repeatedly not to repeat. It says in Hebrews 3 and 4 that they did not enter the rest because all that they heard was not mixed with faith. They did not believe. They did not obey, and so they missed out. They all died in the wilderness. But we have the opportunity to go far beyond that.

We see that in following the holiness code we do not necessarily become holy. But if it is kept in the right spirit, it does help us to remain holy, and it promotes the building of holy character. Mr. Armstrong always said that God's purpose was to build righteous character in us, and he often said that this is something that even God cannot do by fiat. It is not something that He can say "Shazaam!" and somebody is holy—really holy. If He could have done that, Helel would have been holy.

But God's greatest creation—the most beautiful and talented person that He ever made—ended up rebelling against Him, because he did not cooperate with God in becoming holy. He was certainly set apart. He was set apart from all the angels. He was one of the cherubs that covered. He was holy, but he did not *become* holy. He went the other direction and ended up in becoming cast out and totally impure. Now he is the face of all evil. Everything that is bad and wrong is in his character. God wants us to go the other direction than what Helel did, and became Satan. God wants to build righteous character in us.

As I just mentioned, character is created with the willing cooperation of each individual that God calls. It can then only be created through long years of practice for the most part. I do not know how many have had just a short time before God took their lives, and said that was enough. We have been in the church for years and years and years, and we are still growing in holiness, in putting that righteous character on—putting on the new man.

The holiness code is written primarily in a negative form, as prohibitions. "You shall not do this. You shall not do that." He was writing to a carnal people, and that is pretty much all carnal people can understand. The holiness code is an Old Testament statement of how a person can understand righteous character and incorporate it into his life.

Without God's calling, without His Spirit, a person who keeps the holiness code can at best be moral. He could be a moral person. He could do what is right, but he cannot become holy without the tools. He could be a moral, ethical person and a fine upstanding citizen, but without that ingredient of God's Spirit and God's active participation, you cannot become holy by keeping the laws of the holiness code. Only those with whom God is working can be holy, because it is God who supplies the missing pieces.

Let us quickly review what I have said here about holiness.

1. Holiness is the essential nature of God. He is perfectly pure and righteous beyond all human comprehension. The word has a link with transcendence totally beyond anything that we can understand.
2. God is the only One who can either pronounce or make something holy. Holiness can only come from the holy, and the only innately Holy One is God. I am talking here about the holiness that is embodied in righteous character.
3. Once called by God and committed to His covenant, we are to be holy because He Himself is holy. It is a commanded goal of God's people, because He is recreating Himself, and He cannot recreate Himself unless the person becomes holy. You cannot become a God-being without holiness. It would be oxymoronic to have an unholy God of the true nature. It says in Hebrews 12:14 that if we do not pursue holiness, we will never see God.
4. We cannot become holy by any amount of keeping God's law alone. We become holy by growing in God's perfect righteous character, with the assistance of His Spirit.

We express holiness in our daily living by reflecting God's character in our thoughts, speech, and deeds. A simple way to understand it is, that as we grow in Christ's image, we become holier. The more like Christ we are, the holier we are, the more sanctified we are, the more different we are, the more set apart we are, the more transcendent we are, compared to a person who is not trying.

We should be able to see now that because the holiness code teaches us how to grow in righteous, godly character, then it must be enforced. How could we throw something away that is a tool that God gives us to become holy? It just does not make any sense. It would be like saying, "Well, the commandments aren't needed any more, even though they'll teach us to be like God is." Why should we throw the commandments away? They are the things that help us to know how God lives.

So the holiness code is still very much in force. The holiness code reflects God's character, and His character never changes. He gave this to the Israelites to tell them how He lives, so the holiness code still applies.

Now before you go growing a ragged beard, or want to stone somebody for something he did, there are caveats here. We cannot just say, "Well, let's all go and make sure men that you don't trim your beard ever, and make sure you don't round out your hair," or whatever. We have got to understand these in their context.

Some of these things are not things that are in effect in the letter. That is probably the easiest ways to put it. Some of it does not apply anymore except in the spiritual principles that we can gather from it, because we are not Israel. Some of these laws were given to them because they were a physical people. They were a nation that God set apart to show His way, and some of them are very physical things that do not apply anymore, because we do not live like they did anymore.

