

Leviticus 20  
Holy Duty of Excommunication

**Friday, December 15, 2023 • Read Leviticus 20**

Questions from the Scripture text: Who speaks to whom (v1)? To whom is Moses to speak (v2)? What sin is he to address? What penalty must they inflict? By what method? Who else will oppose him (v3)? And do what? Why? What does giving the descendants to Molech do? What might the people of the land fail to do (v4)? What will the Lord do to each one who tolerates the sin (v5)? For what other sin will the Lord excommunicate (v6)? What general command is behind this specific command (v7-8)? What sin does v9 address? What penalty does it demand? What does the end of v9 say about this penalty (cf. ends of v11, 12, 13, 16, 27)? Who else must be put to death (v10)? And who else (v11)? And who else (v12)? And who else (v13)? And who else (v14)? And who else (v15)? And who else (v16)? Who ought to be excommunicated (v17)? And who else (v18)? Who renders the punishments in vv19-21? How do we know? What must Israel keep (v22)? What will happen if they don't? In whose statutes must they not walk (v23)? What is the Lord doing to them for that? What is His attitude toward them? What has the Lord promised Israel (v24)? To Whom has the Lord joined them? From whom has He separated them? How do v25-26 reflect the two parts of what the priests must teach according to 10:10? What penalty for what sin does v27 add at the end?

**What are the implications of God's holiness for congregations of sinful saints?** Leviticus 20 prepares us for the evening sermon on the Lord's Day. In these twenty-seven verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **congregations of sinful saints must maintain church discipline, so that sin is never tolerated in the Lord's holy church.**

In this chapter, many of the same sins are dealt with as those from chapter 18, although here He begins with sacrificing of children to Molech (v2-5, cf. 18:21). This chapter focuses especially upon the penalties that are required for such acts, whether covenantal ("cut off from his people") or civil/capital ("put to death").

**The one who sins brings his own blood upon himself** (v9, 12, 13, 16, 27). Sometimes, we find it difficult to inflict penalties when we should. There can be many reasons for this. We might not love the sinner enough. We might not care enough about the church/society of which they are a member. We like to have others like us, and this seems to be the quickest way to suffer their dislike. We might forget that the Lord is the One Who requires it, so we feel hypocritical as sinners for punishing other sinners. We might just be too lazy to go through the effort of something difficult and messy. Worst of all, we might not love God enough to see sin as bad enough. But sin is deadly serious. The wages of sin is death (cf. Rom 6:23). And the particular sins listed in this chapter bring death into a church or a land.

But, first, these sins bring death upon the one who commits them. This chapter makes this as plain as possible with the reminder, in five instances, that "his blood shall be upon him" (v9, 12, 13, 16, 27). He has done it to himself. The blood is already upon him. Applying the penalty is not optional. The people must consecrate themselves and be holy because YHWH is their covenant God (v7, v26). YHWH Himself sanctifies them, consecrates them as holy (v8, v26). This is what requires them to inflict the penalties (of either excommunication or execution) throughout this chapter.

"His blood shall be upon him" is how v9 helps them even to inflict the penalty from the Book of the Covenant (cf. Ex 21:17). There, this sin had been included with other capital crimes that destabilize a society. This is a reminder that the Lord Himself has established the order of the family, the society, and the church. Though our hearts might melt for a child who has set himself against his parents, we must remember that it is really God that the child sets Himself against. The holiness of His church must not be compromised by tolerating such rebellion. A state that is not also a church may not be under obligation to execute (or perhaps exile) resolutely rebellious children. But the church must certainly excommunicate them. They are called saints, and they must look to God for grace in Christ to become what they have been called and to live that way. If they prove irretrievable from their rebellion, though our hearts melt for them, they must be expelled from the membership and fellowship of the church. Their expulsion is upon their own heads.

**A church that fails to practice discipline defiles God's Name.** Holiness is required both individually and corporately. If a church doesn't excommunicate unrepentant sin from among it, then it itself will be excommunicated from the Lord Himself (v22, cf. Rev 2:5, 3:3), while He Himself punishes the sinners (v6, 19-21; cf. Rev 2:16, 23).

At the beginning of the chapter, with the one who offered his offspring, the Lord Himself has set His face against that man (v3). What they are commanded to do on earth in v2, the Lord has already done from heaven (cf. Mat 16:19, 18:18). And the Lord promises to excommunicate (implying eternal excommunication) the people who fail to execute him, right along with him (v4-5).

