

Leviticus 18

Family Law

In this chapter the Israelites are directed in general not to imitate the customs and practices of the Egyptians and Canaanites, but to keep the ordinances, statutes, and judgments of the Lord, Le 18:1-5; and they are instructed particularly to avoid incestuous marriages, Le 18:6-18; carnal copulation with a menstruous woman, Le 18:19; adultery, Le 18:20; letting any of their seed pass through the fire to Molech, Le 18:21; sodomy, Le 18:22; and bestiality, Le 18:23; and they are deterred from these things by observing to them the pollution and destruction which they brought on the inhabitants of Canaan, and would bring the same on them should they commit them, Le 18:24-30. [Gill]

Thus this chapter prepares His people for the entrance into the land of Canaan where the listed sins was very prevalent. He tells His people what He expects of them **BEFORE** they must confront the wickedness.

Vv. 1-5.

These first five verses introduces the Lord and tells by what authority He speaks.

1) *I am the Lord your God...*

He sets before them His authority, and His constraining love. He knows our frame, and He sees that man resents interference with his liberty in the things of daily life and private actions, more than in anything else; therefore, to silence objection, and to draw the will, He adduces the argument of His sovereignty and love. [*Leviticus*, Bonar, 328, 329.]

Christians have been made *partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*, 2 Pe 1:4. The root of sin is basically **when they knew God, they glorified him not as God**, Rom 1:21. Throughout Scripture, God makes sure His people know who He is, yet they fall into sin anyway.

2) *Land of Egypt... land of Canaan...* The people were surrounded by paganism. The wilderness was really the only place where paganism did not prevail.

3) We should mention the purpose of the laws the Lord is about to give to His people.

V. 5, *which if a man do he shall live in them;*

live a long life in the land of Canaan, in great happiness and prosperity, see De 30:20 Isa 1:19; for as for eternal life, that was never intended to be had, nor was it possible it could be had and enjoyed by obedience to the law, which fallen man is unable to keep; but is what was graciously promised and provided the covenant of grace, before the world was, to come through Christ, as a free gift to all that believe in him, see Ga 3:11,12,21; though some Jewish writers interpret this of eternal life, as Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and Ben Gersom: [Gill]

Moreover, though modern writers might identify this statement with eternal life, *e.g.* Rom 10:5, the law never promised eternal life, so we should not read such a thing into it. See Isa 55:3. Rather, the Lord is promising a long, healthy life on this earth: live by doing what the Lord commands, Pro 14:27; 19:23. Notice Ps 69:32, dependance upon the Lord in prayer leads to long life.

A) significantly, today's "Health" movement emphasizes diet and "clean living," but it sees little or no need for Biblical morality. The natural man sees no problem with an immoral lifestyle, substituting health food and exercise for morality.

B) medical answers for illness and longer life are being financed and sought world-wide. Answers may be found, but Scripture clearly tells us that a long, healthy life is a direct result of following God's moral and

dietary laws.

Eph 6:2, 3, promises a shortened life span to those who remain in sin. Clearly, Christ is the source of life, and those who turn their backs on Him and His word have turned from not only spiritual life, but from physical life. [Jude 12, speaks of those who promise long life, yet have only death to offer. The offer of longer life through a healthier life style apart from Godly morality is a *cloud without water*. Maybe people are living longer through medical advances as Biblical Christianity fades into the background, but notice the horrendous increase in natural disasters. See v. 25-30 below. See also Eph 4:18; 1 Tim 5:6; Rev 3:1. Moreover, if the Promise Keepers Revival were as Godly as its supporters make it out to be, why the increase in natural disasters?]

4) God's law is perfect:

But if, as most think, we are to take, in this place the words "*live in them*" as meaning "eternal life to be got by them," the scope of the passage is, that so excellent are God's laws, and every special, minute detail of these laws, *that if a man were to keep these always and perfectly*, this keeping would be eternal life to him. And the quotations in Rom. x. 5, and Gal. iii. 12, would seem to determine this to be the true and only sense here. [Bonar]

Thus God's law is so good and perfect that **IF** one could keep it perfectly, **THEN** he would have eternal life. Clearly, no man can keep them perfectly, though Christ did. The point is, however, that *The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple*. Ps 19:7. Though the family laws of Lev 18 seem to the natural man restrictive to his activities, the laws being presented are perfect. A person will "live" according to the extent he follows them. Live, however, must speak of physical life.

