

# A Biblical Response to the “Dear Dr. Laura” Letter

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In a December 1998 broadcasts, Dr. Laura Schlessinger (“Dr. Laura”), an observant Jew at the time, was attempting to reconcile her understanding of homosexuality with her understanding of the Bible (specifically, the book of Leviticus). She stated,

*“I’m sorry – hear it one more time, perfectly clearly: If you’re gay or a lesbian, it’s a biological error that inhibits you from relating normally to the opposite sex. The fact that you’re intelligent, creative and valuable is all true. The error is in your inability to relate sexually intimately, in a loving way to a member of the opposite sex – it is a biological error.”*

In May 2000, an anonymous, open letter rebutting Dr. Laura’s stand on homosexuality began to appear on the Internet. Authorship of the letter is uncertain. Some attribute it to James M. Kauffman, Ed. D. Professor Emeritus, Dept. of Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education at the University of Virginia; others to a Mr. Kent Ashcraft. In Snopes’ most recent posting on this topic dated November 2004, (<http://www.snopes.com/politics/religion/drlaura.asp>), they state that they had been unable to determine who was the original author. Since its appearance, however, millions of people have read the open letter.

The Snopes article states, in part, “Simply put, the letter points out a logical flaw in the ‘homosexuality is wrong because the Bible says so’ argument... How can one part of Leviticus be deemed as etched in stone when other parts have been discarded as archaic?”

As a biblical Christian and pastor, I enjoy discussing spiritual matters with people of all viewpoints and faiths. As I do so, I encounter many people who demonstrate a complete disregard for the Ten Commandments and other moral laws found in the Bible. Increasingly, their arguments parrot those in the open letter to Dr. Laura, and the Snopes summary, “*How can one part of Leviticus be deemed as etched in stone when other parts have been discarded as archaic?*” Many have rashly (and foolishly, in my opinion) concluded that this question has no rational answer and therefore, the entire Bible is irrelevant to our day.

In fact, when God’s laws are considered holistically, contextually, and within the framework of God’s plan for the Jewish people, it becomes evident that it is neither inconsistent nor illogical to conclude that the homosexual lifestyle is (still) unlawful in God’s eyes while concluding that other provisions of the Mosaic Law are *not* applicable today. It is my prayer that my response here will demonstrate to the honest, objective critic that there *are* reasonable answers to the ten questions posed in the letter, and others like them.

Let’s start with the entire letter as found on the Internet, the version with James M. Kauffman as the author). Next, I will address each question from both a biblical and cultural perspective, and then finally I will provide a concluding summary.

## **The Letter:**

Dear... Dr. Laura: Thank you for doing so much to educate people regarding God's Law. I have learned a great deal from your show, and try to share that knowledge with as many people as I can. When someone tries to defend the homosexual lifestyle, for example, I simply remind them that Leviticus 18:22 clearly states it to be an abomination.... End of debate. I do need some advice from you, however, regarding some other elements of God's Laws and how to follow them.

1. Leviticus 25:44 states that I may possess slaves, both male and female, provided they are purchased from neighboring nations. A friend of mine claims that this applies to Mexicans, but not Canadians. Can you clarify? Why can't I own Canadians?
2. I would like to sell my daughter into slavery, as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7. In this day and age, what do you think would be a fair price for her?
3. I know that I am allowed no contact with a woman while she is in her period of Menstrual uncleanness - Lev15: 19-24. The problem is how do I tell? I have tried asking, but most women take offense.
4. When I burn a bull on the altar as a sacrifice, I know it creates a pleasing odor for the Lord - Lev.1:9. The problem is my neighbors. They claim the odor is not pleasing to them. Should I smite them?
5. I have a neighbor who insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2 clearly states he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself, or should I ask the police to do it?
6. A friend of mine feels that even though eating shellfish is an abomination, Lev. 11:10, it is a lesser abomination than homosexuality. I don't agree. Can you settle this? Are there 'degrees' of abomination?
7. Lev. 21:20 states that I may not approach the altar of God if I have a defect in my sight. I have to admit that I wear reading glasses. Does my vision have to be 20/20, or is there some wiggle-room here?
8. Most of my male friends get their hair trimmed, including the hair around their temples, even though this is expressly forbidden by Lev. 19:27. How should they die?
9. I know from Lev. 11:6-8 that touching the skin of a dead pig makes me unclean, but may I still play football if I wear gloves?
10. My uncle has a farm. He violates Lev.19:19 by planting two different crops in the same field, as does his wife by wearing garments made of two different kinds of thread (cotton/polyester blend). He also tends to curse and blaspheme a lot. Is it really necessary that we go to all the trouble of getting the whole town together to stone them? Lev.24:10-16. Couldn't we just burn them to death at a private family affair, like we do with people who sleep with their in-laws? (Lev. 20:14) I know you have studied these things extensively and thus enjoy considerable expertise in such matters, so I'm confident you can help.