The Lord designates various, specific penalties. Among them: stoning (v2), excommunication (v6), general execution (v10-13), burning with fire (v14). By varying it, He underlines the reality that it is He Who is the Lord. It is He Who has the holiness and the authority. We must be holy because He is holy, and we must do as He says in His church, because He is the One Who says it. He doesn't even need us to carry out punishment. For instance, the punishment of childlessness in v21 is something that only He can carry out; He does it Himself. When He commands church discipline, He gives us the privilege of fellowship with Him in a work that He does in consecrating and cleansing His church.

**A nation that fails to punish criminals provokes God's wrath.** Molech (v3, 4, 5) was a foreign God. The language of the land vomiting in v22 is not only excommunication language with regard to His covenant people (cf. Rev 3:16) but also the language of the Lord punishing the heathen nations whom He abhors (v23, cf. 18:25, 28). There is warning here for more than just Israel; it is a warning for all nations.

What sin have you been tolerating in your own heart and life? What do you think of, or feel about, church discipline? How should such thoughts and feelings change or strengthen, based upon this chapter? What are other ways that you can promote a culture of consecration to God in your home? In your church? in your land?

*Sample prayer: Lord, forgive us for how tolerant we have been of sin. We forget Your holiness and take it lightly, even to the point that we bristle at the discipline that You require in Your church, or the punishment that You require civil magistrates to inflict. But we thank You that You, who love holiness so much, have also loved us with holy love that gave us Christ. For His sake, please forgive us our sin, and help us to love You. Grant that we would consecrate our life to You as holy. And grant that our churches would reform and revive and practice the discipline that You have commanded in Your word, we ask through Christ, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs: ARP139D "O That You'd Slay the Wicked, God!" or TPH229 "Holy God, We Praise Your Name"**

**(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via [hopewellarp.org](http://hopewellarp.org))**

Leviticus 20, these are the words of god. Then your who spoke to Moses saying, again, you shall say to the children of Israel. Whoever the children of israel or of the strangers, who dwell in israel, who gives any of his descendants to molech, he shall surely be put to death.

The people of the land shall stone him. A stones, i will set my face against that, man. And we'll cut him off from his people because he has given some of his descendants to molech. To the file, my sanctuary and propane, not only name. And if the people of the land should in any way, hide their eyes from the man, When he gives some of his descendants to molech and they do not kill him.

Then i will set my face against that man and against his family. And i will cut him off from his people. And all, who prostitute themselves with him to commit harlotry with molech. And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits to prostitute himself with them. I will set my face against that person and cut him off.

From his people consecrate yourselves. Therefore, And be holy for. I am yahua your god. Then you shall keep my statutes and perform them. I am y'allplay, who sanctifies you? For everyone who curses his father, his mother she'll surely be put to death, he has cursed his father or his mother.

His blood shall be upon him. The men who commits adultery with another man's wife, he commits adultery with his neighbor's wife. The adultery and the adulteraths shall surely, be put to death. Who commits who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness. Both of them shall surely.

Be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them. If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death. They've committed perversion, their blood shall be upon them. If a man lies with a male as he does with a woman, Both of them have committed.

An abomination. They shall surely. But for to death, their blood Shall be upon them. If a man marries a woman and her mother, it is wickedness. They Shall be burned with fire, but he And they that there may be no wickedness among you. If a man mates with an animal he shall.

Surely be put to death and you shall kill the animal. If a woman approaches any animal and means that you so kill the woman and the animal they shall surely be put to death their blood. Is upon them. With a man, takes a sister. His father's daughter. His mother's daughter and sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is a wicked thing.

Make sure she'll be cut off in the sight of their people. He was uncovered. His sister's nakedness. He shall bear his guilt. If a man lines of the woman during her sickness and uncovers her nakedness, he has exposed or flow, she has uncovered the flow of her blood, but then, Shall be cut off from their people.

You should not uncover in the nakedness of your mother's sister or for your father's sister. For that one. Uncover. Because mirror of kin, they shall bear their guilt. If a man lies with his uncle's wife, he hasn't covered his uncle's nakedness. They shall bear their sin. They shall die childless.

If a man takes his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing. He has uncovered his brother's nakedness, they shall be. Childless. You so therefore keep all my statutes and all my judgments and perform them. That the land where i am bringing you to bringing you to dwell, may not vomit you out.

You shall not walk in the statutes of the nation, which i'm casting out before you For they commit all these things. Therefore i abore them. But i have said to you, you shall inherent their land and i will give it. To you to possess our land flowing with milk and honey.

I'm y'all play your god. His separated you from the people's. You saw therefore, distinguish between clean. Animals and unclean between unclean, birds and clean. These will not make yourselves abominable by beast or bird by any kind of living thing that keeps on the ground. Creeps on the ground, which i have separated from you.

