

Sunday February 19th

Leviticus 24

Chapter 24 of the book of Leviticus starts with this:

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Command the sons of Israel that they bring to you clear oil from beaten olives for the light, to make a lamp burn continually. ³Outside the veil of testimony in the tent of meeting, Aaron shall keep it in order from evening to morning before the LORD continually; *it shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations.* ⁴He shall keep the lamps in order on the pure *gold* lampstand before the LORD continually.

The lamps in the tabernacle were built according to the specifications given to Moses in Exodus 25:31–37

“Then you shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand *and* its base and its shaft are to be made of hammered work; its cups, its bulbs and its flowers shall be *of one piece* with it. ³²Six branches shall go out from its sides; three branches of the lampstand from its one side and three branches of the lampstand from its other side. ³³Three cups *shall be* shaped like almond *blossoms* in the one branch, a bulb and a flower, and three cups shaped like almond *blossoms* in the other branch, a bulb and a flower—so for six branches going out from the lampstand; ³⁴and in the lampstand four cups shaped like almond *blossoms*, its bulbs and its

flowers. ³⁵ A bulb shall be under the *first* pair of branches *coming* out of it, and a bulb under the *second* pair of branches *coming* out of it, and a bulb under the *third* pair of branches *coming* out of it, for the six branches coming out of the lampstand.³⁶ Their bulbs and their branches *shall be of one piece* with it; all of it shall be one piece of hammered work of pure gold. ³⁷ Then you shall make its lamps seven *in number*; and they shall mount its lamps so as to shed light on the space in front of it.

A Bible commentary describes it this way:

“These lampstands were shaped to resemble an almond tree in bloom, symbolizing the life-giving and light-giving power of God.”

The instructions given here in Leviticus 24 weren't for making the lampstands, because they had already been made. These were directions for keeping them filled with oil, so that they would burn continually. Some of you may remember an old song that said “Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning... Give me oil in my lamp, I pray.”

We see the New Testament corollary to this principle in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins in Matthew 25:1-13 where Jesus says this:

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and five

were prudent. ³ For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴ but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. ⁵ Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and *began* to sleep. ⁶ But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet *him*.’ ⁷ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ The foolish said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹ But the prudent answered, ‘No, there will not be enough for us and you *too*; go instead to the dealers and buy *some* for yourselves.’ ¹⁰ And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. ¹¹ Later the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us.’ ¹² But he answered, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’ ¹³ Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

The point of the parable is that our supply of oil must never be allowed to run dry. The oil represents the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

We must be in his presence daily in order to stay filled with his anointing.

Keep in mind that Jesus said he was the light of the world, AND that we should be the light of the world too.

One pastor put it this way: “if you are going to light your environment and effect your atmosphere you have to have a source of oil that causes you to keep burning.

Many people start out burning brightly for a while, but then they begin to flicker out. Their lives are more like flashing lights, blinking lights, like turn signals. They are turned on for little while, but then they fade out or click off. But if you are going to be able to maintain your light; you have to have some connection to the source, some access to the power that allows you to keep going all through the night and stay illuminated in the darkness of life. God told Moses that in order to get that kind of dependable light, it had to be pure, clear olive oil.”

Clear, pure oil comes from living clear, pure lives, continually filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Next Moses turns his instructions from supplying the oil to supplying the bread:

⁵ “Then you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it; two-tenths *of an ephah* shall be *in* each cake. ⁶ You shall set them *in* two rows, six *to* a row, on the pure *gold* table before the LORD. ⁷ You shall put pure frankincense on each row that it may be a memorial portion for the bread, *even* an offering by fire to the LORD. ⁸ Every sabbath day he shall set it in order before the LORD continually; it is an everlasting covenant for the sons of Israel. ⁹ It shall be for Aaron and

his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it is most holy to him from the LORD'S offerings by fire, *his* portion forever.”

These instructions relate to the table of what was called show-bread. There were 12 loaves for the 12 tribes.

This table had been built in accordance with the instructions found in [Exodus 25:23–30](#)

“You shall make a table of acacia wood, two cubits long and one cubit wide and one and a half cubits high. ²⁴ You shall overlay it with pure gold and make a gold border around it. ²⁵ You shall make for it a rim of a handbreadth around *it*; and you shall make a gold border for the rim around it. ²⁶ You shall make four gold rings for it and put rings on the four corners which are on its four feet. ²⁷ The rings shall be close to the rim as holders for the poles to carry the table. ²⁸ You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold, so that with them the table may be carried. ²⁹ You shall make its dishes and its pans and its jars and its bowls with which to pour drink offerings; you shall make them of pure gold. ³⁰ You shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before Me at all times.

Just as Jesus told us that He was the light of the world, He also refers to Himself as the bread of life in these 4 verses:

John 6:33 “For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.”

John 6:35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.

John 6:48 “I am the bread of life.”

John 6:51 “I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.”

Although we don't have a direct reference of Jesus telling us that we are also supposed to be the bread of life, the way He did with the light of the world, we do have this clear instruction found in Matthew 14:15-16

When it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, “This place is desolate and the hour is already late; so send the crowds away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.”¹⁶ But Jesus said to them, “They do not need to go away; you give them *something* to eat!”

So we can see that we are called to be light to those who are in darkness and also bread to those who are hungry.

