

## Leviticus 24

### The Priest's duty

Vv. 1-4.

This section contains instructions concerning the priest's duty behind closed doors, out of sight of the people. Only the Lord God can see the priest at this point: The people do not know what he is doing at this point, other than what was revealed in the written word containing these instructions. The priest at this point of his God-given responsibility was out of sight.

The point, however, that stands out in my mind is the requirement upon God's people to bring *pure oil-olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually*.

The people never saw the light; only the priest, who kept it trimmed and lit, and Lord saw the light from the oil they were commanded by God to bring.

Several points:

1) all the people were required to bring this oil. Every one of God's people were to feel an interest in the unseen work of the sanctuary.

2) the oil had to be *pure*, clear and unmixed or undiluted. The oil also had to be *beaten*: Work had to be put into the oil before it was acceptable and useable by God.

Thus the people were made to feel they had as much a part in the work of the tabernacle as did the priest. They had a major part in keeping the candlestick burning where only the Lord God and the priest could see it.

3) the oil was not part of the people's tithes which went to support the Levites, nor was it a part of the offerings for the upkeep of the House of God. Rather, the oil was a separate and specific command from the Lord God to keep *the lamps upon the pure candlestick burning before the Lord continually*.

...By thus prescribing to the people the duty of bringing to the priests the oil for the lamps will prepared, they were made to feel that they, as much as the priests, had an interest in the transactions of the Holy Place. It was equivalent to a declaration that the seven-lamped candlestick burned for them. And so it did. That golden candlestick, with its seven lamps at the end of the seven branches, was a type of God's Church standing in Christ (He is the shaft of gold), and supplied by the Spirit with light and life; or, to put the same truth in a different form, it was Christ holding up His Church (the seven branches) [see Rev 1, ed], while the Holy Spirit was the indwelling light and life of each. Each Israelite had, therefore, a special interest in these lamps. [Bonar, 426, 427.]

Rev 1 shows us Christ is the golden shaft of the lampstand, and the churches are the lamps coming off the Shaft, causing light to come from the *pure candlestick*. Thus, the people of the church are as much part of the work as is the "priest," that is, the minister or pastor. Without the people, the work could not continue. *The candlestick* cannot "burn" without the oil supplied by the people.

V. 2, *...pure oil... burn continually*. The *oil* clearly represents the Holy Spirit, without Whom *the lamps* cannot burn.

Bonar calls attention to 1 Sam 3:3, and that the *lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was...* The lamp was allowed to burn out of oil; then it was refilled, trimmed and relit, **twice a day**, morning and evening. The reason it was permitted to burn out was to clearly show the need for the continual filling of the Holy Spirit, without Whom the believer cannot shine as a light in this dark world. It is not only a daily refilling of the Spirit, but it is twice a day, a continual need of the Spirit's grace and power.

Though Christ is the Shaft of Gold in Rev 1, and the lamps are attached to the Shaft, they cannot burn without the continual flow of *oil*, the Spirit of God. The individual lamps **cannot burn on their own** though attached to the Shaft. **In other words**, simply being "born again" does not equip one to burn; required is a continual walk with the Lord and filling of His Spirit.

We might mention 1 Sam 3:4ff.: It was after the lamp had gone out that the Lord God spoke to Samuel not once, but thrice; the Lord called until Samuel answered. **IT IS NEVER TOO DARK FOR THE LORD TO SPEAK; IN FACT, HE SPEAKS IN THE DARKEST OF SITUATIONS.**

Hebrews 9, tells us *the candlestick, the table, the shewbread* were outside *the second veil*; inside that veil was *holiest* place of all, which contained *the ark of the covenant* and all that pertained to it. Inside the ark was the covenant-law of God.

V. 3, *statute for ever...* That is, "until the messiah should come, the true light, which would put out all such typical ones, and by his Gospel spread light in all his churches throughout the world." Gill.

**Vv. 1-4, the candlestick...** Though it spoke primarily of Israel being a light for the Lord in a pagan world, it also clearly looked forward to the church scattered throughout the dark, pagan world.