Thank you again for reminding us that God's word is eternal and unchanging. Your adoring fan, James M Kauffman, Ed.D. Professor Emeritus, Dept. Of Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education University of Virginia (It would be a damn shame if we couldn't own a Canadian)

## My Responses

I admit that I am impressed (and amused) with the author’s subtle use of humor to make his point. But his point is a serious one because he mocks God, perverts His words, and misleads untold thousands of other people to do the same. Unwittingly, he also reveals his ignorance of the Bible, history, and health.

As I address each of the author’s questions, I will attempt to fill in some of the background that is critical to understanding the referred to Bible passages. While an exhaustive discussion would require volumes, I hope you will learn enough to be convinced that the author takes selected Scriptures out of context in order to make God’s laws look foolish. In the proper context, we see that God’s laws are actually supremely wise and loving. They reveal a God of such love and compassion for His people that He provided a set of “rules to live by” that would keep them (if obeyed) from physical, emotional, and *spiritual* harm. In the future, I hope this response will cause you to carefully consider all the biblical texts and think for yourself, rather than rely on someone else’s clever (but deceitfully incomplete) treatment of biblical matters.

First, all ten of the questions posed by the author of the “Dear Dr. Laura” letter address sections from the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law comprises the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Addendum 1 provides some helpful background about the purposes of the Mosaic Law.

Questions 1 and 2 both deal with the issue of slavery in the Bible. I want to start by stating emphatically that *nothing* in the Bible condones the abuse of our fellow man such as occurred when white Americans and Europeans forced people of other races and countries into involuntary, oppressive slavery. Further, in order to understand slavery as discussed in the Bible, we must first understand the culture in the Middle East at the time. In Addendum 2, I briefly provide this cultural context. I encourage you to read this background before reading the much briefer responses to the first two questions.

Now on to the author’s ten questions.<sup>1</sup>

**Question No. 1:** *Leviticus 25:44 states that I may possess slaves, both male and female, provided they are purchased from neighboring nations. A friend of mine claims that this applies to Mexicans, but not Canadians. Can you clarify? Why can’t I own Canadians?*

**Answer to Question 1.** According to Scripture, you could not own slaves unless you were a Jew living in ancient Israel under the laws of Moses (clear from the text and context of this law). If you were, and a destitute foreigner came to Israel to worship the one true God and obtain employment, housing, and food for his family, then you could purchase him as a life-long servant. Compared to life in Moab, Ammon, Sidon, or Philistia, for example, these God-fearing immigrants considered themselves blessed to live among the Jews, even in permanent servitude. This differs little from modern day migrant workers who come to this country to work for a farmer who provides them with housing and pays them enough to keep their families fed and clothed (often for life). Though their situation is dire by American standards, they are better off than they were in their native country.

**Question No. 2:** *I would like to sell my daughter into slavery, as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7. In this day and age, what do you think would be a fair price for her?*

**Answer to Question 2.** When the ancient Jews sold their daughters into slavery, it was understood that they would become the master’s wife someday. In the meantime, the daughter and master were

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<sup>1</sup> Note: All Scripture verses in this article are taken from the New King James Version, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

viewed as “betrothed.” The system provided a practical way for providing for the needs of families of that day and included provisions that protected the safety and reputation of the woman. This was in stark contrast to the inhumane ways that the surrounding nations treated women and children. (See discussion of Exodus 21 in Addendum 2.)