Vv. 6ff., His authority established, the Lord proceeds to give laws pertaining to morality, laws which will counter the lust of the flesh, laws which if ignored, will lead to death—death at the hand of God or at the hand of disease. The following family laws show us that the Lord takes great care to protect the family. We should mention that when civil government fails to exercise the same care of the family as does the Lord, it destroys itself.

This is the first time laws against incest are given. Apparently, up to now marriage between close relatives, even brother and sister, were permitted. Now, marriage closer than between first cousins were forbidden, but it seems here that first cousins were permitted. Modern civil law forbids marriage any closer than second cousins.

The law of the Lord covers every area of life and thought, even the most intimate and secret so that even sex within marriage is restricted:

Heb 13:4 *Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*

As with all other passages in Scripture, Heb 13:4 will not stand alone: Lev 18 lists several things that clearly defile the "marriage bed," bringing God's wrath against the "defilers." He demands purity in the family and in the marriage union.

Having, in former chapters, fenced His own tabernacle, He now fences the tabernacles of men. [Bonar]

I am the Lord. Again, the Lord reminds them of His authority to tell them how to live even in their most private lives. Though the laws are addressed to Israel, they obviously apply to the whole of mankind. The Lord charged the Canaanites with the evils listed in this chapter: immorality of all kinds, defining some of the evils that resulted in the land spewing out the Canaanites, vv. 3, 24, 25.

V. 6, Geneva: "That is, to lie with her, though it be under title of marriage." Thus this passage refers to marriage, not necessarily to fornication. V. 6 introduces sins that are clearly immoral. The following laws of chapter 18 are still binding:

1. They are really no more than an amplification of the seventh commandment, which protected God's order in the family. The different channels in which lust might flow are pointed out, and then filled up--choked up--by

the Divine prohibition. [Bonar]

God desires that inner family relationships be without impure, lustful motives. The earthly family relationship is to resemble the heavenly family relationship. Speaking to the Christian family at large through Paul, He said,

The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity. 1 Timothy 5:2.

The law of Moses, Lev 18, requires pure affection among physical family members, free of lustful desires. The law of Christ, 1 Tim 5:2, requires pure affection among the spiritual family members. In both cases, our love and care one for another is to be holy and pure. See 1 Ti 4:12; Ph 4:8; 1 Thes 5:22, & 2 Tim 2:22.

The case of *grandchildren*, in ver. 10, 11, [17, 18, ed] has an interesting feature in it. It might happen that after a father's death, the original family would be broken up. The widow married again, and her new family grew up in youth and beauty. These *daughters* are like strangers to the original family; still, a relationship has been formed, however slight it appear: these are to be reckoned sisters of the original family. Thus the Lord multiplied the links of connection, and kept connections unbroken. [Bonar]

There was an exception, Deut 25:5-10: The brother was to marry his dead brother's wife and raise up seed to his brother. But the law's specific purpose was to preserve the family and inheritance unbroken until the Messiah should come. [Bonar]

POLYGAMY

There are several points in this chapter that the *patriarchs* "violated," *e.g.*, v. 18, Jacob took two sisters as wives, *Rachel* and *Leah*. Thus the Lord TOLERATED polygamy, but in the beginning, it was not so. Mat 19:18, *because of the hardness of your hearts...*

Polygamy, though clearly a lessor state, was better than fornication and/or adultery: The family with more than one wife still had one head, the husband, who was to be under the One Head, Jehovah God. In fact, everything in the Old Testament was imperfect, except, of course, the Ten Commandments, Ps 19:7, &c.