1) Christ is the true vine, and we are the branches, as the candlestick had one shaft providing the oil for the light for each lamp. The branch is useless apart from the vine as the lamp was useless apart from the shaft.

2) the seven branches from the one shaft pictured the seven Spirits of God, Rev. 4:5.

3) Zech 4 well describes the candlestick: Basically, it is Christ upholding His church by His grace, v. 7,

*Who [art] thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel [thou shalt become] a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone [thereof with] shoutings, [crying], Grace, grace unto it.*

*Jude 24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present [you] faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy...*

Without the continuing and upholding grace and mercy of God through Christ Jesus our Lord, we would not last a moment in this wicked world.

4) Christ, the Shaft of the candlestick, not only upholds His church [that is, individual members], but He alone provides the oil to fulfill its responsibility [Re 11:4 *These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. (AV)*]. The two olive trees, Zech 4:3... There are several ideas about what they represent, and I believe they represent the two natures of Christ: He was the God-Man. He was a man in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwelt. Though God, He suffered in all points like as we, yet He was without sin. He is the faithful High Priest who is touched with our infirmities. Because He endured the life of a man, He knows what grace we need to burn brightly in the dark world around us.

Obviously, I am not dogmatic on the point, but the two natures, without confusion, in Christ, God and Man,

seem to me to fit the context best.

5) the child of God is to be a light in the midst of darkness, Matt 5:14, Php 2:15. The light is not a natural gift, but a work of the Spirit of Grace. That Spirit must be supplied daily:

*Lam 3:21-23 This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.*

6) the responsibility of a light is to shine: The owner who does not keep his lighthouse burning brightly is responsible for the ships that crash into the dangerous reef.

7) light that exposes surrounding sin and wickedness might give one the impression that all that is necessary is to live a Godly, personally clean life among the surrounding evil. Though it is necessary to do so, Christian responsibility is more:

*Mat 5:13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

**SALT:** For salt to be effective, it must be mixed with the whatever is being salted. Certainly, salt here speaks of clean, pure Bible doctrine, but it also speaks of active involvement in holding back corruption.

8) Bonar points out that 2 Pet 1:19 could also refer to this candlestick:

*19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: 20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. (p 432)*

However, Peter is there referring to the literal voice they heard from heaven while they were on the mount with Christ.

## **Vv. 5-9, the Bread**

1) being set before God in the holy place as was the incense on the golden altar, it was a type of *Jesus*, upon Whom the delight of the Father rested. The Father delighted in the Son, the Bread of Heaven.

2) *the pure table*, that is, the table made of Shittim-wood overlaid with pure gold. The Ark of the Covenant was made of the same material, and it represented Christ, the God-Man. His humanity, wood, and His deity, gold. (The streets of the new Jerusalem are pure as gold. Does that represent Christ's, who rules the city, purity and deity?)

The bread on *the pure table*: The food for the souls of His people is Christ, the Son of God, John 6:48ff.

3) *twelve cakes*, each made with *two tenth deals* of fine flower. A *tenth deal* is identified as one omer. Thus each cake was made of two omers of fine flower.

Twelve was the number of stones in the Priest's breastplate, each named for a tribe of the children of Israel. In other words, each person named on the breastplate had a two omer size loaf of bread.

Ex 16:16, each person only needed one omer per day, but here we see the daily supply of two omers for each person named on the priest. The sufficiency in Jesus, our High Priest, is more than any person could ever use.

His people have a **double portion** in Christ.

A person's perishing, whether saint or sinner, is no one's fault but his own, for there is super abundance for each person in Christ.

*Re 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*

4) it was the priest's duty to see that the bread was there and arranged properly:

A) primarily speaks of the proper provision made by Christ, our High Priest. And that provision made for all men, particularly the lost sinners.

B) could also speak of the religious leaders, pastors, arranging the Bread of Life for his people, and making an abundance of it available for all who will listen.

5) the bread was replaced every seven days; thus it never molded: It never got old.

A) The Bread of Life never gets old: He always has new joys and peace.