Because of God’s blessing on our country as well as modern conveniences, men and women in our day marry based on love and mutual attraction rather than on survival. So hopefully, the man who asks for your daughter’s hand in marriage will be doing so out of love. If you have raised your daughter to be a virtuous and capable wife to her future husband, then you might be able to get the groom to pay for the wedding in exchange for your blessing. That should be worth a few thousand dollars. If several guys want your daughter’s hand, then you might be able to get the one your daughter wants to marry to give you even more. Hope this helps.

**Question 3.** I know that I am allowed no contact with a woman while she is in her period of menstrual uncleanness - Lev15: 19-24. The problem is how do I tell? I have tried asking, but most women take offense.

**Answer to Question 3.** Your question implies that you pursue sex with women outside of a monogamous marriage. So you are already breaking God’s laws against fornication and adultery, and it is almost certain that you will contract a sexually transmitted disease (STD) if you have not already.

If you continue in your rebellion against the God who made you, then you might want to at least heed God’s advice and refrain from sex during a woman’s menses, because it is now well-established that the risk of contracting and transmitting some STDs increase during a woman’s period. See Addendum 3 for a brief explanation of how the laws of Leviticus 15 helped protect the people from STDs and other infections.

**Question No. 4.** When I burn a bull on the altar as a sacrifice, I know it creates a pleasing odor for the Lord - Lev.1:9. The problem is my neighbors. They claim the odor is not pleasing to them. Should I smite them?

**Answer to Question 4.** The passage you reference deals with the “burnt offering” sacrifice, which was performed on a continuing basis, but only at the place God prescribed – first in the Tabernacle and later at the Temple in Jerusalem:

*Take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see; but in the place which the Lord chooses, in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you. Deuteronomy 12:13-14*

As you can see, your back yard is not an authorized location for the burnt offering, whether it pleases your neighbors or not. Further, animal sacrifices became obsolete when Jesus died on the cross for your sins and was resurrected three days later. (See Addendum 4 for a brief explanation of how Jesus fulfilled the sacrificial system in the Old Testament.)

**Question No. 5:** I have a neighbor who insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2 clearly states he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself, or should I ask the police to do it?

**Answer to Question 5.** No need to stone your neighbor for not observing the Sabbath. Unlike the laws on homosexuality, the New Testament is clear that the Sabbath laws applied only to the Old Testament Jews. The spiritual reasons behind this law were fulfilled in Jesus when He made a way for us to enter *His* rest. (See Addendum 5 for a brief explanation of how Jesus fulfilled the Sabbath Law.)

**Question 6.** A friend of mine feels that even though eating shellfish is an abomination, Lev. 11:10, it is a lesser abomination than homosexuality. I don't agree. Can you settle this? Are there 'degrees' of abomination?

Addendum 6 provides helpful background on the dietary laws and their role in preserving the health, safety, and survival of the Jewish people.

**Answer to Question 6.** When God uses the word "abomination," He does so to emphasize His demand for *complete* obedience in matters necessary to prevent spiritual or physical suffering, misery, and death. This is why God uses "abomination" in His warning against eating potentially contaminated shellfish. Today, modern methods of testing, harvesting, and storage help protect us from neuro-toxic shellfish poisoning. Further, this dietary law applied only to the Jewish people. Therefore, it is *not* an abomination for you (or your neighbor) to eat shellfish. Enjoy.

**Question No. 7.** Lev. 21:20 states that I may not approach the altar of God if I have a defect in my sight. I have to admit that I wear reading glasses. Does my vision have to be 20/20, or is there some wiggle-room here?

**Answer to Question No. 7:** Leviticus 21 defines *who* could perform the duties of a High Priest inside of the temple and describes in detail *how* they were to perform this function (i.e., "approach the altar.") The reason *you* cannot "approach the altar" is *not* because you have less than perfect eyesight. It is because the Old Testament priesthood is obsolete. The New Testament reveals to us how the resurrected and eternal Savior, Messiah Jesus, assumed forever the role of High Priest. (Psalm 110 prophesized that Messiah would change the Priesthood.) Further, there is no longer any altar to approach. The physical temple, which was completely destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70, has been replaced by a heavenly, spiritual house (Hebrews 3:1-6).