The imperfect state of polygamy looked forward to the perfect state of Christ and His Church:

As such, it [polygamy, ed] was permitted to remain in Israel, in order to keep them in expectation of a higher and better order of things, resembling far more nearly the order of unfallen Paradise, where there was union between one man and one woman a shadow of Christ and His Church... The New Testament law of marriage is the revival of the original type of Christ and His Church. [Bonar]

The entire Book of Hebrews tells us that Christ and His Church is better than anything offered under the old covenant. [Keep in mind, however, that the Commandments are the law of both the Old and New Covenant.]

We are thus confronted with an observation: If the Lord God were to "remarry" Old Testament Israel, as some teach He will at a future date, then He Himself would destroy the "better" picture presented by His New Testament Church. Moreover, He would violate His own law found in Deut 24:4, forbidding remarrying a former wife.

These laws dealing with the family repaired to some degree the disunion of the Fall and the divisions of Babel. Christ, the Law of God, reverses the effects of sin.

2. They are not *ceremonial* precepts, and therefore they are permanent in their obligations. They bind all nations, even as does the seventh commandment. They are so truly *moral* obligations, that in ver. 24, 25, the Canaanites are stamped with infamy for not having recognized and observed them. It is plain, therefore, that these laws were in force *before* the Mosaic ritual existed; and if so, they have *patriarchal* authority. [Bonar]

"*patriarchal* authority..."

Of course Cain and Abel were not under this law; they married their sisters. Abraham marrying his half-

sister, Sarah, is an instance of the unsettled state of the law then... Temporary considerations were allowed by God to supersede these precepts on some occasions... [Bonar]

God deals with and works with individuals. Every person is different, and God deals with each differently, but He is the One who must make the exceptions, *e.g.*, David, "thou shalt not die" over his sordid affair.

There is no hint in the New Testament that these family laws have been repealed; but on the contrary, Paul's horror, expressed in 1 Cor. v. 1 a man married his father's widow, unequivocally declares that he recognized the precepts as both *moral* and *divine* in their authority. [Bonar]

Vv. 7, 8 & 1 Cor 5:1, Paul points out that Divine law is written in the heart of all men, *not so much as named among them*. No man has an excuse.

May we not here, from the fact that in this instance *human* law and feeling among the heathens coincided with the Divine, derive light as to the other commandments? If the law of God be thus recognized by the human conscience in cases such as these, is it not plain that the same conscience will yet testify to all other parts of this holy law in like manner? There is sufficient to prove that the law was once there, and sufficient also to prove that it was displaced. [Bonar]

The Divine law, *i.e.*, the Ten Commandments, was and is written in the being of all men by their Creator. Rom 1:28 ... *to retain God in their knowledge*:

[O]r to own and acknowledge him as God, to worship and glorify him as such; but took every method to erase this knowledge out of their minds, and keep it from others... [John Gill]

Wicked man must make a conscience effort work to remove or repress the knowledge of God, for His Divine law is written in every person. When man makes that effort long enough, God gives *them over to a reprobate mind*:

[A] vain empty mind, worthless, good for nothing devoid of all true knowledge and judgment; incapable of approving what is truly good, or of disapproving that which is evil; a mind that has lost all conscience of things, and is disapproved of by God, and all good men: [*ibid.*]

3. this third point is easily to overlook, v. 18, *to vex her*. Though polygamy was permitted as an imperfect way of life, a man could not marry a woman and her sister, *e.g.*, *Leah* and *Rachel*. The Lord gives a law to protect personal feelings of individuals. [Bonar]

V. 19 fits more with the previous passage than with the following, for it assumes that the *uncovering* takes place within proper marriage relationships; this law checks even lawful intercourse between husband and wife.

Israel failed to abide by the law given here in Lev 18, Ez 22:10ff.

War Against the Family
A Strengthened State

Lev 18:20-23

The Lord is strict in this chapter to protect the family: The preceding dealt with inner family evil; this section deals with evil outside the family. Significantly, there appears to be almost as many laws protecting the family unit as there are protecting the relationship with the Lord. **FURTHERMORE**, note there are no laws protecting the state. MY! HOW FAR WE HAVE COME FROM GOD'S WORD.

