

Leviticus 20 | Sunday August 10, 2025

Throughout the book of Leviticus God's holiness has been on full display and this has led to a contrast showing how sinful humanity is. As we continue through the study, it is easy to become increasingly uncomfortable with the depths of our sin as they are continually exposed. God is holy and His standard of holiness has not changed or been altered and when violated demands justice. Sin has consequences and demands death. Yet in these tough truths God's grace and love have shown through. He did not leave us in our sin but provided a way to be right with Him, He provided Jesus. The same commands that expose our sin, reveal His love.

1 John 5:3 ESV

(3) **For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.**

John 15:9-10 ESV

(9) As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love.

(10) **If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love**, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

God's love is shown through living in His commandments. When correctly applied and lived out His commandments are not **burdensome, heavy, a source of difficulty or trouble**. God's law revealed in Leviticus shows us His timeless holiness and His desire for His people to experience His love and how to abide in it. **Not following His commandments means we are not abiding in Him**. God has revealed His will, and when we violate it then we are not abiding in His love. So much pain and distress come when we are outside His will. Chapter 20 describes the punishments for violating the commands that have been explained in chapters 18-19.

Leviticus 20:1-27 ESV

(1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, (2) "Say to the people of Israel, Any one of the people of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. (3) I Myself will set My face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given one of his children to Molech, to make My sanctuary unclean and to profane My holy name. (4) And if the people of the land do at all close their eyes to that man when he gives one of his children to Molech, and do not put him to death, (5) then I will set My face against that man and against his clan and will cut them off from among their people, him and all who follow him in whoring after Molech. (6) "If a person turns to mediums and necromancers, whoring after them, I will set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people (7) Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. (8) Keep My statutes and do them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you. (9) For anyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death; he has cursed his father or his mother; his blood is upon him. (10) "If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. (11) If a man lies with his father's wife, he has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them. (12) If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death; they have committed perversion; their blood is upon them. (13) If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death;

their blood is upon them. (14) If a man takes a woman and her mother also, it is depravity; he and they shall be burned with fire, that there may be no depravity among you. (15) If a man lies with an animal, he shall surely be put to death, and you shall kill the animal. (16) If a woman approaches any animal and lies with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them. (17) "If a man takes his sister, a daughter of his father or a daughter of his mother, and sees her nakedness, and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace, and they shall be cut off in the sight of the children of their people. He has uncovered his sister's nakedness, and he shall bear his iniquity. (18) If a man lies with a woman during her menstrual period and uncovers her nakedness, he has made naked her fountain, and she has uncovered the fountain of her blood. Both of them shall be cut off from among their people. (19) You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister or of your father's sister, for that is to make naked one's relative; they shall bear their iniquity. (20) If a man lies with his uncle's wife, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness; they shall bear their sin; they shall die childless. (21) If a man takes his brother's wife, it is impurity. He has uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless. (22) "You shall therefore keep all My statutes and all My rules and do them, that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out. (23) And you shall not walk in the customs of the nation that I am driving out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I detested them. (24) But I have said to you, 'You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.' I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples. (25) You shall therefore separate the clean beast from the unclean, and the unclean bird from the clean. You shall not make yourselves detestable by beast or by bird or by anything with which the ground crawls, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean. (26) You shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine. (27) "A man or a woman who is a medium or a necromancer shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones; their blood shall be upon them."

There are varying degrees of punishments depending on what command was broken, from being cut off from the people, to dying childless. The most striking punishment and most common in the chapter is the death penalty. If certain commands are violated then the person is to be stoned, or burned to death. **This chapter does not violate the verses we just saw that proclaimed God's commandments reveal His love.** God wanted His people to walk in the light and experience life with Him. Walking in the darkness, in sin, leads to death.

Leviticus 20:2-3 ESV

(2) "Say to the people of Israel, Any one of the people of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel **who gives any of his children to Molech shall surely be put to death.** The people of the land shall stone him with stones.

(3) **I Myself will set My face against that man** and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given one of his children to Molech, **to make My sanctuary unclean and to profane My holy name.**

One of the false god's that was worshiped in the promised land was Molech. Our lives reflect what we worship. To worship Molech cost you something, your child, and people were willing to give them. God repeatedly warned Israel not to copy the Canaanites in worshipping Molech. God wanted this detestable false god and his heinous worship to be obliterated as Israel conquered the

promised land.

