

“I Am the Lord Your God”

Lev. 18:1-5

Introduction:

1. Throughout the text of Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, God presents Himself as having a special relationship with some people.
2. It begins in the O.T. with the selection of Abraham and his descendants, later known as Israelites.
3. They were a specially selected people from all the other peoples of the earth.
 - a. They were not selected because they were a particularly numerous people.
 - b. It was not because they were a particularly righteous people.
 - c. God had a plan and He chose these people as the ones through whom He would accomplish it. It is a matter of debate as to why He chose them over some other people.
4. We do know that the relationship was expressed in familial language. Thus the descendants of Abraham became known as “the children of God.” Their selection was also expressed in the imagery of God being their husband and they being the wife.
5. When they came out of Egypt God told Pharaoh, “Let My people go.”
6. In Lev. 18 the same idea is expressed in the phrase, “I am the Lord your God.” I place the emphasis on “your” because this emphasizes the connected relationship. And in this text there is a contrast between those who worship other gods and the Lord your God.
7. This relationship is carried over into the N.T. The church is the people of God, the household of God. They are the children of God, married to Christ.
8. The relationship carries moral and ethical implications, just as other people’s relationships with their gods carry moral and ethical implications. These become distinguishing traits between God’s people and the other peoples of the world. Lev. 18 distinguishes the sexual practices of God’s people and other people. This of course, is not the only area that distinguishes them, but it is one.
9. I would like to observe with you some of the distinct sexual practices of God’s people evidenced in both O.T. and N.T. and discuss how being a person belonging to God relates to your sexual practices.

Discussion:

- I. The instruction given in Lev. 18. Cf. Lev. 20; Deut. 27:20-23.
 - A. It is clear in this text that one’s relationship to God is what determines what is ethical in sexual practice.
 1. Notice the repeated phrase “I am the Lord your God” (2, 4, 5, 6, 21, 30).
 2. Failure to abide by the “rules” is regarded as defiling (24, 30) and results in being “cut off from among God’s people” (29).
 3. God defined the reason why Israel was to be distinct. “You shall consecrate yourselves and be holy, for I am the Lord your God, who sanctifies you” (Lev. 20:7-8). “You shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine” (Lev. 20:26).

- B. The “statutes” that are defined here stand in contrast to the “statutes” of other peoples.
1. “You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt” (3).
 2. “You shall not do what is done in the land of Canaan” (3).
 3. The sexual culture among God’s people is different than the sexual culture among other peoples.
- C. Lev. 18:6ff identifies numerous particulars.
1. When we read them we may not understand why some behaviors are prohibited.
 2. Some of the principles are so ingrained in us that we find certain of the prohibited behaviors repulsive to us.
 3. Some of the behaviors violate the intent of creation. For example: 18:22 says, “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female.” 18:23 says, “Also you shall not have intercourse with any animal to be defiled with it, nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it.” Man and woman were created for one another. No other creature that had been created was suitable as a mate. Thus such practices run counter to the purposes evident in creation.
 4. Such practices were part of the culture of Egypt with their gods and with Canaan and their gods, but not so among God’s people.
 5. Read 24-30.
- D. There are various other statutes that distinguish God’s people evident in Lev. 19 and 20.
1. Such things as not stealing, not lying, not oppressing your neighbor, injustice, slander and a whole host of things distinguish the people of God.
 2. All of the regulations distinguish the people of God from the worshipers of other gods (cf. 20:1-8, 24b, 26).

II. Such distinguishing features are evidenced throughout biblical history.

- A. Even before the days of the laws given on Sinai, Joseph although seduced by Potipher’s wife said, “How could I do this great evil and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9). It was his relationship with God that disciplined his behavior.
- B. God said to David after his adultery with Bathsheba, “You have despised Me” (2 Sam. 12:10) and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.”
- C. Tamar said to Amnon, her half brother, when he attempted to seduce her, “Do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this disgraceful thing” (2 Sam. 13:12).
1. “Such a thing is not done in Israel?” See Lev. 18:9.
 2. Common practice in Egypt. That King Tut’s **mother** and father were **brother and sister** may seem bizarre today but **incest** was rife **among** the boy king’s family because Pharaohs were believed to be descended from the gods. ... King Tut’s own wife Ankhesenpaaten, was his **half-sister** as they shared the same father.
- D. While some of the patriarchs seem to have violated some of the statutes of Lev. 18, perhaps they did not have all the instruction that was later given by God.
1. Abraham told Abimelech that Sarah was his half-sister (Gen. 20:12; contra Lev. 18:9).
 2. Jacob married two sisters (Gen. 29; contra Lev. 18:18).

- 3. Amram (father of Moses and Aaron) marries his aunt Jochebed (Ex. 6:20; Num. 26:59; contra. Lev. 18:12; 20:19).
- E. Tamar asked Amnon to ask their father, David, and he would give her to him in marriage (2 Sam. 13). She appears to think marriage to her half-brother would not be out of the question.

III. Other than Leviticus 18, 1 Cor. 6:9-7:40 is our single most complete biblical discourse on sexual practices.

- A. Like Lev. 18 it begins with a contrast between the culture of the world and the culture of the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11).
- B. Sexual sins top the list as violating Christ (6:15-20).
- C. While sexual sin can be forgiven (6:11) it is at great price.
- D. Paul identifies 5 major considerations (7:1ff).
 - 1. Marriage is the discipline that God has given (1-5).
 - 2. The unmarried state is good if one has the self-control necessary to maintain it (6-9).
 - 3. The design is for the married to stay married (7:10-16).
 - 4. Regarding virgins, Paul says, in light of the “present distress” it is good to remain single, but marriage is an alternative (7:25-38).
 - 5. Paul addresses widowhood in verse 39-40. Widows are to marry “only in the Lord.” In 1 Tim. 5:11-15 he recommends marriage for younger widows “feeling sensual desires.”
- E. God’s people have been called out from the culture of unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14-18).
- F. Heb. 13:4 states it succinctly: “Let marriage be held in honor by all and let the marriage bed be undefiled for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” I take this to be a reference to fornication and adultery as being the general course of action reflective of the direction of one’s life as adopting the culture of the world rather than the culture of the kingdom of God.

IV. “What does all this mean for my sexual practices?”

- A. Not all questions are answered. For example, How much of what is stated in the O.T. transfers into N.T. practice?
- B. It is obvious that there is a distinct difference between the practices of the world and the people of God, that the difference, is “I am the Lord YOUR God.” Our connection to Him is the foundation of this difference. And so, for the people of God to act like the people of the world is a betrayal of the Lord.
- C. Such sin, while being very severe, is forgivable (1 Cor. 6:9-11), but at the cost of the life of God’s son, and therefore should not be taken lightly, so that we make His life cheap.

Conclusion:

- 1. This lesson has not been designed to address the emotional injury caused by violating the principles of God. Perhaps in another lesson we can do that.

2. Here we have tried to identify “why” the statutes are what they are, and to observe the cultural differences between the world and the kingdom of God.
3. I would persuade you to make the Lord YOUR God and to practice what He has called on you to do. It is for your good always.
4. If you accept the sexual culture associated with the world it is not healthy for you. Accepting the sexual culture associated with the kingdom of God is healthy for you personally, for your family, your children and the society in which you live.