Unlike the ceremonial laws governing the priesthood, there are no prophecies that God's moral laws, including those against homosexuality and other sexual sins, would ever change. In fact, the moral laws are repeated and reinforced in the New Testament. (Jesus Himself emphasized that God created marriage as between one man and one woman. Read Matthew 19:4-5.) So for you to equate these two is disingenuous and shows your ignorance of the Bible. See Addendum 7 for further discussion of how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament ceremonial laws.

**Question 8.** Most of my male friends get their hair trimmed, including the hair around their temples, even though this is expressly forbidden by Lev. 19:27. How should they die?

**Answer to Question 8.** The answer to your question is found by looking at the context, provided in the surrounding verses:

*You shall not eat anything with the blood, nor shall you practice divination or soothsaying. You shall not shave around the sides of your head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard. You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the Lord.* Leviticus 19:26-28

God is warning the Jewish people against taking up the occult practices of the surrounding nations. The Gentile nations worshiped idols, practiced divination, soothsaying, and a host of other witchcraft and devil worship rituals (including infant sacrifice by burning their own babies to death). These practices also included self mutilation and certain patterns of hair/beard cutting that let everyone who saw them know that they were involved in occult worship practices. God was telling His people to not act or look like those who are involved in various forms of demonic worship.

The principle applies today within the context of current witchcraft and other occultic practices. Today, God’s people (Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus as their Savior and Lord) are not to act *or look* like wiccans, Goths, Satanists, neo-Nazis, astrologers, or any other type of occult practitioner. (2 Corinthians 6:14-17)

In summary, trimming the hair around one’s temples does not connote occultism in today’s culture, so your friends are not bound by this law and need not suffer execution. But if they also deride God and His Word like you do, they (and you) will have more than physical death to be concerned about.

**Question 9.** I know from Lev. 11:6-8 that touching the skin of a dead pig makes me unclean, but may I still play football if I wear gloves?

**Answer to Question 9.** The verses are:

*...and the swine, though it divides the hoof, having cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch. They are unclean to you.* Leviticus 11:7-8

We are now well aware of the many diseases that can be contracted through contact with live swine (pigs) and eating pork. In ancient times, keeping and eating swine (pigs) posted a serious health risk to the Jewish people. As a protective measure, God made swine completely off-limits (“unclean”) to them. Today, with increased knowledge and modern cooking methods we can make sure pork is well cooked before eaten and are usually able to enjoy pork without getting sick. (But are we really *sure* that these precautions make eating pork safe? See Addendum 6 for more information about diseases related to keeping swine and eating pork.) At any rate, this law relates to the skin of and on a dead and decaying pig, not its cured hide.

In summary, the answer to your question is: Yes, with or without gloves, your choice.

**Question 10.** My uncle has a farm. He violates Lev.19:19 by planting two different crops in the same field, as does his wife by wearing garments made of two different kinds of thread (cotton/polyester blend). He also tends to curse and blaspheme a lot. Is it really necessary that we go to all the trouble of getting the whole town together to stone them? Lev.24:10-16. Couldn’t we just burn them to death at a private family affair, like we do with people who sleep with their in-laws? (Lev. 20:14) I know you have studied these things extensively and thus enjoy considerable expertise in such matters, so I’m confident you can help.

**Answer to Question No. 10:**

1. About planting two different crops in the same field: I believe that our farmers learned not to do so a long time ago.
2. About wearing clothes from fabric made with mixed linen and wool (not cotton and polyester as you mistakenly and mockingly state). We do not (yet) understand completely the reason for this law. However, there was some beneficial reason – perhaps clothing made from only one type thread lasted longer, was more comfortable, or resisted mold (Leviticus 13:47-59). It may also have been that this made their clothing distinctive from that of the surrounding nations. This would tend to hinder their intermingling with and being influenced by their idolatrous and immoral neighbors.
3. About the entire town witnessing the stoning of someone who blasphemes God. It was important for all the people to know that within the nation of Israel, no one was allowed to curse the God that

had established them in the land and given them the Laws that governed them. When obeyed, this law would have given people pause before they would curse God.

