



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 Tuesday Bible Study Ponderings

Readings for February 20, 2012 – February 22, 2012

Emailed: Saturday, February 25, 2012

For our ponderings, consider the questions listed below in regards to what we have read during the days of Monday, February 20th – Wednesday, February 22nd.

- **(Leviticus 15:18)** The verses in this section are not implying that sex is dirty or disgusting. God created sex for (a) the enjoyment of married couples, (b) the continuation of the race, and (c) the preservation of the covenant. Everything must be seen and done with a view toward God's love and ultimate authority. Sex is not separate from spirituality and God's care. God is concerned about our sexual habits. He designed us, including our sexuality, as wonderfully complex and unified creations. We tend to separate our physical and spiritual lives, but there is an inseparable intertwining. God must be Lord over our whole selves – including our private lives. In what ways do you acknowledge your relationship with God when it comes to your private life?
- **(Leviticus 16:1-25)** Aaron had to spend hours preparing himself to meet God. But we can approach God anytime (Hebrew 4:16). What a privilege! We are offered easier access to God than the high priests of Old Testament times! Still, we must never forget that God is holy nor let this privilege cause us to approach God carelessly. The way to God has been opened to us by Christ. But easy access to God does not eliminate our need to prepare our hearts as we draw near in prayer. In what ways do you prepare your heart before you approach God?
- **(Leviticus 17:3-9)** Why were the Israelites prohibited from sacrificing outside the Tabernacle area? God had established specific times and places for sacrifices, and each occasion was permeated with symbolism. If people sacrificed on their own, they might easily add to or subtract from God's laws to fit their own lifestyles. Many pagan religions allowed every individual priest to set his own rules; God's command helped the Israelites resist the temptation to follow the pagan pattern. When the Israelites slipped into idolatry, it was because "all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes" (Judges 17:6) In what ways are you living your life in the way you see fit? Or are you seeking what seems right in God's eyes?
- **(Leviticus 19:9-10)** God instructed the Hebrews to provide for those in need. He required that the people leave the edges of their fields unharvested, providing food for travelers and the poor. It is easy to ignore the poor or forget about those who have less than we do. But God desires generosity. In what ways can you leave the "edges of your fields" for those in need?
- **(Leviticus 19:10-35)** "Do not . . ." Some people think the Bible is nothing but a book of don'ts. But Jesus neatly summarized all these rules when He said to love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself. He called these the greatest commandments (or rules) of all (Matthew 22:34-40). By carrying out Jesus' simple commands, we find ourselves following all of God's other laws as well. Do you view the Bible as a lot of don'ts or do you view your obedience to God's commands as a way to show your love for God and others?
- **(Leviticus 19:32)** People often find it easy to dismiss the opinions of the elderly and avoid taking time to visit with them. But the fact that God commanded the Israelites to show respect for the elderly shows how seriously we should take the responsibility of respecting those older than ourselves. Their wisdom gained from experience can save us from many pitfalls. How do you show respect and honor to your elders?
- **(Leviticus 19:33-34)** How do you feel when you encounter foreigners, especially those who don't speak your language? Are you impatient? Do you think or act as if they should go back where they came from? Are you tempted to take advantage of them? God says to treat foreigners as you'd treat fellow countrymen, to love them as you love yourself. In reality, we are all foreigners in this world because it is only our temporary home. View strangers, newcomers, and foreigners as opportunities to demonstrate God's love.



(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 16:12) An incense burner was a dish or shallow bowl that hung by a chain or was carried with tongs. Inside the burner were placed incense (a combination of sweet-smelling spices) and burning coals from the altar. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place carrying a smoking incense burner. The smoke shielded him from the Ark of the Covenant and the presence of God – otherwise he would die. Incense may also have had a very practical purpose. The sweet smell drew the people's attention to the morning and evening sacrifices and helped cover the sometimes foul smell.



(Leviticus 13) Leprosy or a serious skin disease is a name applied to several different diseases and was greatly feared in Bible times. Some of these diseases, unlike the disease we call leprosy or Hansen's disease today, were highly contagious. The worst of them slowly ruined the body and, in most cases, were fatal. Lepers were separated from family and friends and confined outside the camp. Since priests were responsible for the health of the camp, it was their duty to expel and readmit lepers. If someone's leprosy appeared to go away, only the priest could decide if that person was truly cured. Leprosy is often used in the Bible as an illustration of sin because sin is contagious and destructive and leads to separation.

(Leviticus 16:5-28) The event with the two goats occurred on the Day of Atonement. The two goats represented the two ways God was dealing with the Israelites' sin: (1) He was forgiving their sin through the first goat, which was sacrificed, and (2) He was removing their guilt through the second goat, the scapegoat, that was sent into the wilderness. The same ritual had to be repeated every year. Jesus Christ's death replaced this system once and for all. We can have our sins forgiven and guilt removed by placing our trust in Christ (Hebrews 10:1-18).

(Leviticus 17:11-14) How does blood make atonement for sin? When offered with the right attitude, the sacrifice and the blood shed from it made forgiveness of sin possible. On the one hand, blood represented the sinner's life, infected by his sin and headed for death. On the other hand, the blood represented the innocent life of the animal that was sacrificed in place of the guilty person making the offering. The death of the animal (of which the blood was proof) fulfilled the penalty to death. God therefore granted forgiveness to the sinner.

(Leviticus 19:9-10) The law to leave some harvest was a protection for the poor and the foreigner and a reminder that God owned the land; the people were only caretakers. Laws such as this showed God's generosity and liberality. As people of God, the Israelites were to reflect His nature and characteristics in their attitudes and actions. Ruth and Naomi were two people who benefited from this merciful law (Ruth 2:2)