We are not a nation apart in a land as a nation of this world. We are a little bit different. We are a nation, but we are a spiritual nation living as pilgrims and sojourners among other nations, and some of these things do not quite apply in their letter as much anymore. This means we have to determine what is still applicable, and what is not.

As far as I know, there are no simple ways to do this. If you want simple, I am sorry. That is not what you will get from me. There are some guidelines that we can use that help, but God is a very thoughtful God, and He wants us to be thoughtful people. He wants us to learn to meditate on His law, as Psalm 119 says several times. He wants us to understand how these things apply. He wants us to be able to make righteous judgments about situations that come up, and so we have to learn to apply the law in the situations that arise in our daily lives, whatever we happen to be doing.

I would recommend that you review John Ritenbaugh's sermons on which laws should we keep? That is in "The Covenants, Grace, and Law" series where he gives several sermons on the application of these principles, and I am going to give you these four principles again just to refresh your mind.

(1) First of all, does the law in question define sin? Sin is the transgression of the law, and the law is still in effect. If the law in question defines sin, then we should keep it. I am talking about a spiritual sin here—the kind that will need repentance. I do not want to go any further on that. I could get into quite a theological quagmire there.

For instance, one way that we can approach it is: Can we trace a particular law back to one of the Ten Commandments? Is one of these laws a sub-point, let us say, of one of "The Big Ten"? Let us see if I can think of one. We can look at any of the ones in Leviticus 18. It is all about sexual sins: "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your uncle. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother-in-law," etc. Those can all be traced back to commandment number 7, and so they are still valid. They are sexual sins, and we should try to keep those laws that regulate sexuality.

(2) Is there a scripture that says that such a law no longer needs to be kept? Can we find a specific scripture where Christ or one of the apostles, or somewhere, that says that this has been done away? Believe me, there are not a lot of them. Paul does say that some of the rituals have been set aside, because Christ Himself fulfilled them in His sacrifice and life. But you do not find many outside of that.

(3) Are there examples that show God's will on the matter? Especially, is there an example of Christ doing something, or one of the apostles doing something that shows that this is definitely still in effect? One that comes to mind is, Paul uses, "You shall not muzzle an ox." What is the example he uses? Do any of you remember? It is in the pay of the ministry. "A laborer is worthy of his hire," and so that law is in effect.

If you have an ox, you had better not muzzle it. Paul says that if you have a preacher that is preaching you the truth, make sure to take steps that his physical upkeep is maintained. It gives you an idea of how Paul, who was a lawyer (if there ever was one in the church, one who knows the law) applied that physical law having to do with oxen to the church—to the New Testament application.

(4) Where does the law appear in Scripture? Some parts of Scripture have more authority than others, especially Christ's own words. That is not to say that we should deprecate parts of Scripture, but certain parts of Scripture, let us say the Sermon on the Mount, are fundamental and unchanging. That is the way it is. God lays down the law, and we should be keeping them.

After going through the holiness code, I think you will find that the vast majority of these laws are still applicable in one form or another. If they are not valid on their faces—it is a physical law, let us say, of one sort of practice or another—their spiritual principle is still in effect, and we should be keeping it.

I want to remind you that the spirit of the law is far broader in application than the letter. The letter says, "You shall not commit adultery." The spirit of the law says all these sexual sins you should not do, and besides that, there are spiritual applications of that which go back to idolatry. When you are keeping the spirit like we are to be doing, we have to be on our toes to make sure that we are trying to be holy through our actions.

Let us take an example in Leviticus 19 and see how the spirit of the law is applied to this in the Sermon on the Mount.

**Leviticus 19:12** And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

The first thing that should hit us is that very clearly this is the Third Commandment, so obviously this is still in effect. As a matter of fact this whole verse restates two of the major issues involved in the Third Commandment. 1) He tells them not to swear. That could go to cursings, euphemisms, anything out of our mouth that abuses God's name. That is the *prima facie* view of it. That is what is on its face. "You shall not take the name of the Lord God in vain," meaning you shall not speak God's name in a profane manner.

But the other part of the Third Commandment is that we can profane God's name through our actions, which this verse here says. "You shall not profane the name of your God in any way." It leaves it wide open. It is not just words. It can be deeds, actions.