4. About capital punishment being applied by burning with fire. There were only two times the Law required death by burning. They were:

*If a man marries a woman and her mother, it is wickedness. They shall be burned with fire, both he and they, that there may be no wickedness among you. Leviticus 20:14*

*The daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by playing the harlot, she profanes her father. She shall be burned with fire. Leviticus 21:9*

This law undoubtedly kept many women from becoming prostitutes and many men from marrying both a woman and her mother. Obedience to these moral laws and all the others found in the Law of Moses would protect their society from many of the physical diseases and social problems that afflict our land today. We are rapidly approaching the time of self destruction by a complete collapse of the family and associated social order. It was foolish of us to stop the teaching of God's commandments to our children in the home, in churches, and in schools. We are now paying the price.

## Conclusion

Your carefully-crafted, satirical questions were clearly intended to scorn the God of the Bible and lead others to do the same. In that, you have been successful. However, the God of the Bible is the true God, whether you choose to believe that or not, and one day you *will* stand before Him in judgment. Unless you repent before that day, you will regret for eternity that you led so many souls astray.

*Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Luke 17:1-2*

For those who have been swayed by these kinds of arguments to reject the God of the Bible, I beg you to reconsider while there is time. Jesus does not force you to believe in Him, but He wants you to for your own eternal good. He is willing to forgive you no matter what you have done, even if you, like this author, have tried to turn people away from believing in Jesus.

Jesus is also willing to forgive moral sin (lying, adultery, hatred, murder, homosexuality, theft, etc.), but the offender must first be willing to repent (turn away from) these rebellious actions against a holy God and then come to Him humbly asking to be forgiven **and changed** by His power living inside of them.

*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such **were** some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11*

*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. James 4:8-10*

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Copies of this response in booklet form, with attached Addenda and Appendices, can be obtained by contacting Calvary Church of Port Orchard ([www.calvarypo.org](http://www.calvarypo.org)).

## **Addendum 1. What is the Mosaic Law?**

The Mosaic Law comprises the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The Jews sometimes refer to these books as the Pentateuch, the first part of the Hebrew Bible, or the Torah. In the Christian Bible, these are the first five of the 39 books of the Old Testament, which cover the period up until about 400 years before the birth of Christ. (The 27 books of the New Testament are about Jesus.)

The Mosaic laws were given by God to Moses for the Hebrew people just before their establishment as a nation in the Promised Land of Israel (See Appendix A for the reasons God gave this land to the Jews). It revealed to them God’s standards of right and wrong (the moral law), described rules on worshipping God (the ceremonial system), and prescribed civil laws designed to preserve a just, healthy, and orderly society. (Some laws could overlap, but it is still helpful to think of the Mosaic Law as consisting of these three categories.)

The Mosaic Law served several purposes. First, it set the Hebrews apart from the violent, immoral, and idolatrous civilizations around them. Thus, they (when they obeyed) were a revelation of the one true God to the pagan nations around them.

Second, the Mosaic Law revealed much about the character of God Himself. By studying the law, we learn that God is holy, that He cares deeply about the welfare of His creation (especially people), and that He is a personal God – not just some impersonal force. He is just and expects His people to deal justly with other people. And much more.

The Law was also critical to the survival of the Jewish people. Only recently have we come to understand how the various sanitary and dietary laws ensured the health and survival of these people by preventing disease through rules for sexual purity and proper sanitation; for preventing contagion through rules for quarantine of diseased people; and more.

Why was it so important that the Jewish people survive? Because God had promised to send a Redeemer – a Savior – through the lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And unlike most of the ancient civilizations of that day, the Hebrews *did* survive as a distinct people group until the birth of Christ, about 2,000 years later. And they are with us today, fulfilling many, many prophecies in other parts of the Bible. But that’s another lesson!

## Addendum 2. Why does the Bible Appear to Accept Slavery?

**The Historical Background.** When Israel lived in obedience to God’s laws, He protected them, and they prospered as a nation. Sometimes, people from surrounding nations (“foreigners”) came to Israel, seeking to worship the God of the Israelites and enjoy their prosperity. God graciously made provision for foreigners (Gentiles) to come to Him – they were allowed to live in the land *if* they forsook their idols and observed the Mosaic law. Those that refused to do so were to be deported back to their country.