B) no matter how many times the Scriptures are read, they never get old: There is always more new material there than one can possibly handle.

C) pastors should keep the Bread of Life new every time for their people.

**I am firmly convinced that pastors who cannot study and find new material on their own for their people have no business pastoring. There are loads of "sermon" material made available through the mail. They would not do that if there was not an abundance of pastors who need and use it.**

D) it was renewed every seven days: *Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together...*

5) Bonar, in 1846, said that the bread in order every seven days means that **the seven thousand year of the earth, that he shall be set gloriously before His people in fresh fulness.** (p. 434)

I am inclined to believe he is seeing something that is not there. There will be an abundance of speculation as the calendar turns over the year 2,000 because that makes time about 7,000 years old, according to Scripture.

6) Twelve large loaves of bread kept in proper order by the priest: "opening his hand liberally to supply the hungry through all the tribes of Israel." Bonar. Bonar gives this interesting foot note here:

In 2 Chron. iv. 19, Solomon is said to have made "the golden altar; the tables <Hebrew word> also, whereon the shew-bread was." There were ten tables, and the Hebrew words are literally rendered, "And on them (viz., these tables) the shew-bread"--probably ten tables, each with twelve loaves. This vast increase of material in Solomon's temple is remarkable throughout; four cherubim, ten leavers, ten candlesticks, all pointing to the amazing enlargement of vision and of fruition in the days of the Prince of Peace.

7) The bread is not burned every week, but the frankincense is burnt. The bread belonged to Aaron and his sons. Thus Christ intercedes for His own as they feast on Him (study and meditate on His Word).

8) the bread is supplied by the people weekly, v. 8. God's people must understand that all this is done for their sake.

9) concluding this section, Bonar makes a good point:

And last of all, "the everlasting covenant" (ver. 8) and "perpetual statute" (ver. 9) throw a fence around these enactments. As regularly as the Sabbath came on, the prepared loaves must be on the table. We must not put other food before the Lord's people. Ministers dare not change it. What mean those who set before God's people a supply of eloquence, intellect, argument, or of history, or speculation on the truth? Even if the table have on it an array of duties, row upon row of graces and virtues, yet if Christ, the life, and the food of life, be not there, the "everlasting covenant" is broken, and the "perpetual statute" annulled.

Bonar's 1846 warning is even more important today: Expounding of God's Word has been replaced by eloquence, intellect, argument, history and speculations about the truth, **and the people love it, for that is what attracts the crowds.**

### Vv. 10-16.

Keil points out that the location of this event of blasphemy is very significant: Vv. 1-9 have been talking about the holiness of the Lord and the means of approach to Him through the various rituals and ordinances. In the midst of the giving of the Lord's law-word to man, showing man how to please and approach Him, we have this situation, 10-16. Not only is the location of vv. 10-16 important, but so is the location of vv. 17-22, the *lex talionis*, or law of *like for like*. Its location shows the very close connection between man's regard for the name of the Lord and the justice to be obtained between men.

The term, **blasphemed**, is a hard one to determine the meaning of. Balak wanted Balaam to **curse** Israel, Nu. 23:8, 25, yet *Moses and Aaron took these men which were expressed by their names*, Nu 1:17; *Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid*, 2 Ki 12:9, and those who trust upon Pharaoh of Egypt will have his hand **pierced**, 2 Ki 18:21; Job **cursed** the day he was born, Job 3:8, and he **cursed** the habitation of the foolish; *the people shall curse him that withholdeth corn*, Pro 11:26, and Pro 24,

*23 These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment. 24 He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him: 25 But to them that rebuke him shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them. 26 Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer.*

The disobedient place their wages into a bag with **holes** in it.

I suppose the closest meaning is to speak bad of.

Having got into a quarrel with an Israelite, the man scoffed at the name (of Jehovah) and cursed. ... It was this passage that gave rise to the custom, so prevalent among the Rabbins, of using the expression "name," or "the name," for *Dominus*, or *Deus*. (Keil "The prohibition forbidding the *utterance of the name* is derived by the Jews from Lev. xxiv. 16, in virtue of an untenable exposition of the passage given in the LXX... *Theology of the Old Testament*, Gustav Oehler, Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 2527 Girard Ave. N., Minneapolis, Min. 55411. P 92.)

