



Thru the Bible in 2012

The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of our God endures forever. Isaiah 40:8

Ladies for Jesus Thursday Bible Study Reflects

Readings for April 23, 2012 – April 26, 2012

Emailed: Wednesday, April 25, 2012

For our ponderings, consider the questions listed below in regards to what we have read during the days of Monday, February 23rd – Thursday, February 26th.

- **(Leviticus 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 psychics 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 we may obtain all the information we need – and the Bible's teaching is trustworthy. Do you look at sources other than God to "predict" the future?
- **(Leviticus 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. Next time you are drawn to a forbidden physical or emotional pleasure, remind yourself that the consequences might be suffering and separating from God, who is trying to help you.
- **(Leviticus 22:18-25)** Animals with defects were not acceptable as sacrifices because they did not represent God's holy nature. Furthermore, the animal had to be without defect in order to foreshadow the perfect, sinless life of Jesus Christ. When we give our best time, talent, and treasure to God rather than what is tarnished or common, we demonstrate the true meaning of worship and testify to God's supreme worth. What kind of quality can people see in your service and giving?
- **(Leviticus 23:1-4)** God established several national holidays each year for celebration, fellowship, and worship. Much can be learned about people by observing the holidays they celebrate and the way they celebrate them. What do your holiday traditions say about your values? In what ways do your celebrations and holidays reflect your relationship with God?
- **(Leviticus 23:9-14)** The Festival of First Harvest required that the first crops harvested be offered to God. The Israelites could not eat the food from their harvest until they had made this offering. Today God still expects us to set aside His portion first, not last. Giving leftovers to God is no way to express thanks. What does the "first harvest" represent in your life?
- **(Leviticus 25:23)** The people would one day possess land in Canaan, but in God's plan, only God's ownership was absolute. He wanted His people to avoid greed and materialism. If you have the attitude that you are taking care of the Lord's property, you will make what you have more available to others. This is difficult to do if you have an attitude of ownership. What position do you think you have when it comes to what God has provided under your care? Think of yourself as a manager of all that is under your care, not as an owner.
- **(Leviticus 25:35-37)** God said that neglecting the poor was a sin. Permanent poverty was not allowed in Israel. Financially secure families were responsible to help and house those in need. Many times we do nothing, not because we lack compassion, but because we are overwhelmed by the size of the problem and don't know where to begin. God doesn't expect you to eliminate poverty, nor does He expect you to neglect your family while providing for others. He does, however, expect that when you see an individual in need, you will reach out with whatever help you can offer, including hospitality.

- **(Leviticus 26:13)** Imagine the joy of a slave set free. God took the children of Israel out of bitter slavery and gave them freedom and dignity. We, too, are set free when we accept Christ's payment that redeems us from sin's slavery. We no longer need to be bogged down in shame over our past sins; we can walk with dignity because God has forgiven us and forgotten them. But just as the Israelites were still in danger of returning to a slave mentality, we need to beware of the temptation to return to our former sinful patterns. In what way do you exercise your freedom in Christ?
- **(Leviticus 27:9-10)** God taught the Israelites that when they made a vow to Him, they must not go back on their promise even if it turned out to cost more than expected. (This applied to animals; humans could be redeemed or purchased back.) God takes our promises seriously. If you vow to give 10 percent of your income and suddenly some unexpected bills come along, your faithful stewardship will be costly. God, however, expects you to fulfill your vow even if it is difficult to do so. Do you fulfill the vows you make to the Lord?
- **(Leviticus 27:33)** Many of the principles regarding sacrifices and tithes were intended to encourage inward attitudes as well as outward actions. If a person gives grudgingly, he shows that he has a stingy heart. God wants us to be cheerful givers (2 Corinthians 9:7), who give with gratitude to Him. Would you consider yourself a cheerful giver?
- **(Numbers 1:2-15)** Taking a census was long and tedious, but it was an important task. The fighting men had to be counted to determine Israel's military strength before entering the Promised Land. In addition, the tribes had to be organized to determine the amount of land each would need, as well as to provide genealogical records. Without such a census, the task of conquering and organizing the Promised Land would have been more difficult. When you are at crossroads do you take inventory of your resources? We will serve more effectively if, before plunging in, we set aside time to take a "census" of all we have – possessions, relationships, spiritual condition, time, goals.



