

## **Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**

### **Bible Study Notes**

**6-2-21**

### **Leviticus 20**

#### **Punishments for Worshiping Molek - Verses 1-5**

The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> "Say to the Israelites: 'Any Israelite or any foreigner residing in Israel who sacrifices any of his children to Molek is to be put to death. The members of the community are to stone him. <sup>3</sup> I myself will set my face against him and will cut him off from his people; for by sacrificing his children to Molek, he has defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name. <sup>4</sup> If the members of the community close their eyes when that man sacrifices one of his children to Molek and if they fail to put him to death, <sup>5</sup> I myself will set my face against him and his family and will cut them off from their people together with all who follow him in prostituting themselves to Molek.

**20:1-3** Sacrificing children to the gods was a common practice in ancient religions. The Ammonites, Israel's neighbors, made child sacrifice to Molek (their national god) a vital part of their religion. They saw this as the greatest gift they could offer to ward off evil or appease angry gods. God made it clear that this practice was detestable and strictly forbidden. In Old Testament times as well as New, his character made human sacrifice unthinkable. (1) Unlike the pagan gods, he is the God of love, who does not need to be appeased (Exodus 34:6). (2) He is the God of life, who prohibits murder and encourages practices that lead to health and happiness (Deuteronomy 30:15-16). (3) He is the God of the helpless, who shows special concern for children (Psalm 72:4). (4) He is the God of unselfishness who, instead of demanding human sacrifices, sacrificed himself for us (Isaiah 53:4-5).

#### **The Penalty For Involvement With The Occult - Verses 6-8**

<sup>6</sup> "I will set my face against anyone who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute themselves by following them, and I will cut them off from their people. <sup>7</sup> "Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the LORD your God. <sup>8</sup> Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD, who makes you holy.

**20:6** Everyone is interested in what the future holds, and we often look to others for guidance. But God warned about looking to the occult for advice. Mediums and spiritists were outlawed because God was not the source of their information. At best, occult practitioners are fakes whose predictions cannot be trusted. At worst, they are in contact with evil spirits and are thus extremely dangerous. We don't need to look to the occult for information about the future. God has given us the Bible so that we may obtain all the information we need—and the Bible's teaching is trustworthy.

**20:7** Sanctify yourselves ... I am the LORD who sanctifies you: These are two important aspects of our walk with God. God will not force you to be separate to Him. He does the work, but He does it through our own cooperating efforts and yielded will.

## **The Penalty For The Cursing Of A Parent - Verse 9**

**<sup>9</sup> "Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death. Because they have cursed their father or mother, their blood will be on their own head.**

**20:9 Shall surely be put to death:** Even considering that this law applied to an adult child who threatened their parent, this was still a severe law. Yet as it was practiced in ancient Israel, it had a built-in protection for the rights of the child, according to Deuteronomy 21:18-21. This passage states that the parent did not have the right to carry out this punishment, but they had to bring the accused child before the elders and judges of the city. This meant that the parent - against all contemporary custom - did not have the absolute power of life and death over their children. As a practical matter, the judges of Israel rarely if ever administered the death penalty in such cases, yet the child was held accountable.

## **The Penalty For Adultery - Verse 10**

**<sup>10</sup> "If a man commits adultery with another man's wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress are to be put to death.**

**20:10** The adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death: God commanded the death penalty for adultery in ancient Israel. As with previous laws and their penalties, this was because of the exceedingly great social consequences of this sin. God commanded the ultimate penalty to discourage it.

## **The Penalty For Sins Of Incest & Homosexuality - Verses 11-13**

**<sup>11</sup> "If a man has sexual relations with his father's wife, he has dishonored his father. Both the man and the woman are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads. <sup>12</sup> "If a man has sexual relations with his daughter-in-law, both of them are to be put to death. What they have done is a perversion; their blood will be on their own heads. <sup>13</sup> "If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.**

**20:11-13** Though God here commanded the death penalty for homosexual practice (under the guidelines of evidence in a capital case as described in (Deuteronomy 17:6-7), we should note this was not a more severe punishment than what was commanded for adultery or incest. Homosexuality is sin, but sin in the same sense other sexual sins are.