Adam Clarke says there is nothing in the text of Lev 24:10, 11, that tells us that the man *blasphemed the name* of the Lord God Almighty, for the words are added by the translators. The word *God*, v. 15, does not necessarily mean the Lord God, but could mean false gods. Note the difference between v. 15 and v. 16, *Whosoever curseth*

his God shall bear his sin, and he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, implying that the God of v. 15 was not the God of v. 16:

Hence all that we term *blasphemy* here may only signify the *particularizing some false god*, i.e., naming him by his name, or imploring his aid as a helper, and when spoken of the true God it may signify using that sacred name as the idolaters did the names of their idols. ("**Oh, god!**" would be the phrase, ed.) ... In whatever point of view we consider the relation which has been the subject of this long note, one thing is sufficiently plain, that he who speaks irreverently of God, of his *works*, his *perfection*, his *providence*, &c, is destitute of every moral feeling and of every religious principle, and consequently so dangerous to society that it would be criminal to suffer him to be at large, though the long-suffering of God may lead him to repentance, and therefore it may be consistent with mercy to preserve his life. (*Clark's Commentary*, I.589.)

Hastings says the word *blasphemy* "has the general sense of slanderous, contumelious speech against either God or man:

... In classical and NT Greek (as also in EV) the word is not restricted, as in ordinary Eng. phraseology and Eng. law, to the divine relation, but has the general sense of slanderous, contumelious speech against either God or man. ... A special use in NT touches the human assumption of what is God's, the degradation of the infinite glory of the unapproachable God to the finite nature of the creature. Thus the word is put into the mouths of the Jewish accusers of Christ (Mt 9.3 26.65, Jn 10.36, Lk 5:21), and is employed likewise conversely by the NT writers and speakers to depict the sacrilegious and insulting denial by the Jews to Christ of what was His due status (Mt 27.39, Lk 22.65 23.39), and their equally sacrilegious and insulting charges against Him (Ac 13.45 18.6 26.11). (*A Dictionary of the Bible*, I.305.)

Man, with his speech, reduces the Lord God Almighty to the level of a mortal man. Blasphemy is speech that refuses to give the Lord God His due status. Rather than exalting Him as the Creator, blasphemy reduces the Lord God Almighty to the level of the creature. Elsewhere, Hastings defines blasphemy:

**BLASPHEMY** (1) an ill-omened or profane utterance, a light or rash prayer; (2) a slander, or any defamation; (3) impious speech against God. ...

2. **In the Old Testament.**—It is to the Jewish and Christian law (with their off-shoots), then, that we have to look for the creation of the offence of blasphemy. We omit the 'contempt' for God referred to in Mal 1.8, (Mal 1:8, *And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.*) the dishonour done Him by withholding the offerings due to Him in Mal 3.8,9, (Mal 3:8, 9 *Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.*) the swearing falsely by His name in Lv 19.12, (Lev 19:11 *Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another. 12 And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD. 13 Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.*) the sin 'with a high hand' of Nu 15.30 (Num 15:30 *But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.*)(cf. 2 K 19.22)(2 Ki 19:22 *Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel*), the reviling (or murmuring against) the Elohim of Ex 22.28,(Ex 22:28 *Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.*) since, though these are all directed against God, they do not rise to the height of the specific sin of blasphemy. ... This (Lev 24:11, ed.) was the only kind of reproach against God which was punishable with death at the hand of man, lower kinds (such as those referred to above) being left to the judgment of God. ... To *profane the name* came to

imply all forms of irreverence, of private insincerity, and of public disrespect for morality and religion. ...  
(*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, II.669, 670, 672.)