It is easy, therefore, to see what is going on around us. As the family disintegrates, the state is strengthened. Hence, it is to the state's advantage to not only permit activities that weaken and destroy the family, *e.g.*, drugs, pornography, abortion, but the state might even lead in destroying the family unit antichrist [statists] education of all kinds: sex education; drug education; sodomite education in alternate life-styles; rebellion education, call this number if you feel your parents abuse you; death education, visit the funeral home and write

your own obituary [then we wonder why the suicide rate among young people]; teaching facts without God, which only makes man more effective in his rebellion against God; teaching the THEORY of evolution that man is simply an animal walking upright. Other areas of state sponsored and financed measures to destroy the family include: a welfare system that pays for children out of wedlock; a tax system that penalizes marriage; laws that support and encourage sodomy and murder/abortion, and an endless list of other anti-family "laws" and activities not only condoned by but sponsored by the state in its war against God.

The enemy of all righteousness is not asleep nor loafing on the job. He is alert to every opportunity to move against God wherever man ignores the Word of God. We will mention that he has the God-given authority to take over areas forsaken by Christians, 2 Ti 2:26, &c. In other words, he knows that the Kingdom of God on earth is built on strong family units, or the Lord God would not have made such a big issue of the family; he knows that the Lord emphasized and strengthened the family, not the state; he knows that a strong, oppressive state depends on weak families; he knows the desires of carnal man [see Rom 8:7, the minding of the flesh, marg and 1 Cor 3:1-3], and if he can make sin convenient and attractive, family members will follow after the evil that undermines the family. He knows the Word of God and that the result of families weakened by sin will be just as the Lord promised in 1 Sam 8: a strengthened, oppressive state, a One World Government if you please. Strong Christian family units, as defined in places such as Lev 18, Eph 6 and Col 3, are the major obstacles to rebuilding Babel. Thus the all out attack against the Christian family unit.

Have you noticed the consistent, open attack against Godly family relations on prime-time TV sitcoms? The warfare against Godly family units could not be more open: It is everywhere one turns. Sadly, Christians either do not know there is a war going on, or they ignore the fact there is a war. They live and act like Christianity is a shot of immunity against the *vain words* and *philosophies* of evil men; they seem to feel presume that as Christians they can willingly and knowingly expose themselves and their children to antichrist words and philosophies from various sources, with God's protection.

Eph 5:6, 7 *Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. {disobedience: or, unbelief} Be not ye therefore partakers with them.*

In Ephesians chapter 5, Paul not only gives laws to protect the family, but he speaks against several more things that will fit into the context of the family: *covetousness, foolish talking, not convenient jesting* and general *uncleanness*. In vv. 6, 7, he points out that *the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience*, and that Christians are not to partake of the mentioned sins. The warning is that if Christians fail to keep the laws protecting the inner man and the family unit, God will move against them also; 1 Sam 8 tells us that He moves against the sins of His people through strong, oppressive civil authorities.

Remember Balaam and Balak? Balak, King of Moab, saw that God's people, having defeated the Amorites, were too strong for him, so he hired Balaam to curse Israel, Nu chs 22-24. Unable to curse God's people to give Moab the upper hand on the battle field, Balaam taught Balak how to weaken God's people from within, so God's hand would be against His own people, Rev 2:14. [See also Num 31:16; Mic 6:5; 2 Pet 2:15; Jude 11.] Balaam taught Balak to weaken Israel's family unit by sending Moab's women among God's people, Num 25. [V. 3, *and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel*. One can only imagine how Moab's females looked and acted in order that Israel's men would be attracted to them. Notice that the attractive females on the sitcoms are the ones taking the lead in seducing the males; the sitcoms make it appear that such seductions are simply a natural part of life, as are sodomite relationships.]

Thus Israel of old illustrates what Paul meant in Eph 5:6 & 7, when he said that *the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience*. The enemy knew then and he knows now that if he can undermine the family unit, he has God's hand against His own people.