So right away we know that this law in the holiness code is still very much in force since it is a sub-point of Commandment Number 3.

Let us look at Jesus' commentary on this in Matthew 5. I want you to know that the holiness code is quoted or referred to forty times in the New Testament directly, and many times in the Sermon on the

Mount. I have read some commentaries that say that maybe Jesus had His mind back there in the holiness code while He was giving His Sermon on the Mount.

**Matthew 5:33** Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.'

If you look in your margin, it says "Leviticus 19:12." That is where we just were.

Jesus Christ, our Savior, our High Priest, the Leader of this church says:

**Matthew 5:34** "But I say to you [He is going to make an expansion], do not swear at all. . ."

It used to be that we just could not swear falsely. Now we cannot swear at all.

**Matthew 5:33-37** ". . . Neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' for whatever is more than these is from the evil one."

Wow! He took the Third Commandment and really exploded our understanding about what that means. This reaches into all of our personal relationships. Every word that comes out of our mouth better be a yes or a no, because if you are shading the truth, you are showing Satan's character. Wow! I would like William Jefferson Clinton to read this. This convicts him, because whatever is not a yes or a no is of Satan. It is sin. That is the spirit of the law. That is the spirit of the holiness code.

A little while ago I mentioned some laws are no longer in force in the letter, but the spirit principle, or principles (there might be several behind them) are still very much in effect. I want to go through one or two so you can get the understanding of this.

First of all we should not have the attitude going in that we are going to try to find a law that is not applicable anymore. That is going in totally backwards. That is wrong. You are in the wrong spirit. Go repent. It should be the other way around. When we go into these things, we should be looking for God's will for us, and then have the willing mind to follow it no matter what it entails, and where it leads us. We have to come at it with humility, knowing that the spirit of it is probably going to hit us somewhere, because we are not perfect yet.

The other thing we should understand going in is that *God made this law*. Have the attitude of James 1:17: "Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

God does not change, and He gives good and perfect gifts. So if He gives us a law, it is good. Remember what Paul said in Romans 7:12, that "The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." If God gives something, it is holy, just, and good. He does not give things that are going to be bad for us. He gives things that are universally applicable in one form or another, and so we should not be running willy-nilly to throw some of those pearls of wisdom out.

Let us check out one of these in Leviticus 19:9. This is the story of Ruth encapsulated in one verse.

**Leviticus 19:9** When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest.

Did you know that this law made the way for Jesus Christ? It brought together a Moabitess and a Jew of the line that eventually became the line of David and the line of Christ. Our Savior was born because this law was followed by a righteous man named Boaz. Interesting, is it not?

That was just the first level, that when an Israelite had a field, he was supposed to leave the corners unreaped so that the poor could come in and do the reaping and take and eat and be fed, and live. That is just the first level of this though. The spiritual level goes far beyond fields of grain and the poor. It goes into every area of giving and sharing with those who are less fortunate than us. Paul restates this in a different manner in I Timothy 6.

**I Timothy 6:17-19** Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy [because your wealth comes from God]. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

This is part of sanctification—learning to give and to share with those who are less fortunate than us. Paul repeats this in Hebrews 13.

**Hebrews 13:15-16** Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

So obeying this law of charity leads to the individual learning how to love his neighbor as himself, which Paul devotes all of I Corinthians 13 to. Do you see how this expands out into more than just reaping the edges of your field?

Now the spiritual principle of this does not nullify the face value either. If you are involved in agriculture, you should be following this law, not necessarily by leaving a portion of your field unreaped, because we do not have gleaners today. It would go to waste. But maybe you should set aside part of your yield, either to give directly to the poor, or to turn into money, and give the money to the poor, or to those less fortunate. Paul admonishes that first give to the church. Give to those of our brethren in the church.

If you are not involved in agriculture, and most of us are not because we live in an industrial-information type age, you have to meditate on this law to figure out how you can inculcate those principles into your own yield. God can bless you agriculturally, or He can bless you financially. He can bless your business. He can bless everything you do. How are you using His blessing to give and to share with those who have not been blessed quite as much? I am not talking about third tithe either. This is your yield of your increase, not every third year, but all the time.

Go now to Leviticus 17. This one has to do with a physical matter.