Several things are mentioned above as means of blaspheming God:

- 1) offering or giving to Him less than the best. Though it is a free will offering, anything less than the best is contempt towards God.
- 2) failure to give to God what is His due in tithes and offerings.
- 3) professing to be something we are not profanes His holy name. When our daily lives do not confirm what we profess with our mouth—love for God and that He is our first priority—we deal falsely with one another.
- 4) presumptuous actions reproaches, or blasphemes, the Lord.
- 5) speaking contemptuously against the rulers God has established over us. This, obviously, does not mean we must agree with them at all times, nor does it mean we must obey them in all things. It does, however, clearly tell us that we must not rail against them.

As bad as the above things are, man is not given the power to enforce any penalty against them. Enforcement must be left to the Lord.

However, blasphemy against the name of the Lord was dealt with by men: the guilty was stoned.

J.F.B. gives this account of v. 11:

... It was a common practice among the Egyptians to curse their idols when disappointed in obtaining the object of their petitions. The Egyptian mind of this youth thought the greatest insult to his opponent was to blaspheme the object of his religious reverence. He spoke disrespectfully of One who sustained the double character of the King as well as the God of the Hebrew people; and as the offence was a new one, he was put in ward till the mind of the Lord was ascertained as to his disposal. (*Jamieson, Fausset, Brown*, I.501.)

Cursing one's parents was punishable by death; thus cursing God is even more serious.

- 1) the father is not named though he was an Egyptian. Did the father come out with the mother and her son? It only says his father was an Egyptian, but he could have remained faithless and remained behind in Egypt. Could the mother have taken her son to another house to be protected by the blood on the night of the passover?
- 2) v. 11, the name, but *of the LORD* is added by the translators. Vv. 15, 16 imply he spoke against the Lord God, but that is not what v. 14 says.
- 3) the death penalty is carried out against a sin that had not yet been identified as a sin. The prohibition against working on the sabbath had been established when the man gathered the sticks, but that is not the case here—the law had not yet been given. In other words, the name of the Lord is so reverent that the people should have known not to use it like this man did, even fresh out of Egyptian bondage.
- 4) this law places everyone, Israelite and non-Israelite, under God's law. God's law applies to everyone, the whole earth. Thus even the pagans using a vain phrase of the Lord God results in disaster for society, for the next step is disregard for justice.

5) the sin here was with the tongue, words spoken in anger, in the heat of the moment-while they fought. Accordingly, there is no excuse before God nor man for doing evil. A fit of anger (temporary insanity), drunkenness, &c., can not be used to escape responsibility for evil words or actions. And when evil is overlooked or the wicked doer is not held responsible because he was drunk or "temporally insane," God will see that the irresponsible society makes restitution: It dies in place of the sinner.

The only time "evil" was overlooked was in the case of INVOLUNTARY MANSLAUGHTER, a person's life was taken totally by accident, *e.g.*, an axe head flew off and hit someone. At all other times, there was always someone accountable, even if the mean ox got out and hurt someone.

Evidently, the Egyptian was a proselyte in the midst of Israel. It is significant that the translators **added of the LORD** in v. 11. In other words, the **name** the man *blasphemed* was assumed to be the name that was/is above every name, and would not be uttered nor written by the Hebrews, cf. Phil. 2:

*4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

See the argument in Heb 1 for the exalted name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, the problem in Lev 24:11 is over the name of Jesus as He is found in the Old Testament. **Accordingly, we cannot imagine the reverence due to the name of God the Father as revealed in the Son.** His, the Son's, name is so holy in the Old Testament that they refused to utter it, calling it simply, *the name*.

Apparently, providence worked to bring this about while Moses was receiving the instructions of vv. 1-9 from the Lord. It happened to emphasize the holiness of the Lord. The people brought the man to Moses who placed him in ward until the mind of the Lord could be determined. Notice this is the **only jail** in Scripture: in ward until we can determine what the Lord would have done to the guilty party.

Note also that while the Lord was speaking to Moses there was fightings and wars in the camp. Of course, there were 3,000,000 people.

The man was the son of an Egyptian, part of the mixed multitude who came out with them. The application of the law to this man showed that everyone was accountable to God no matter what his heritage.

The Lord pronounces His judgment in the matter, and the sinner is put to death outside the camp. (Christ died outside the camp.) The witnesses had to lay their hands upon him to transfer their guilt of hearing to the person of the guilty, and to show that they were faithful witnesses.