## **The Penalty For Other Sexual Sins - Verses 14-21**

**<sup>14</sup> "If a man marries both a woman and her mother, it is wicked. Both he and they must be burned in the fire, so that no wickedness will be among you. <sup>15</sup> "If a man has sexual relations with an animal, he is to be put to death, and you must kill the animal. <sup>16</sup> "If a woman approaches an animal to have sexual relations with it, kill both the woman and the animal. They are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads. <sup>17</sup> "If a man marries his sister, the daughter of either his father or his mother, and they have sexual relations,**

it is a disgrace. They are to be publicly removed from their people. He has dishonored his sister and will be held responsible. <sup>18</sup> "If a man has sexual relations with a woman during her monthly period, he has exposed the source of her flow, and she has also uncovered it. Both of them are to be cut off from their people. <sup>19</sup> "Do not have sexual relations with the sister of either your mother or your father, for that would dishonor a close relative; both of you would be held responsible. <sup>20</sup> "If a man has sexual relations with his aunt, he has dishonored his uncle. They will be held responsible; they will die childless. <sup>21</sup> "If a man marries his brother's wife, it is an act of impurity; he has dishonored his brother. They will be childless.

**20:10-21** This list of commands against sexual sins includes extremely harsh punishments. Why? God had no tolerance for such acts for the following reasons: (1) they shatter the mutual commitment of married partners; (2) they destroy the sanctity of the family; (3) they twist people's mental well-being; and (4) they spread disease. Sexual sin has always been widely available, but the glorification of sex between people who are not married to each other often hides deep tragedy and hurt behind the scenes. When society portrays sexual sins as attractive, it is easy to forget the dark side. God had good reasons for prohibiting sexual sins: He loves us and wants the very best for us.

**20:10-21** The detestable acts listed here were very common in the pagan nations of Canaan; their religions were rampant with sex goddesses, temple prostitution, and other sins. The Canaanites' immoral religious practices reflected a decadent culture that tended to corrupt whoever came in contact with it. By contrast, God was building a nation to make a positive influence on the world. He did not want the Israelites to adopt the Canaanites' practices and slide into debauchery. So he prepared the people for what they would face in the Promised Land by commanding them to steer clear of sexual sins. God still expects those who worship him to maintain sexual purity in their lives.

### **Why God called Israel to such holiness - Verses 22-26**

<sup>22</sup> "Keep all my decrees and laws and follow them, so that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out. <sup>23</sup> You must not live according to the customs of the nations I am going to drive out before you. Because they did all these things, I abhorred them. <sup>24</sup> But I said to you, "You will possess their land; I will give it to you as an inheritance, a land flowing with milk and honey." I am the LORD your God, who has set you apart from the nations. <sup>25</sup> "You must therefore make a distinction between clean and unclean animals and between unclean and clean birds. Do not defile yourselves by any animal or bird or anything that moves along the ground—those that I have set apart as unclean for you. <sup>26</sup> You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.

**20:22-23** God gave many rules to his people—but not without reason. He did not withhold good from them; he only prohibited those acts that would bring them to ruin. All of us understand God's physical laws of nature. For example, jumping off a 10-story building means death because of the law of gravity. But some of us don't understand how God's spiritual laws work. God forbids us to do certain things because he wants to keep us from self-destruction. The next time you are

drawn to a forbidden physical or emotional pleasure, remind yourself that its consequences might be suffering and separation from the God who is trying to help you.

**20:26** That you should be Mine: These laws were not only given so that Israel could possess the land; they were also so God could possess Israel - so they would be holy to Me, for I the LORD and holy ... that you should be Mine.

Sometimes we think what God mostly wants is our obedience; but there is a sense in which we can give God our obedience without giving Him ourselves (such as perhaps the Pharisees did). What God really wants is us - and if that is truly given, the obedience will follow.

### **Penalty For Being A Medium Or Practitioner Of The Occult - Verse 27**

**27** **“A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death. You are to stone them; their blood will be on their own heads.”**

**20:27** If one consulted a medium, they were to be cut off (Leviticus 20:6); but if some one was the actual practitioner of these occultic arts, they were to be executed under the law of Israel.

Their blood shall be upon them: This reminds us that it is a much more serious thing to lead others into sin than to sin ourselves - and so the penalty is greater, even as Jesus said: But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matthew 18:6).