Verses 10-23 tell the sad story of one unfortunate young man:

¹⁰ Now the son of an Israelite woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the sons of Israel; and the Israelite woman's son and a man of Israel struggled with each other in the camp. ¹¹ The son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name and cursed. So they brought him to Moses. (Now his mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan.)

¹² They put him in custody so that the command of the LORD might be made clear to them.

After so many years of living in slavery in Egypt, intermingling between Jews and Egyptians had started to happen, even though God had wanted the Hebrews to stay pure as His people.

We see a reference to this in Exodus 12:38.

“A mixed multitude also went up with them, along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock.”

The boy in verse 10 was part of that “mixed multitude”. We don't know his name, or his Egyptian father's name, but we are told that his mother's name was Shelomith. Since she was a Jew and the boy's father was an Egyptian, it's actually possible that he was her slave master back in Egypt. Apparently he stayed behind in Egypt when the Jews left with Moses. This poor young son might have suffered double discrimination.

In Egypt, he was most likely treated as a slave and had to serve along with the other Jews. But the Jewish people on

his mother's side also would have seen him as a half-breed, and may have treated him with contempt.

We're told that one day, as this young man walked into the Israelite camp, he got into an argument with a full-grown and fully Jewish man. In the middle of the argument, Shelomith's son cursed the man he was arguing with and he also cursed the God of Israel.

In Exodus 20:7 God had given the Israelites laws concerning blasphemy. The third commandment said, "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain." But now, in this situation, there was a question about whether or not that law applied to Shelomith's son since he was not a full-blooded Jew. So the witnesses to the blasphemy brought the young man to Moses, and kept him in custody until Moses could seek out the will of the Lord.

Moses prayed and got an answer, but it wasn't what the boy was hoping to hear:

¹³ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁴ "Bring the one who has cursed outside the camp, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head; then let all the congregation stone him. ¹⁵ You shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If anyone curses his God, then he will bear his sin. ¹⁶ Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death; all the congregation

shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.

God's answer to Moses was that His standards for blasphemy applied to everyone, whether they were Jews, Gentiles, or mixed-race people. His command to Moses was to take the young man outside the camp and stone him to death. Verse 23 records that the "children of Israel did as the Lord commanded Moses."

In the midst of pronouncing judgment upon this young man for blasphemy, God also lays out this unflinching rule for justice, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth".

¹⁷ 'If a man takes the life of any human being, he shall surely be put to death. ¹⁸ The one who takes the life of an animal shall make it good, life for life. ¹⁹ If a man injures his neighbor, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him: ²⁰ fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as he has injured a man, so it shall be inflicted on him. ²¹ Thus the one who kills an animal shall make it good, but the one who kills a man shall be put to death. ²² There shall be one standard for you; it shall be for the stranger as well as the native, for I am the LORD your God.'"²³ Then Moses spoke to the sons of Israel, and they brought the one who had cursed outside the camp and stoned him with stones. Thus the sons of Israel did, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

This “eye for an eye” concept might sound like stern justice. It’s kind of the opposite of “do unto others as you would have them do unto you”. It’s more like “do unto others EXACTLY what they have done to you!” It seems to promote revenge.

But this rule was actually designed to curb the kind of exaggerated, over the top revenge that people used to carry out back then. We see it described in Genesis 4:23-24, where:

Lamech said to his wives,
“Adah and Zillah,
Listen to my voice,
You wives of Lamech,
Give heed to my speech,
For I have killed a man for wounding me;
And a boy for striking me;
²⁴ If Cain is avenged sevenfold,
Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.”

Do you see what Lamech is doing?

He is bragging about killing people who only wounded him or hit him. He says that whatever harm is done to him, he will pay back with eleven times greater revenge! This “eye for an eye” principle was established so that any retaliation should be proportionate or equal to the offense. That actually became the standard for justice that is still used today in court cases of self-defense.

But just because you COULD take revenge on someone didn't mean that you SHOULD take revenge on them. In fact Jesus expressed his opposition to the misuse of this standard in Matthew 5:38-39

“You have heard that it was said, ‘AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.’³⁹ But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

Jesus' approach was a call to temper justice with love and mercy.

He laid out the higher principle, the Golden Rule, in Matthew 7:12 “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

Do you want to be treated with mercy when you've done something wrong? Jesus said in Matthew 5:7

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

This isn't just a New Testament idea. God had said in Deuteronomy 32:35

‘Vengeance is Mine, and retribution,
In due time their foot will slip;
For the day of their calamity is near,
And the impending things are hastening upon them.’

The Apostle Paul quotes this verse and expands upon it in Romans 12:17–21

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. ¹⁹ Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord. ²⁰ “BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD.” ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Do you see that phrase IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM? One powerful way that we can be the light of the world and the bread of life, is to react differently than the rest of the world when someone treats us badly.

The world is used to people wanting “an eye for an eye”. We’re no different than anyone else when we retaliate and seek revenge. What makes us different, what shows the world that our lives have been changed by an encounter with Jesus, is when we walk in forgiveness, turning the other cheek and showing love and mercy to our enemies.

We have to have our lamps filled with the oil of the Holy Spirit in order to display that kind of mercy, but when we do, it shines brightly against a background of hostility and retribution. Do you want to shine as a light for Jesus? Look for an opportunity to show mercy to someone who doesn’t deserve it!