The Jewish nation at that time consisted of twelve “tribes,” or family groups, each occupying a portion of the land of Israel allotted to them previously by Joshua (Joshua Chapters 13 through 19). The land for each tribe was further subdivided and allotted to individual families in the tribe. As the population increased, individual pieces of property became smaller as successive fathers bequeathed portions of his family’s land to his son(s). Families were allowed to lease unused portions of land to other families for growing crops or grazing their herds. The land itself stayed with the original tribe and family. Every 49 years, in the “Year of Jubilee,” all leases were cancelled and all debts forgiven.<sup>2</sup> (This provision prevented the inequitable accumulation of wealth / property over time.)

**What the Bible Says about Slavery.** With this background, let’s look at what the Bible teaches about slavery. (The author of the Dear Dr. Laura letter mentions only Leviticus 25:44, so he is being disingenuous or is ignorant of other Scripture verses on this topic.) We will look at the entire discussion of slavery in this passage (Leviticus 25:39-55) to get the full context:

*‘And if one of your brethren who dwells **by** you [a Hebrew from another tribe] **becomes poor**, and sells himself to you, you shall not compel him to serve as a slave. As a hired servant and a sojourner he shall be with you, and shall serve you until the Year of Jubilee. And then he shall depart from you — he and his children with him — and shall return to his own family [tribe]. He shall return to the possession of his fathers. For they are My servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves. You shall not rule over him with rigor, but you shall fear your God. Leviticus 25:39-43*

These instructions differ slightly from those in Exodus 21 (discussed below). Apparently, the difference is based on whether the person being bought is from the same or a different tribe as the purchaser. (In Exodus 21, as we shall see, the servant/slave was from the *same* tribe and could only be required to serve the master for seven years.)

Here, in Leviticus 25, the servant who was purchased from another tribe was to serve his master until the Year of Jubilee. For example, if the servant sold himself into servitude the year before Jubilee, then he would serve his master for only one year. If he sold himself the year after Jubilee, then he would be required to serve 48 years. The purchase price the servant received was based on the years remaining until the next Jubilee.

*And as for your male and female slaves whom you may have — from the nations that are around you, from them you may buy male and female slaves. Moreover you may buy the children of the strangers who dwell among you and their families who are with you, which they beget in your land; and they shall become your property. And you may take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them as a possession; they shall be your permanent slaves. But*

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<sup>2</sup> The Year of Jubilee is described in Leviticus 25:8-33.

*regarding your brethren, the children of Israel, you shall not rule over one another with rigor.*  
Leviticus 25:44-46

These verses were used to justify slave ownership in Europe and America. *But they were taken completely out of context, and so applied in gross error.* The Jews did not go into their neighbor’s lands to forcibly remove men and women for use as slaves like the slave traders of colonial Europe and America did when they went to Africa. Instead, the neighbors of Israel *came to them* asking to live among the people of Israel in order to serve the true God, as this passage from 1 Kings reveals:

*“Moreover, concerning a foreigner, who is not of Your people Israel, but has come from a far country for Your name’s sake (for they will hear of Your great name and Your strong hand and Your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this temple, hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as do Your people Israel, and that they may know that this temple which I have built is called by Your name. 1 Kings 8:41-43*

An example of this is found in the book of Ruth. Ruth, a young woman from Moab (Jordan today) who had married a Hebrew man, immigrated to Israel with her Hebrew mother-in-law (Naomi) after they were both widowed. At first, Naomi gave Ruth permission (and urged her) to stay in Moab, with her own people. But Ruth responded, *“Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you. For wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Ruth 1:16<sup>3</sup>*

The point is that some people came to Israel of their own volition, desiring to live in the Jewish culture and in service to their God. The Jews did not forcibly remove them from their homes to place them into slavery. But these immigrants faced a huge hurdle that is not easily understood by the modern western mind. They were not Jews, they were not from one of the tribes of Israel, they had no land, nor could they obtain land in their own name and therefore could not pass the land down to their children. If they had money, they could live in the land by renting. If they did not have money, they would sell themselves and their families into servitude in order to have room and board and work. They would then receive a permanent immigrant status within one of the tribes of Israel, which was much better than living in their home country.

