

An essential principle behind this chapter is that the nation of Israel were chosen by God to show forth His praises; called out of the darkness of Egypt into God's glorious light and to be distinct from all other nations, not for the sake of it, but that in every way they were to reflect this in gratitude to God for being chosen. Thus the Law was given and each detail was for this purpose, to show forth His praises.

In the beginning everything was "very good" and we understand by this that there was nothing to offend the holiness of God.

Whilst not under the Law of Moses in things we eat or drink, the principle of holiness must dominate our lives. We do this by following in Jesus footsteps. So what did He say of adultery?

Matthew 5:27,28: Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

But ...

John 8:2 -11 And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; ...

In the time of Jesus the Pharisees were one of the three chief Jewish sects, the others were the Sadducees and the Essenes. Of the three, the Pharisees were the most separated from the ways of the foreign influences that were invading Judaism, and from the ways of the common Jewish people in the land.

... and when they had set her in the midst They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

Jesus was not at His time of probation a judge as He will be when He returns. An important point apart from Jesus attitude to those who questioned Him is that all come short of fulfilling the Law and glorifying God. Yet that is more reason why we must give our utmost that at least when His Son returns He will find the faith and in us in particular

We study the Law to learn of these principles and concentrate our minds upon them. But there are things which are of practical value and in this chapter are benefits seen in the enactment of the Law in vs1-4

On a purely physical reason; separation was of benefit to stop the diseases spreading. Leprosy for instance was contagious, and therefore there was the necessity of putting those afflicted apart, that the infection might not be communicated.(In fact at that time the affected person with leprosy had to shout a warning that he was "Unclean").

There was also a spiritual reason. The camp was the habitation of God and in honour of Him Who had thus condescended to dwell with them, nothing impure should be permitted to remain. It is this Holiness that we must grasp as they were also expected to under Moses. Everyone who is part of The House of God is under obligation to ensure there is no uncleanness in the house-see Matthew 18v15-20 and 1Corinthians 5

At that time Israel were regathered with Jerusalem as the holy city and the rebuilt temple was there (Matt 24)

In Numbers v6 we are brought to realise that any breach of the Law is a sin against God. As James also said James 2:10 *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* But here we are to consider the situation where there may or may not be a breach of the Law but upon the suspicions that a husband thinks his wife has committed adultery. This is very unusual because the Law normally does not leave room for doubt. The procedures here invoke the Spirit and can thus prove reliable

Adultery was sin under the Law and an affront to God but also the husband

The Law for adultery is the seventh of the Ten Commandments in Law given to the people through Moses and is plain and simple

Under Moses where confession is made of a sin then there could in some cases be recompense (vs5-10) but not with adultery. Where that occurs and there is a child then the situation may be clear but who is to say whether it is her husbands or of another man. These days DNA testing is available but not then. But if the husband is suspicious, child or no child, the reason best known to himself, the judgment of God is sought by the means shown here v14 as soon as his suspicions are vented. Lev 20-they were if found guilty both to be put to death; thus confession also of the name of the man would be sought.

V15 The husband must not appear empty before The Lord. He must bring a tenth of an ephah of barley but significantly it is to have no oil or frankincense. It is described as an offering of memorial- a record. The feast of unleavened bread was a memorial –Ex 3v15 Hebrew “Zeker” to call to mind. There were other occasions where they were to appear before the Lord but again not empty handed Ex34v20 and Deut. 16v16

So whether the husband is correct or not this spirit of jealousy will become a barrier in the relationship; but he must not act on impulse and separate from the wife but bring the matter before God

Marriage is a holy thing before God and symbolizes the relationship between Christ and His bride Eph5v25. But before Christ Israel as a nation were married to The Lord and we know that they were not faithful.

Of course God sees all things and will know the outcome of this examination before it takes place. V17 The priest is to take Holy water-(from the Lava)-and dust from the floor (perhaps a reminder that we are all but dust).Then uncover her head-does this emphasise that the bond between husband and wife is broken? If she is not honest the test under oath will reveal it. She is declaring her innocence before God and the priest assures her that the bitter water will not affect her if that is so, but if she is guilty there will be a terrible outcome.(So many a guilty woman would confess rather than go through the ordeal. But the punishment would be death.) She must then say Amen (so be it).

In John 8 the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman caught in the very act and they did this simply to try and catch Jesus -to test Him. But Jesus did not take the bait but wrote in the earth-another reminder perhaps that all men are but dust

The principle of the Law is explained by James 2;10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all). And Jesus answer was let him that is without sin cast the first stone. And they went away condemned by their own conscience.

But we must look at these verses in Numbers in our endeavour to understand what there is to learn for ourselves

Num5vs1-4 No uncleanness was to be tolerated within the camp. This seems terribly harsh because many were born with physical defects or caught contagious diseases such as leprosy. They were to be put outside the camp and the reason was that God dwelt within the camps and they must be holy.

What does this teach us but that God is looking for perfection within the camp. And as far as individuals are concerned He looks upon the heart so physical defects do not separate from God as they seem to have done under the Law

Isaiah 66:2 *but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*

From this we can conclude that those with physical defects whilst separated from the camp were not separated from God.

Num V21 the bitter water would have no effect upon the innocent, but upon the guilty it would have the disastrous effect described

We see in this that the husband is not tested and he stands as innocent for this test is for the woman only. He will be judged according to his own deeds but here is required to act if this thing that is worrying him

Does this have a type? We look at Jesus. We know that Jesus was tested in all points like as we and without sin and being born of the spirit had no natural deformities. But we as the Bride, His prospective wife being brought out to be so from every age can

benefit from His perfect sacrifice even though individually we start out with shortcomings.

Under The Law nothing having a blemish could be offered

Numbers 5:29 -31 This is the law of jealousies, when a wife goeth aside to another instead of her husband, and is defiled; Or when the spirit of jealousy cometh upon him, and he be jealous over his wife, and shall set the woman before the LORD, and the priest shall execute upon her all this law. Then shall the man be guiltless from iniquity, and this woman shall bear her iniquity.

Thus he is obliged to carry out this action even though having no evidence but simply suspects his wife. The implication from v31 is that he is under an obligation to take her to the priest because of his suspicion. If wrong the suspicion could damage their relationship.

This is the Law where the man is guilty Leviticus 20:10 *And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.* So the priest here must also deal with the man –We think of King David and this terrible lapse 2Peter2:19 of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. It was the passion of the night and we do not understand enough of God to judge. But God looks on the heart and all unrighteousness is sin and we nowadays in the Ecclesias have an obligation to act according to the Word-Matthew 18:15-17 explains.

So in this Law she could honour God and her husband by confession but there is no obligation to do so.

This brings home the seriousness of adultery by a woman among God's people. But adultery is always that and outsiders are not under the Law but the brother or sister will be judged in the last day.

But there is a wider meaning for God is a jealous God -Ex20v1-6 and whilst we cannot see into the hearts we have an obligation to act as Matthew 18 explains if sin is evident.

Also that the ecclesia must be kept free from all other associations- 2 Corinthians 6v17.

Brother Ken with love to all in Christ