

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Leviticus 20: 22-27

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We'll continue to read Leviticus chapter 20, and today we'll read from verse 22 to verse 27.

Today's passage is the conclusion of chapters 18 through 20. The Ten Commandments reveal who God is and establish the major principles of our relationship with God and our relationships with others. When the principles of the Ten Commandments are applied in daily life, they give rise to various statutes and judgments, which are recorded in chapters 18 through 20. These statutes and judgments were meant to govern and regulate the lives of the Israelites.

At that time, Moses was leading two million people of Israel to Mount Sinai. They had completed the Tabernacle and established the priestly service system. God first required the Israelites to remove the uncleanness from among them. Then, on the Day of Atonement, through the high priest's offering, the people of Israel were brought before the mercy seat to meet with God. After that, God revealed His desire for Israel to be set apart, holy unto Him. And the way for Israel to be holy unto God was by following the statutes and judgments that He had commanded. Now we come to the conclusion of these instructions.

Verse 22: "You shall therefore keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them, that the land where I am bringing you to dwell may not vomit you out."

God once again reminded the people of Israel to carefully observe His statutes and judgments so that the land would not vomit them out. This concept has come up before, but today we'll spend a bit more time reflecting on it. When people fail to observe God's statutes and judgments, the land itself will cast them out.

The entire universe was created by God. John 1:3 says, "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." In this verse, "Him" refers to Christ. All things were created through Christ. Proverbs 8:30 directly tells us that Christ was the craftsman at God's side during creation—the one executing the blueprint, like an engineer. Christ not only created all things in the universe, but He also maintains their operation. Hebrews 1:3 (NKJV) tells us that He upholds all things by the word of His power. The creation and continual sustaining of the universe are works of Christ.

Today's physicists, after centuries of study—from Newton to Einstein to Bohr—have gained a certain understanding of the natural laws governing the universe. They have identified four fundamental universal constants: the gravitational constant, the speed of light, Planck's constant, and the Boltzmann constant. These four constants determine the movement of celestial bodies and the motions of particles within atoms, all in accordance with precise laws. These natural laws were, in fact, established by Christ. While physicists, through observation and experimentation, can reveal these natural laws governing the physical world, Scripture adds a moral dimension, revealing how human interactions with nature, when aligned or misaligned with God's statutes, produce specific consequences within these natural laws.

First, in the Garden of Eden, when man sinned for the first time, God said to Adam in Genesis 3:17-19, "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return." Here, we see that when man sinned, the ground was cursed, and man would then have to toil in sweat just to survive.

Following this, Romans 8:20-21 states, "For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Thus, after Adam's sin and the resulting curse on the earth,

this curse extended to all creation, subjecting it to futility. This bondage will continue until the day the children of God are revealed in glory.

When will the children of God be revealed in glory? Revelation 21:1-2 tells us, “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also, there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Only in the new heaven and new earth will the problem of sin be fully resolved. When Satan and all his followers are cast into the lake of fire, it will usher in eternity, which is also the final dwelling place for all the saints.

From Genesis 3 to Revelation 21, the Bible describes the era we live in today, in which Christ, by His almighty command, established the natural laws that govern creation. Within these laws, there is a divine requirement for humanity: to diligently observe and follow God's statutes and ordinances. If this is neglected, the earth will "vomit out" its inhabitants. When people on earth are driven by greed, moral corruption, and recklessly disrupt the ecological balance, the earth ceases to serve humanity and may even reach the point of rejecting them entirely.

The ancient Chinese philosopher Laozi expressed this idea, saying that “Heaven and earth are unkind; they treat all things as dogs,” attributing the harsh outcomes to the heavens and earth themselves. However, Scripture reveals that it is, in fact, humanity’s transgression of God’s statutes and ordinances that leads to such consequences.

Verse 23: “And you shall not walk in the statutes of the nation which I am casting out before you; for they commit all these things, and therefore I abhor them.”

God instructed Moses to lead the Israelites back to the beautiful land of Canaan, promised to Abraham. God also assured them that He would drive out the inhabitants of Canaan before them because of the Canaanites' wicked deeds. These people had violated the natural laws God established, and thus He abhorred them. Because of their corruption, they defiled the land, and it was prepared to "vomit

them out." Therefore, God warned the Israelites not to follow the customs of these nations.

Scripture repeatedly tells us that God does not show partiality; His disdain for the Canaanites was not based on their race but on their moral depravity and their violation of His natural laws. This corruption polluted the land, which would "vomit them out" as a consequence, serving as a cautionary example for Israel. God consistently warned Israel not to adopt the customs of the Canaanites. Yet, as Israel's history shows, the Israelites failed to keep God's statutes and ordinances and instead followed the Canaanites in worshiping idols. Does this mean that God failed? By no means. God knew that Israel did not have the ability to keep His statutes and ordinances perfectly. However, within Israel, there remained a small group known as the "remnant." Though the majority turned away, a minority remained faithful, choosing to follow God's laws.

In every generation, there was a remnant within Israel who were loyal to God and obeyed His commands. Through this faithful remnant, God was able to bring forth Jesus Christ, fulfilling His plan of redemption. Now in the New Testament, Christ has risen and ascended, seated at the right hand of the Father, fulfilling His heavenly ministry. Likewise, God is calling for overcomers within His church today. These New Testament overcomers correspond to the faithful remnant within Old Testament Israel.