As unclean, you shall be holy. To me. For all y'all, i am holy and have separated you from the people. That you should be mine, a man or woman. Who is a medium or who has familiar spirits? Shall surely be put to death? Facial sternum of stones, they're blood Shall be upon them.

So far, the reading of gods inspired. And in there and twerk.

His chapter largely covers the same offenses as back in chapter 18. In chapter 18, there was Uh, the repeated motivation. For keeping the command that they would be holy. Because y'all play their god is holy, that motivation is here. But it is not repeated over and over. Like it was in that chapter.

In this chapter, What is repeated over and over again? Are the various penalties? For some things that were to be. Executed for some. Uh, this execution happens in some cases specifically by stoning In some cases specifically by burning. In some cases, it's not specified. And then, there are excommunications.

Uh, cutting off. Uh, being cut off from the people of god. And that's actually communication, is not something that happens only in this life. That is something that happens much more dreadfully in the life to come. So that an excommunication is actually a stiffer penalty. Then an execution. In the next communication.

God says that he sets his face against the person. And they are cut off. From their people, even after death, even Eternally. And so that's actually much more dreadful. But by giving, Uh, by being the one who designates Each of the penalties the lord emphasizes to them. That not only Do they respond to his holiness by being holy as he is holy but they respond to his holiness, by maintaining his church.

As he says for it to be maintained and by punishing offenses in his church, the way he says, Uh, to punish offenses in his church. The. The order of his church, the order of his covenant people. That is not something that is left up to them. They are mere creature.

They are merely the redeemed. He is the holy creator and the redeemer. And therefore, one of the ways that We recognize the holiness of the lord. Is by operating in his church. According to his word. Now, one of the difficulties that comes up for us then is that his word?

Uh, actually commands penalties that are sometimes Uh, difficult for us to consider inflicting. On the one hand. We are horrified that someone would cause his children to Um, To be given to molec to. Be killed for this idle. God. And yet, the lord. Actually has to. Institute a command, not only that they should be put to death, but to warn them about what will happen if they fail to do this.

And we'll come to that in a moment. But for the same reason that that or well for one of the same reasons that that could That sin horrifies us. Um, It is difficult for us to imagine having to, Inflict. Uh, excommunication or execution. Upon one of our children or one of the covenant children.

What we saw back in chapter 18, when it talked about offering, Children tomorrow, like is that the defiling of the land was actually worse? Then the death of the child. Now, if we If we think about this, in terms of the preponderance of the biblical evidence of covenant children, God, having called them saint and are not having any evidence to the contrary and so are having good hope.

Um, Concerning them like david did when he said of his child. Who died even for David's own sin? As a punishment for sin. And yet david said, i will go to him. He shall not come to me. David was confident that his child had gone to the lord. Um, but the defiling of the land was worse than the death of the child.

And so we should really be horrified. Um, Not just for the tenderness that we have towards children. Uh, but with the reverence that we have towards god and towards the fact that they are is children, their covenant offspring was one of the way reasons he hates divorce. One of the reasons he hates adultery and Uh, in Malachi, is that it robs him of the godly offspring that are one of the purposes for which he has given marriage.

And so, it's an idolatry and that it It worship smaller, instead of yahweh, it defiles the land. Uh, and it Uh, treats, those children that have consecrated that god has consecrated to himself by putting them in covenant homes. Uh, new testament, he would call them saints. Um, And it.

Does not honor. That they belong to him. Well, sometimes the children do not honor that they themselves belong to him. They want to belong to themselves. Do not want to acknowledge their creator, they do not want to acknowledge their covenant redeemer. And so it does not matter that he who made them and he who redeemed them.

And he, who put his name upon them, is the one who has assigned to them their particular father and their particular mother. They become petty, and repellious, and wicked. And even to the point of cursing father and mother. Not just in a moment where Um, the word. The thought crosses our mind or the word crosses our lips.

But they become a condemner. Of their parents. And a cursor, a revolver. Of their parents. And everyone who did, this was to be executed in Israel. And everyone who does this. Uh, is to be x communicated, even now in the church. For although the church is not now, estate and does not have The power of the sword.

We must remember as we've already said, That the penalty of excommunication in leiticus 20 is actually more severe. Then the penalty of execution. That cut off does not mean merely having their breath cut off or their blood cut off or their life in this world cut off. It is a much more dreadful covenantal, spiritual Profound thing and that does continue.

In the church, in the new testament. Uh, for which the lord Jesus describes his cutting off churches. As removing their lamp stand removing his gracious presence. Uh, from among them. And chubby has a parcel, he refers to excommunication as handing someone over to the devil. And so it is no small thing, indeed, it is worse than death.