**Leviticus 17:15-16** And every person who eats what died naturally or what was torn by beasts, whether he is a native of your own country, or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. Then he shall be clean. But if he does not wash or bathe his body, then he shall bear his guilt [or his iniquity].

This one is one of those physical laws that involves eating clean food. It does not even come into the matter of unclean foods. This is about eating clean food since it assumes that an Israelite would be following the dietary laws God gave them in another place. This is clean food that has either died on its own, or was slain by another beast. There is no specific New Testament verse that covers this. And the other points of validity are not really very conclusive. So how do we approach this? A spiritual principle or analogy that corresponds to this does not naturally quickly come to mind. It seems at first glance that this law is no longer in force. Do not be so sure. Meditate on it a minute. How could we apply this to ourselves?

Now purely on a physical level, this law is very beneficial, and it should be kept. Think about it. If you found a deer or a cow or a sheep or some other clean animal on the side of the road, and you did not see it get hit by a car or something like that, you just saw it dead. You did not know how long ago it died. You did not know whether it had died of its own, or whether it had been killed by a beast. It was just dead. Would you eat it? Not on your life! It might be your life!

Did it die of a disease, or of old age? Did the animal that killed it have rabies or some other transferable disease? I do not think any of us would endanger our health to eat it. It might be rotting already. Immediately after death, rotting begins. Even medical examiners tell how long a body has been dead by the kind of insects that are growing on it and what stage of life those insects are in. It is kind of gross, is it not? God is pretty smart, is He not?

What about a spiritual level? It is probably more important. Speaking physical life versus spiritual life, I think the spiritual level is more important. I can see a spiritual analogy here. What is food spiritually? God's Word.

Think about this some more. God's Word, dead, on its own. God's Word slain, torn, by a beast. Are you starting to get some inklings of how we can apply this? God's Word can become diseased when it is mixed with foreign materials that defile its purity. That is what disease is. It is foreign material inside any living body that should not be there. It causes sickness. It causes impurity. It causes defilement. So for me this says that we should not ingest God's Word when it is mixed with other false materials.

Syncretism, believe it or not, jumps right out at me in this verse. God's Word, when it is mixed with a foreign disease, becomes diseased. You cannot trust God's Word when it has been syncretized with falsehood. It does not produce life that way. God's Word only produces life when it is in its pure form.

What about torn by beasts? I can think of one beast. He goes about as a ravenous lion seeking those whom he may devour. He is shown as a lion, and as a dragon—Satan the Devil. And what about his agents? They are known as lions and bears and leopards, and great beasts whom no one has seen before, but are ugly and terrible—dragons with horns, and little horns that pop up and speak blasphemous words.

How often Satan has used his agents to tear God's Word to pieces. Just look at Protestant and Catholic theology, full of falsehood. Yet they claim it is God's Word. For instance, the Catholic Church depends more on tradition through the pope and his sayings from the See as more substantive than what God's Word says. My Bible says that God's Word is purified seven times. It does not need additions.

There you have it. This law is still in effect, both physically and spiritually. Do not let anybody tell you that these things have been done away. These laws are there to produce holiness in us by His spirit.

Obviously one sermon cannot explain the entire holiness code. We could probably go through every one of these and see really neat things out of God's Word about how they apply. At another time maybe I will go into it more systematically. I really wanted this to be an overview so that you yourself can start going through these things and understanding God's way more fully.

I do not want to just preach at you, I want to give you something that you can use and learn and grow by, because who knows how soon it is going to be that you are going to be judging by these laws, and using them every day to apply them to the people in the Millennium and giving them instruction in helping them to become holy. I admonish you to exercise your godly judgment muscles, because we need to be learning to judge righteous judgment, because that is what kings and priests do.

Let us end in Psalm 119, and leave the sermon with the attitude of the approach to God's way.

**Psalm 119:97-112** Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts. I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word. I have not departed from Your judgments, for You Yourself have taught me. How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have sworn and confirmed that I will keep Your righteous judgments. I am afflicted very much; revive me, O LORD, according to Your word. Accept, I pray, the freewill offering of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me Your judgments. My life is continually in my hand. Yet I do not forget Your law. The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I have not strayed from Your precepts. Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever, to the very end. Amen.