Let’s look at some other verses in Leviticus and Exodus pertaining to slavery:

*“Now if a sojourner or stranger close to you becomes rich, and one of your brethren who dwells by him becomes poor, and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner close to you, or to a member of the stranger’s family, after he is sold he may be redeemed again. One of his brothers may redeem him; or his uncle or his uncle’s son may redeem him; or anyone who is near of kin to him in his family may redeem him; or if he is able he may redeem himself. Thus he shall reckon with him who bought him: The price of his release shall be according to the number of years, from the year that he was sold to him until the Year of Jubilee; it shall be according to the time of a hired servant for him. Leviticus 25:47-50*

If a Jewish person from one tribe sells himself in slavery to another tribe, then the servant’s relatives could pool their money together to purchase the family member back from the master.

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<sup>3</sup> As it turned out, Ruth did not have to sell herself into slavery to survive in Israel. Instead she married a distant relative of her former Jewish husband, a man from the tribe of Judah. Centuries later, one of her descendants was born in Bethlehem as the Savior of the world (especially for those who believe).

*If there are still many years remaining, according to them he shall repay the price of his redemption from the money with which he was bought. And if there remain but a few years until the Year of Jubilee, then he shall reckon with him, and according to his years he shall repay him the price of his redemption. He shall be with him as a yearly hired servant, and he shall not rule with rigor over him in your sight. And if he is not redeemed in these years, then he shall be released in the Year of Jubilee, he and his children with him. For the children of Israel are servants to Me; they are My servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 25:51-55*

The price to purchase the family member back is based on how much money was paid by the master to purchase the servant and how many years are left before Jubilee, when the Jewish servant would be released anyway.

*“Now these are the judgments which you shall set before them: If you buy a Hebrew servant [from your own tribe], he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing. If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master’s, and he shall go out by himself. But if the servant plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever. Exodus 21:1-6*

*And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed; you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. From what the Lord has blessed you with, you shall give to him. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this thing today. And if it happens that he says to you, ‘I will not go away from you,’ because he loves you and your house, since he prospers with you, then you shall take an awl and thrust it through his ear to the door, and he shall be your servant forever. Also to your female servant you shall do likewise. It shall not seem hard to you when you send him away free from you; for he has been worth a double hired servant in serving you six years. Then the Lord your God will bless you in all that you do. Deuteronomy 15:13-18*

Jews could also purchase fellow Jews as servants who were of their own tribe, but they were to serve only six years.<sup>4</sup> This passage also requires that any wife given to the servant (as well as children born into the household) would remain as servants after the servant was freed (**presumably** to serve out their six years of servitude). If this presumption is correct, then it provided guaranteed protection for the wife and children, who would otherwise be without a home while the husband strove to re-establish a livelihood as a freed man, then his wife and children could join him when their required six years of servitude was completed.

There must have been times where the servant did not like his master, and therefore would have remained unmarried until he was freed at the beginning of the seventh year so that he would not be leaving his wife and children to suffer their remaining years of servitude.

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<sup>4</sup> This is similar in ways to military service today. Some enlist in the military in order to get an education and training that they would not otherwise be able to afford. In exchange, the Service requires them to “serve” a certain number of years.

However, if the master was kind and provided well and the servant was willing to serve his master for the rest of his life, then he would take a wife and have children, knowing that the master would take care of their family.<sup>5</sup>

Now, let’s look at all of the relevant verses in Exodus 21 that pertain to fathers selling their daughter into “slavery” (Question 2):

*“And if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. If she does not please her master, who has betrothed her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her. And if he has betrothed her to his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters. If he takes another wife, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights. And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without paying money. Exodus 21:7-11*

**The Cultural Context.** In ancient times, when Jews sold their daughters into slavery, it was understood that they would become the master’s wife someday. These female servants were referred to as concubines. We must remember that in those days there were no supermarkets, washers, dryers, electricity, central heating, running water, indoor plumbing, and so forth. (Imagine for a moment how the domestic workload would change without all of these time and labor-saving conveniences!)