Deuteronomy 12:29-31 ESV

(29) “When the LORD your God cuts off before you the nations whom you go in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land,

(30) take care that you be not ensnared to follow them, after they have been destroyed before you, and **that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods?—that I also may do the same.’**

(31) You shall not worship **the LORD your God in that way, for every abominable thing that the LORD hates they have done for their gods, for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods.**

To worship Molech you had to offer up your child and burn them in a fire. It was this deep personal sacrifice that was thought to gain Molech’s favor. God hated this practice and wanted to use His chosen nation to judge the people who practiced it. Unfortunately the exact opposite happened.

Jeremiah 7:30-31 ESV

(30) “For **the sons of Judah** have done evil in My sight, declares the LORD. They have set their detestable things in the house that is called by My name, to defile it. (31) And **they have built the high places of Topheth**, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, **to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My mind.**

Israel did not listen to God, instead they followed after what the world did. God’s chosen people sacrificed their own children to worship a false god. This worship became so entrenched that they even built their own altars to Molech and had a dedicated place called **Topheth** to worship him. This was not a fringe group who decided to worship Molech.

1 Kings 11:6-8 ESV

(6) So **Solomon** did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done.

(7) Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, **and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem.**

(8) And so he did for all his foreign wives, **who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods.**

It can seem like such a small thing to worship these foreign gods until we learn what it involved. **The wisest man who ever lived, even had his own children killed to worship Molech. No sin is out of reach for any of us.** It does raise the question of why? What would motivate someone to kill their own child to appease a god? **As sinners we have a deep desire for our salvation to cost us something.** All the way back to Cain’s magnificent fruit offering, we want to show ourselves worthy of God’s love, or blessings. In an effort to gain Molech’s love and blessing we are even willing to kill our children. This in part is what makes the gospel so offensive. We do not have an offering holy or costly enough to gain our salvation. Even our own children, cannot secure God’s favor.

1 Timothy 2:5-6 ESV

(5) For there is one God, and there is **one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,** (6) who gave Himself **as a ransom** for all, which is the testimony given at

the proper time.

It is amazing how Satan will take truth and change it subtly to make it a heinous falsehood. Humanity needs a blood sacrifice to reconcile us to God. This cannot be achieved through any human, or our children, but through the one mediator Jesus. He is the ransom, He is the sacrifice we needed. Molech worship was an abomination in God's eyes for the human lives that were lost in it and how it twisted the gospel. As a community Israel was to have no place for this worship.

Leviticus 20:2; 4-5 ESV

(2) "Say to the people of Israel, Any one of the people of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech shall surely be put to death. **The people of the land shall stone him with stones.**]

(4) And if the people of the land **do at all close their eyes to that man** when he gives one of his children to Molech, **and do not put him to death,**

(5) then I will set My face against that man and against his clan and will cut them off from among their people, **him and all who follow him in whoring after Molech.**

Israel as a whole was to see that this false worship was not tolerated. Even the method of death God chose is corporate. **Stoning involves the community.** This punishment even was to extend to those who failed to carry out the punishment. Even if you did not worship Molech but were unwilling to kill the person who did, God viewed this as acceptance and it needed to be judged. When someone deserved the judgment of death, it was not to be done anonymously, but by the community.

Deuteronomy 13:6-10 ESV

(6) "If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter or the wife you embrace or your friend **who is as your own soul entices you secretly,** saying, '**Let us go and serve other gods,**' **which neither you nor your fathers have known,**

(7) some of the gods of the peoples who are around you, whether near you or far off from you, from the one end of the earth to the other,

(8) you shall not yield to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him, **nor shall you conceal him.**

(9) **But you shall kill him. Your hand shall be first against him to put him to death**, and afterward the hand of all the people.

(10) You shall stone him to death with stones, because **he sought to draw you away from the LORD your God,** who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

When viewed through the world's lens this command is barbaric. This truth is so personal and so offensive. How would someone enact this judgment on their own family. This truth challenges what we truly value. God's truth is life and unbending. Turning to falsehood is not small as we are so tempted to think but matters for all eternity. **God wanted His people to be set apart and enjoy a deep life-giving walk with Him.** False worship could not be tolerated.

Leviticus 20:6-8 ESV

(6) "If a person turns **to mediums and necromancers, whoring after them,** I will set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people.

(7) **Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God.**

(8) Keep My statutes and do them; I am the LORD **who sanctifies you.**

God's holiness has been on display throughout the entire book. Our opinion on what is right does not matter. He is perfect and Holy. He is the standard. **The very reason He is worthy of praise, is also the reason He is just, His holiness.**

Isaiah 57:15 ESV

(15) For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, **who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:** "I dwell **in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit,** to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

God's name is holy and He inhabits eternity and yet He also is with the contrite and the lowly. He is personal and wants a relationship with us, but cannot change His holiness in that process. We can struggle to understand that God is deeply loving and personal but also has a standard that cannot be changed. His relationship with us is based on truth.