(Leviticus 11:47) The designations *clean* and *unclean* were used to define the kind of animals the Israelites could and could not eat. There were several reasons for this restricted diet: (1) To ensure the health of the nation. The forbidden foods were usually scavenging animals that fed on dead animals; thus disease could be transmitted through them. (2) To visibly distinguish Israel from other nations. The pig, for example, was a common sacrifice of pagan religions (3) To avoid objectionable associations. The creatures that move about on the ground, for example were reminiscent of serpents, which often symbolized sin.

(Leviticus 23:23-24) Most of the trumpets used in the Festival of Trumpets were rams' horns, although some of the more special trumpets were made of beaten silver. Trumpets were blown to announce the beginning of each month as well as the start of festivals.

(Leviticus 25:8-17) The Year of Jubilee was meant to be celebrated every 50 years. It included canceling all debts, freeing all slaves, and returning to its original owners all land that had been sold. There is no indication in the Bible that the Year of Jubilee was ever carried out. If Israel had followed this practice faithfully, they would have been a society without permanent poverty.



(Leviticus 20:1-3) Sacrificing children to the gods was a common practice in ancient religions. The Ammonites, Israel's neighbors, made child sacrifice to Molech (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 a God of love who does not need to be appeased (Exodus 34:6) (2) He is a God of life, who prohibits murder and encourages practices that lead to health and happiness (Deuteronomy 30:15, 16) (3) He is God of the helpless, who shows special concern for children (Psalm 72:4). (4) He is a God of unselfishness who, instead of demanding human sacrifices, sacrificed Himself for us (Isaiah 53:4-5).

(Leviticus 21:16-23) Was God unfairly discriminating against handicapped people when He said they were unqualified to offer sacrifices? Just as God demanded that no imperfect animals be used for sacrifice, He required that no handicapped priests offer sacrifices. This was not meant as an insult; rather, it had to do with the fact that the priest must match as closely as possible the perfect God he served. Of course, such perfection was not fully realized until Jesus Christ came. Because they were Levites, the handicapped priests were protected and supported with food from the sacrifices. They were not abandoned; they still had opportunity to perform many essential services within the Tabernacle.

(Leviticus 23:6) The Festival of Unleavened Bread reminded Israel of their escape from Egypt. For seven days they ate unleavened bread, just as they had eaten it back then (Exodus 12:14-15). The symbolism of this bread made without yeast was important to the Israelites. First, because the bread was unique, it illustrated Israel's uniqueness as a nation. Second, because yeast was a symbol of sin, the yeast-less bread represented Israel's moral purity. Third, the baking method reminded them to obey quickly. Their ancestors left the yeast out of their dough so they could leave Egypt quickly without waiting for the dough to rise.

(Leviticus 25:44) Why did God allow the Israelites to purchase slaves? Under Hebrew laws, slaves were treated differently from slaves in other nations. They were seen as human beings with dignity, and not as animals. Hebrew slaves, for example, took part in the religious festivals and rested on the Sabbath. Nowhere does the Bible condone slavery, but it recognizes its existence. God's laws offered many guidelines for treating slave properly.

(Leviticus 27:14) The book of Leviticus is filled with the commands God gave His people at the foot of Mount Sinai. From these commands we can learn much about God's nature and character. At first glance, Leviticus seems irrelevant to our high-tech world. But digging a little deeper, we realize that the book still speaks to us today – God has not changed, and His principles are for all times. As people and society change, we need constantly to search for ways to apply the principles of God's law to our present circumstances. God was the same in Leviticus as He is today and will be forever (Hebrews 13:8).

(Numbers 1) As the book of Numbers opens, the Israelites had been camped near Mount Sinai for more than a year. There they had received all the laws of regulations recorded in the book of Leviticus. They had been transformed into a new nation and equipped for their task. At this time, they were ready to move out and receive their land. In preparation, Moses and Aaron were told to number all the men who were able to serve in the army. This book is named for this census, or numbering, of the people.