Building Churches

My wife and I attended a funeral of a beloved friend, a college instructor who introduced us several years ago. At the funeral, I overheard one pastor tell another about his goal to build a church and he needed to increase 10 families a year. The two then discussed building churches. The phrase catching my attention, remaining with me, was, *build a church*. What, may we ask, has happened to building families, and building up people in the Word of God and faith? Maybe it was just a phrase or maybe the pastor really meant what he said, but we all

know of churches that try to have something for the family every night of the week. They even borrow huge sums of money to build family centers. What is wrong with making the home the family center? The excuse I have encountered is, Well, they will just stay home and watch TV, so we try to give them something *godly* to do here on the premises. Maybe if individuals and families were built up in the Word of God and the Christian faith, we would not have to *worry* about what they do at home. Has the megachurch become as much an enemy of the Godly family unit as are sitcoms?

Building churches means that the messages from the pulpit must consistently be motivational and/or evangelistic, *viz.* the pressure is always on to get the 10 new families, or the goal mortgage payment(?) will not be met. The families are used, therefore, to build the church, rather than the church used to build the families in the Christian faith. The pressure is on, so there is little or no time, motivation nor energy to systematically teach the Word of God.

Balaam taught Balak to move against the Christian family, *i.e.*, Israel, and then God Himself would move against His people. This pastor personally knows of churches who seem to be well instructed by Balak as the churches themselves move to destroy the family by providing something every night for every member of the family, encouraging each member to go his or her own way to do his or her own thing.

Numbers 25, however, did not leave God's people in the hands of the enemy: The sin was dealt with by God's appointed judges exercising righteous judgment according to the Word of the Lord, v. 5. Then the chapter closes with the Lord's command to *vex* those who worked to destroy the family. God's people were commanded to be hostile toward *the Midianites, and smite them*. The reason is given in v. 18, *For they vex you with their wiles...* Thus God's people were told to war against those who worked to destroy the family by teaching Israel to commit fornication.

Notice that the next chapter, Num 26, opens with the people preparing for war. The weakened family strengthened the enemy's hand, but when the sin was dealt with, God's people were strengthened.

Though Paul did not tell God's people to *smite* the promoters of the destruction of the family, he certainly did command they beware and even avoid where possible those working and teaching against the Christian family unit, Col 2:8; 1 Ti 1:6; 6:20; 2 Ti 2:16; Tit 1:10; 3:9, &c.

Sad to say, however, the TV shows militating against the Christian family unit are the top rated shows, and the churches attempting to replace the family, urging the family to build around the church, are the churches who are, as a rule, attracting the families. Can we complain about the strengthened state that militates against the family when we tolerate and support Christian works that strengthen themselves by undermining the family?

The Lord Jehovah gave an abundance of laws pertaining to, and protecting and strengthening the family. One will be hard pressed to find even one law to the church or to the state that will strengthen either at the expense of the family.

Notice, furthermore, that midst the laws in Lev 18 protecting the family is found v. 21:

And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD. {Molech: Gr. Moloch}

John Gill, 1696-1771, makes this important point long before the modern state as we know it:

Ver. 21. *And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, &c.*] The name of an image or idol, according to Aben Ezra, who observes, that their wise men interpret it as a general name for everyone whom they made to reign over them; and it is right, he says, that it is the abomination of the children of Ammon, and so the same with Milcom, 1Ki 11:5; and with Baal, as appears from Jer 32:35; and they are both of much the same signification, the one signifies a king, the other a lord; and perhaps is the same with the Melicarthus of Sanchoniatho {y}, who is also Hercules; to whom Pliny says {z} that the Phoenicians offered human sacrifices every year: of Molech,...

because the word "fire" is not in the original text, some, as Aben Ezra observes, explain the phrase, "let to

pass through", of their causing them to pass from the law of God to the religion of Molech, or of devoting them to his service and worship; but the word "fire" is rightly supplied, as it may be from #De 18:10; and the same writer says, the phrase to pass through is the same as to burn; but though this they sometimes did, even burn their infants, and sacrificed them to idols, 2Ch 28:3 Ps 106:37,38 Eze 16:20,21; yet this seems to be something short of that, and to be done in the manner, as Jarchi and other Jewish writers {a} relate; who say, the father delivered his son to the priests (of Molech) and they made two great fires, and caused the son to pass on foot between the two fires, which was a kind of a lustration, and so of a dedication of them to the idol; though it must be owned that both were done; yea, that both the phrases of passing through the fire, and of burning, are used promiscuously of the same, see 2Ki 16:3; compared with 2Ch 28:3 and also Eze 16:20,21; and they might be both done at different times, or the one previous and in order to the other; and perhaps they might cause the child so often and so long to pass through the fire, as that at last it was burnt and destroyed:

neither shall thou profane the name of thy God; who had given them children, and to whom they ought to have devoted them, and in whose service they should have trained them up to the honour of his name; but instead of that profaned it, by the above idolatrous and cruel usages:

I am the Lord; who would avenge such a profanation of his name.

{y} Apud, Euseb. Praepar. Evangel. l. 1. p. 38.
{z} Nat. Hist. l. 36. c. 5.
{a} Ben Melech in loc. Kimchii Sepher Shorash. rad. Klm.

It is interesting that v. 21 is placed in the midst of the laws protecting the family.

Fire to Molech... Could mean a literal fire into which children were cast, which seems to be the standard understanding. But also, Molech, according to both Gill and the Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge signifies a king, or governor, or similar import with Baal, lord, or governor... [Online Bible, CDROM, v. 6.30.]

V. 21 is placed in the midst of the laws concerning the family; therefore, the law in v. 21 further protects the family: It clearly protects the family's children from being turned over to the pagan gods, *e.g.*, the state, education, mammon, religion, &c.

Vv. 24-28, iniquity done in secret cries out to God for public vengeance, for the land to spew out its inhabitants:

What evil there is in *lukewarmness* in His sight may be inferred from the use of this expression in Rev. iii. 16 the very expression applied to the most abominable state of society that could be imagined! O man, are you pleasing the world? Are you content with a hope? Are you going as near as possible to the world? Are you a decent, moral, nay, highly-respected professor, who avoids being over-zealous? Satisfied with being, as you think, saved, though still unholy? Are you trying to gain both worlds? Are you thinking to walk on to heaven in a way that is scoffing world will not discover? Then, tremble! He will as assuredly spue thee out of His mouth as if thou hadst all the lusts of lustful Canaan! [Bonar]

Accordingly, the terrible natural disasters taking place at the end of this present millennium are a direct result of the public acceptance of the glorified attacks against God's order for the family; they are the God-promised results of the *lukewarm* Christianity and ungodly paganism that permeates our social order. Those who listen to Rush Limbaugh know that he continually, and rightly, attacks the lack of good morality in the Clinton Administration. But he, like most other people, lays the blame for America's moral ills at the top, giving the impression that if the lack of morality can be dealt with at the top, the bottom will fall into line; however, that is not at all what the Word of God teaches.

Certainly, God requires all authority to live Godly, but we see from vv. 24-30, that the previous laws were given to individuals, applying to EVERYONE who lived in the land, Israelite and non-Israelite alike there could be no exceptions. The individuals were responsible to keep themselves pure. Notice, moreover, that individual, private, personal sins have national repercussions God's law controls what takes place in the bedroom: Prevalent private sins among the people, Christians and non Christians, result in national judgments the land

wars against its inhabitants. The Lord promises to judge the private evils of the individuals; He promises to use the land to judge the evil. War against God is war against God's law; war against God's law is war against God's creation; God's creation will win.

The sins the Lord spoke against in this section were, evidently, common practice in both Egypt, where they just came from, and in Canaan, where they were headed. So to prepare His people for what they were going to face, the Lord gives what is found in Lev 18: He warns His people to remain free from the sins of the surrounding pagans, and He warns of the results if they do not follow heed the warning. We should point out that only by the grace of God will one remain free and above these sins.

Either we will have strong families according to Eph 6 and Col 3, or we will have a strong state, attempting to be the father and mother to every person in the world; furthermore, we will have a strong creation, warring against sinful man, *e.g.*, several 100 year floods within just a very short time.

All society church, state, work place, &c. must protect, support and strengthen the family, or God Himself will move:

Eph 5:6, 7 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. {disobedience: or, unbelief} Be not ye therefore partakers with them.