The name of the Lord is protected with death in v. 16, and the Lord moves right to v. 17 to protect the life of man with **And**. The connection between the two passages is clearly established.

Some concluding points:

1) It seems strange that such a strong punishment should be executed against a man for simply using the Lord's name in a trifling manner, but, typical of the Lord, the first time a sin crops up, the punishment is very severe,



e.g. the man who gathered sticks on the sabbath, Acan, the man and wife before Peter in Acts. Blasphemy was no small matter though we think it is.

2) Every one who heard him was responsible to "own up" to the wickedness he did. In fact, the Lord curses those who hear or know of evil and will not speak out against it.

Ps 50:18, implies that failure to speak out against evil is casting the Word of God away from the silent person. They can claim all they desire to love God and the Word of God, yet failure to raise one's voice against evil in society is denial of the Lord God.

3) V. 15, the punishment is harsh, but the blasphemer brought it upon himself: no one forced him to do it. Therefore, he has no one to blame for his death but himself.

Note that if civil authority fails to use the sword given to it by God in a godly manner, that certainly does not mean the "sinner" escaped the punishment. God will have His vengeance against evil, and no one is to blame except the "sinner."

We should note that we are all sinners, deserving whatever evil that might befall us. But because of Christ, we can reap the blessings of God as we live pleasing to Him.

In fact, the next section of this chapter speaks of God's justice:

Vv. 16-21, eye for an eye, RESTITUTION. Using Mat 5:38, folks say that *eye for eye* is no longer required. The law is given many times in Scripture, Ex 21ff., Deut 19:21, &c. I will not go into it here, for I did in both Matthew 5 and Exo 21. I will say, however, that salvation is based upon restitution, and without the law of restitution, there can be no restitution.

Restitution is the very basis of God's system of justice, and without it, there can be no justice.

There is speculation about what the men strove about, v. 10, but we are not told. We do, however-in my mind, have a hint in the context of the death penalty being passed upon the man. Apparently, they strove over the ownership of something: maybe one charged the other with theft; maybe one accidentally killed the other's animal, or maybe both claimed ownership of an animal. Whatever, the son of the Egyptian used the Lord's name wrongly.

The man was killed, and no pity was to be felt toward him. No one forced him to curse, lie, steal, or strike his neighbour.

The obvious conclusion of this section for us is that restitution must be required, even life for life, and pity is not permitted toward the guilty party. No one forced the guilty party to do what he did.

We should also note that the things which man holds in light esteem, God regards highly: the man simply spoke the Lord's name in a vain manner, and he was put to death.

**Vv. 17-22**, requires *Breach for breach*. This requirement is called the *lex talionis*, or law of *like for like*. See Ex 21:24.

Mat 5:38-42 *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever*

*shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*

The problem being dealt with by the Lord in Matthew was the idea that evil actions could be retaliated against by evil actions, that is, rendering evil for evil:

He shows that contrary to the doctrine of the scribes, that the sum of the second table must be so understood, that we may in no wise render evil for evil, but rather suffer double injury, and do well to them that are our deadly enemies. (Geneva)

Christ did not void *lex talionis*; rather, He said that it is better to suffer double injury than to retaliate—return evil for evil. Moreover, *lex talionis* was given to civil authority, not to individuals nor to the church. In other words, if an individual is robbed of \$1,000, he is not given the right to take \$1,000 from the thief. If he is injured by the carelessness of another, he is not permitted to do likewise against the careless.

Example: if a drunk driver kills a child with his car, the parents of that child are not permitted to run down the child of the drunk. No matter how tempting it might be, no matter how indifferent civil authority is to the murder committed by the drunk driver, the individual must not seek his own vengeance against the driver.

The Lord is dealing with the religious leader's corruption of the Mosaic law, permitting personal vengeance against an evil doer. He forbids His people from that vengeance.