And this is one of the reasons why? We would shrink from. And it grieves us. How we tremble? Uh, to inflict it and yet we must inflict it because as we said, this is part of counting god. Holy It's treating his church as holy not tolerating sin. Every one of us with our own heart.

We treat god as holy by not tolerating sin, in our heart. Every congregation of his church, must treat God as holy by, not tolerating sin in the church. Now, we call to repentance and we rejoice over repentance with heaven and the angels We rejoice over repentance. But when there is not repentance, Then we do follow the process.

By which we end up. Uh, binding and loosing, or at least the officers of the church. Bind at least. On earth. What has been bound? Already in heaven. As the lord says matthew 16 verse 19 verse 18. And there's a It's a parallel at the end of Um, towards the end of John.

Um, there he doesn't say. Um, he uses the present tense, not the Um, Uh, future perfect. We'll have been found.

But a church that fails to practice discipline like you describes in the opening verses. Will itself come under the same discipline from god. Uh, so yeah, they might. Yeah, inflate their membership numbers. And attracts to themselves unbelievers as they get puffed up. By those who prefer nice to holy.

But they will not find that. So nice in the last day before they stick when they stand before the god. Who is holy? And the lord says that he will. Uh, giving perpetrator and permissive. Um tolerator. Uh, the same penalty. This isn't just For people. Whom we see not just in verse 9, but 12, 13, 16 27.

Uh, in this chapter same thing, their blood is upon their head. In other words, don't spare them. Don't think that you're doing anyone any favors. They were already in this position before god. It's a mercy to them and a mercy to the church for you to inflict the penalty.

But they might realize the Um, The actual spiritual reality of their condition. Uh, but it's not just for individuals, it's not just for Uh, churches. Bless the church to find God's name. Uh but it's also for nations, which we see because god doesn't just threaten Israel because they are incompetent within.

He threatens them also as a state, as a nation. In the land and says, there are other nations in the land before you And the lord says here, he abhorred, he hated those people. Because they committed such sins as this. And so, Committing these sins. Is the way a nation shows that they have a god other than the lord.

And the implies here. That even if the nation is not the church, Even if the nation is not in common with god as a church is in covenant with god. Yet, every nation has an obligation. To have the true and living god as god of that nation. And to follow his moral law.

In the laws and in the conduct of that nation. And so, he plainly says, In this passage verse 22 verse 23. That. These other nations. God has. Abhorred. Because of what because of their doing. All these things verse 23. And therefore, Uh, if Israel does not want to be vomited out of the land, as a state as a nation, They must keep all god's statutes.

All god's judgments. And not follow the ways of molec and not follow the way as a bail. And not follow the ways. Of the various. Uh, demon idols. That the nation's follow. And even into this day, The nations at that time, did not think that they were serving. Excuse me.

The nations at that time. Did not think that they were serving demons. I'm sure they thought they were Uh, much more sophisticated than that. And the wicked nations. Uh, tolerate perpetuate. Um, murder and perversion and theft. And idolatry. Today. Probably fancy themselves to be. Uh, secular or scientific or rational?

Or permissive or humanistic or whatever it is. That they want to. Uh, to flatter themselves as thinking is good, when they're really just serving demons. Nations must serve the true and living god. Particularly now. That he has revealed himself, most of all. And the person of Christ nations must serve king, Jesus.

And so, we are to treat him as holy. In our hearts and in our lives less we bring our blood upon ourselves. And a church must not tolerate sin. Church must insist. Upon holiness, a life of repenting. Uh, from It's people lest it. Defiled, god's name. Who, which has been?

Put upon his people. And diverse three to follow my holy sanctuary. Profane my holy name. And the nation. Must acknowledge the true and living god, and not serve demons, not serve idols. Not tolerate wickedness. In the nation, god is holy And he must be treated as holy. By people.

By churches. By nations. And then what's better? Thank you, father for these. Reminders from your word. We do confess one of the reasons why Um, we are a bit startled. At, and have reflexes. A bristling against. Some of the penalties that you give is that we simply do not understand your holiness.

Oh, lord. And therefore, We don't see the seriousness and the greatness of sin. The wrath that it deserves. The discipline and the corrective action that is worth taking. In order to maintain holiness. And so we pray, oh lord that you'd help us that you would make us to have a right view of you so that we can have a right view of ourselves and the right view of sin.

And that by your spirits, applying your words to us. We would be ready to do whatever is necessary for holiness. Uh, even as Our lord Jesus. Used the images of Plucking out eyes and cutting off hands. Oh, lord. Give us to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin. We ask.

In Jesus name. Amen.