These overcomers keep God's word, testify of Christ, and do not follow the trends and customs of the world. Revelation 6:11 says, "Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed." This occurs when the fifth seal is opened, and God instructs these overcomers to rest a little longer. When the full number of overcomers is complete, Christ will return.

Verse 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.”

God wanted the Israelites to drive out the Canaanites and for Israel to inherit the land of Canaan. This was a land flowing with milk and honey, a place blessed by God. We see that a group blessed by God is meant to inherit the land, and that land was to be one flowing with milk and honey. But if people do not keep God’s statutes and ordinances, God will withdraw His blessing; and if they continue to fall into corruption, following depraved customs and polluting the land, then the land will expel them. This is a law set by God.

If, in the future, the land ceases to serve mankind, let us not blame the heavens or the earth, nor put the responsibility on those around us. Instead, we must start by examining ourselves to see if we are observing God’s statutes and ordinances. Here, God again emphasizes, "I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples." The Israelites were God’s chosen people under the Old Covenant. God desired to be their God, and they were to be His people, set apart from the Gentiles.

In the New Testament, it is still the same: the church is God’s chosen people under the New Covenant, and the saints within the church must also be set apart from the world. God’s command to the saints is that we should first lift up Christ and submit to Him; only then can we receive His commission to go into the world to seek those who are “sons of peace” and bring them out from the world, into the church, as members of Christ’s body. This order cannot be changed.

Too many churches, in their eagerness for rapid growth, have lowered the church’s standards, building attraction-oriented churches that allow unbelievers to merge into the body. As a result, the church loses its holiness and becomes indistinguishable from the world. Jesus said in Matthew 5:13, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men." God condemns worldly churches as salt that has lost its flavor—useless in His hands, only to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

Verse 25: “You shall therefore distinguish between clean animals and unclean, between unclean birds and clean, and you shall not make yourselves abominable by beast or by bird, or by any kind of living thing that creeps on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean.”

God gave the Israelites laws of purification and commanded them to distinguish between clean and unclean animals to avoid defilement by unclean creatures, which would make them impure and displeasing to God. The ordinances God gave to the Israelites were physical; they were not to eat unclean foods, lest they become impure in God's sight. However, for the New Testament church, these physical laws are applied spiritually.

For New Testament saints, it is no longer about what we eat physically, but rather the spiritual nourishment we encounter daily. The things we read, meditate on, and engage with on a mental and spiritual level also have aspects of purity and impurity. What qualifies as our pure spiritual food? Here are six principles:

1. It must be ruminant that chews the cud – God's Word should be meditated on deeply, producing teachings and insights after careful reflection.
2. It must have cloven hooves – the Word should be applied to daily life, helping us discern what aligns with God's will and what does not.
3. It must have wings – God's Word should help us rise above worldly trends and customs.
4. It must have fins and scales – the Word should equip us to resist the pressures of the world.
5. It must be able to soar– God's Word should help us escape the pull of earthly desires.
6. It must have jointed legs and able to leap– God's Word should empower people to leap out of difficulties.

We are to consume pure spiritual food, as impure spiritual content defiles New Testament saints, making them unclean or even detestable in God's eyes.

Verse 26: "And you shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine."

The Israelites were to be set apart as holy and dedicated to God because God is holy. Therefore, they were to be distinct from all other nations and become God's people. Similarly, New Testament saints are also called to be separate from the world, to consecrate themselves to God as holy. As Romans 12:1 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." We are to present our bodies, separating ourselves from the world, so that we can be sanctified and dedicated to God, for we belong to Him and are His people.

Verse 27: "A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them."

This verse also speaks about those who practice necromancy and witchcraft. In verse 6, we already read that those who turn to necromancers and practitioners of witchcraft, following their evil ways, will face God's rejection and be cut off from the people. This refers to individuals among the Israelites who, when facing difficulties or needs, do not seek God's help, but instead turn to those who communicate with the dead and practice sorcery. Such people are to be removed from the community of Israel.

Verse 27 addresses those who practice necromancy or witchcraft—whether male or female—and offer such services. These people are to be executed by stoning, and the executioners will not be guilty, as the sin falls on those who practiced these abominations. God's arrangement here is quite significant: verse 27 directly follows

verse 6, which speaks about those who seek out necromancers and witches. In between, however, there is a section dealing with the punishment for breaking family ethics and holiness. This arrangement by God seems to imply that unholiness within the family stems from the fact that the Israelites have not regarded God as God.

We know that the cross has two dimensions: vertical, which represents the relationship between man and God, and horizontal, which represents the relationship between people. However, God's arrangement seems to indicate that the relationship between man and God takes precedence. When the relationship with God is not right, the relationship between people will also be wrong. We pray for God's help, that in our daily lives, we can establish a close relationship with God, for this is the most important. When our relationship with God is right, our relationships with others will align with God's will.

Let us pray together: Lord, bless my daily life. Through regular Bible reading and prayer, may I build an intimate relationship with You, and help me bring this relationship into my interactions with others. Let all that I say and do be in accordance with Your laws and commandments. Help me live a holy life, for You are holy, and we must be holy. Guard my life each day so that it will be pleasing to You. I pray in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.