This chapter does not give an exhaustive list of all the crimes that deserve capital punishment, but a few are highlighted out.

Leviticus 20:9-10; 13 ESV

(9) **For anyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death;** he has cursed his father or his mother; his blood is upon him.

(10) "If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, **both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.**

(13) If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; **they shall surely be put to death;** their blood is upon them.

God is showing how important the family, and marriage are with these punishments.

These are not merely civil arrangements recognized by the government but **God appointed institutions that need to be honored and protected.** These punishments may seem harsh to us, but in reality it shows God's heart for valuing the family and guarding its sanctity. It is incorrect and hurtful to lift out the punishment for the homosexual act and ignore the same punishment is given for adultery and cursing parents. **These punishments are impartial just as God is.** Both the man and woman of the adulterous affair are to be killed. The pharisees in their legalism only brought the women to Jesus (John 8:3). Premeditated murder is also listed as warranting the death penalty (Num35:30) but the evidence of at least two witnesses is required.

These punishments were specifically for Israel as they were ruled by God. Yet they reveal what God values and what His Holy standard is. God is not opposed to the death penalty. It is counter to our human wisdom but in reality it values human life. God even instructed Noah of this truth.

Genesis 9:5-6 ESV

(5) And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

(6) "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, **for God made man in His own image.**

Humanity is the only thing in creation that was given the tremendous privilege of being created in God's image. **Human life is to be valued and protected.** When life is taken God required for the murderer to be killed. The image of God in the person killed is that valuable and needs to be

honored. The world misses this truth. They value the life of the murderer instead of the victim. The death of the criminal is another reminder of the destruction that is found outside of God's will. God takes no pleasure in it.

Ezekiel 18:32 ESV

(32) **For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live."**

God wants everyone to turn to Him and find life in Jesus. He is also Holy and justice must be upheld. In **1972 14** countries had abolished the death penalty, in **2022** the number has risen to **110**. The world is always looking to twist God's truth. God's word in the New Testament is clear that the government should practice the death penalty (Romans 13:1-7, Acts 25:11, Rom 1:32). The world will continually move away from God's truth or practice it incorrectly. Even the countries that still utilize the death penalty do not use it with true holy justice. The world will always get it wrong. This is why Israel was called to be separate. They were not to look like the nations around them. They were not to figure out how to worship Molech. They were to be different.

Leviticus 20:22-23 ESV

(22) **"You shall therefore keep all my statutes and all my rules and do them, that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out.**

(23) And you shall not walk in the customs of the nation that I am driving out before you, for **they did all these things, and therefore I detested them.**

The nations that were living in the promised land were vomited out because of how sinful their society had become. **True pollution is from sin and will be judged.** God is warning His people not to make the same mistake. Others were vomited out, Israel needed to walk with God or they would be no different and would be vomited out.

Leviticus 20:24-26 ESV

(24) But I have said to you, **'You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.'** I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples.

(25) You shall therefore separate the clean beast from the unclean, and the unclean bird from the clean. You shall not make yourselves detestable by beast or by bird or by anything with which the ground crawls, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean.

(26) **You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.**

Instead of being vomited out God wanted His people to inherit the land. They had been separated out now was their chance to live as a separated people. They could walk in God's truth and in His life. Unfortunately, we know what happened.

2 Kings 21:9 ESV

(9) But they did not listen, and Manasseh led them astray **to do more evil than the nations had done whom the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel.**

Israel became more evil and polluted the land worse than the Canaanites. God's people squandered their chance to walk with Him. Even though they were vomited out of the land He is going to be faithful to His promises to them. (Ps 106:34-45).

As believers today we have an amazing opportunity to live for God. We have a choice to think like the world or to use the Word of God as a filter. His word reveals His will and truth. The more we abide in Him we have His thinking and we worship Him in each aspect of our lives. **Israel is to serve as a sober warning not to let the world rub off on us.**

Ephesians 5:1-11; 15-17 ESV

- (1) Therefore be imitators of God, **as beloved children.**
 - (2) And **walk in love**, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.
 - (3) **But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you**, as is proper among saints.
 - (4) Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.
 - (5) For you may be sure of this, that everyone **who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.**
 - (6) Let no one deceive you with empty words, **for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.**
 - (7) Therefore **do not become partners with them;**
 - (8) for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. **Walk as children of light**
 - (9) (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),
 - (10) and **try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.**
 - (11) **Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness**, but instead expose them.
 - (15) **Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,**
 - (16) **making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.**
 - (17) Therefore do not be foolish, **but understand what the will of the Lord is.**
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