The next *Ye have heard* in Matthew confirms the point: The corruption of the Mosaic law in v. 43 was just that, a corruption, for the law never said love your neighbour, and hate thine enemy, e.g., Exo 23:4, 5 *If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.* Le 19:18 *Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.* The parable of the Good Samaritan defined who is the neighbour.

This section, *Breach for breach*, immediately follows the previous conflict over the name of the Lord. The Commandments are divided so that the first table protects the sanctity of the Lord, and the second protects the sanctity of our neighbour.

Adam Clark on Lev 24:20:

Equal laws, where each individual receives the same protection and the same privileges, are the boast only of a *sound political constitution*. He who *respects* and *obeys* the laws has a *right* to *protection* and *support*, and his person and property are as sacred in the sight of justice as the person and property of the prince. He who *does not obey* the laws of his country forfeits all right and title to protection and privilege; his own actions condemn him, and justice takes him up on the evidence of his own transgressions. (Clark's Commentary, I.590.)

"Same protection and the same privileges..." Christians want the benefits of the law without the responsibilities. How can they, hence, point an accusing finger at the pagans who desire the benefits of law without responsibility to the laws such as those concerning *blasphemy*?

Ex 21:19ff., gives the details of this section.

Observe:

First, our God and King rules over all:

**Ps 66:7** *He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.* **Ps 103:19** *The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.* **Pr 16:32** *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*

Though the Lord is in heaven and man is on earth, we have the law-word of our King for our guide. (See also Dan 4:17, 25.)

Second, His rule is just:

**Lev 24:22** *Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: for I am the LORD your God.*

It matters not one's nationality nor social standing. Our King has given one law for all men for all time. His righteousness is revealed as He rules with impartiality in the affairs of men.

Third, the Lord cares as much about man's safety as He does His own name, vv. 16 & 17.

I am afraid we are far more interested in our own well-being and protection than we are for the well-being and protection of others. However, the Lord has the same high fence around His own name and around man's safety.

**Note the close connection** between the name of the Lord, v. 16, and man's safety, v. 17. Also notice the order in which they are given: first, the safety of the Lord's name, then the safety of man. Clearly, man's disregard for the life of others is a direct result of a disregard of the name of the Lord.

In other words, there can be no justice among men, vv. 17-22, without proper regard for the very name of the Lord God, vv. 14-16. When men, society in general, disregard the holy name of God, the natural result is injustice among men.

Fourth, differences between men are to be settled by fixed rules, not by emotions, circumstances nor race. God establishes the laws and everyone is held accountable, v. 22.

Fifth, V. 16 gives the penalty for injuring the name of the Lord. This section gives the penalty for injuring one's fellow man. In fact, in the same breath as the Lord protected His name, He protected man.

Sixth, the *Breach for breach* law reveals God's grace toward men. He builds a fence around life. This law follows the death of someone who blasphemed His name. Thus He shows the same concern for man's life as He does for His own name. The penalty of violating both is death.

Obviously, the institution of the *lex talionis* by civil authorities would solve 90% of our crime problems. This law saw to it that crime did not pay. Life is precious to the Lord: Twice He says the penalty for killing another is death.

The only time this penalty is not in effect is accidental killing (for which the cities of refuge were provided, Ex 12:13), self-defense and military action (see 1 Ki 2:5). Actually, righteous military action is in self-defense.

*Killeth* especially means premeditated murder, and also includes killing by drunkenness and carelessness.

Exodus 21:12-36 covers the *lex talionis*.

Matthew 5:38 did not do away with the *lex talionis*. Rather, it forbade seeking vengeance or using the law for one's own purpose.

The non-Israelite was clearly required to obey the laws of the land while living or visiting the land. The laws of God applied to everyone. We see that again in the next chapter, v. 47. No one forced the man to do his dirty deed concerning the name of the Lord.

The Lord was very firm in saying that the same law applied to everyone who was in the land.

### **V. 23.**

After showing He is not partial toward anyone (He protected His name and protected man's life), the man is taken out and killed.

Life for life: Obviously, the Lord cannot be killed by man, so His name is protected. Moreover, one's name is about the most important thing he owns, so defaming someone's name is serious.