So if a man was single or even married but the existing household members were unable to keep up with the needs of a growing family, the man would hire/purchase a female slave from her father. The purchaser would become “betrothed” (engaged) to her, thus protecting her honor and granting her status in the household.

The betrothal period allowed the man to be sure that the woman could fulfill the tasks needed in order for his household to survive. If she did not work out, he could back out of the deal by allowing another Jew to purchase her. (He was not allowed to sell her to a foreigner.) If no one else wanted to purchase her, he was required to provide for her needs even if and after he purchased another concubine. If he ever failed to take care of her, the woman was allowed to leave as a free woman.

In all these provisions and within the cultural context, we see that the Mosaic Law provided for the practical needs of families while protecting women from abuse and abandonment. (However, this brings up the issue of polygamy. (For a brief discussion on this issue, see Appendix B.)

**Other “Slavery Verses” in the Mosaic Law.** I want to address other verses in the Mosaic Law related to slavery that were not mentioned by the author. My hope is that this knowledge will help defend against other mockers who prey on people’s ignorance of the Bible. First, we will look at instructions for dealing with foreign slaves who had escaped their masters and fled to Israel:

*“You shall not give back to his master the slave who has escaped from his master to you. He may dwell with you in your midst, in the place which he chooses within one of your gates, where it seems best to him; you shall not oppress him. Deuteronomy 23:15-16*

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<sup>5</sup> In this case, the male servant became a voluntary “bondservant” to his master for life. As a physical sign of the male servant’s decision, the master would pierce a hole through the servant’s ear. This was a sign of honor to the master since it reflected on his character as kind and noble - his servants were willing to forsake their own inheritance in order to serve him. This understanding sheds light on the significance of Paul, Peter, James and Jude all referring to themselves as bondservants of Jesus Christ - willing servants of Jesus for life.

This passage makes provision for any escaping foreign slave fleeing to Israel to come under the protection of the loving God of the Bible and not to be forced to return to his former master and country (where he would be punished and forced to worship idols). God desires for *all* people of *all* nations to be saved and to enjoy a relationship with Him. (See 1 Timothy 2:4.)

Further, the Jewish people were to remember their mistreatment at the hands of their Egyptian masters and take care that they did not treat their foreign servants like the Egyptians treated them. These verses emphasize that foreigners (non-Jews) were not to be mistreated simply because they were not Jews by blood, illustrating that God extends His compassion and protection to all.

*“You shall not pervert justice **due the stranger** or the fatherless, nor take a widow’s garment as a pledge. But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this thing. Deuteronomy 24:17-18*

God also made it clear that those who lived in the land – whether Jew or foreigner, were to observe His law, including the law of the Sabbath:

*“...but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, **that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you**. And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. Deuteronomy 5:14-15*

The Jews were not to force these foreign servants to violate the Sabbath or otherwise live in disobedience to the law simply because they were not of Israel by blood. Again, God extends His care to the foreigner, as well as His chosen people, in ensuring they also received a day of rest each week.

Next, we will examine the following passages, which deal with the punishment of wrong-doers, including slaves:

*“If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, then it shall be, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, that the judge will cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, with a certain number of blows. Forty blows he may give him and no more, lest he should exceed this and beat him with many blows above these, and your brother be humiliated in your sight. Deuteronomy 25:1-3*

*“And if a man beats his male or female servant with a rod, so that he dies under his hand, he shall surely be punished. Notwithstanding, if he remains alive a day or two, he shall not be punished; for he is his property. Exodus 21:20-21 (Note: As previously explained, the only situation in which a servant was considered to be “property” was when he/she was purchased as a foreigner. The Jews were not allowed to “own” other Jews.)*

As seen, God’s law stipulated corporal punishment for wrong-doers, whether they were Jews or foreign servants (slaves).

However, the master was not allowed to indiscriminately beat his slave. The law required that the punishment was to fit the crime. If the master became abusive and killed his servant, then he himself would be guilty of murder according to this law and would be executed as the law required.

In our “civilized” culture, we are appalled at the idea of lashing a thief, liar, or other types of law-breakers, and consider such practices as barbaric. Instead, we sentence our criminals to terms in jails and prisons. The United States currently locks up 715 citizens for every 100,000 people (the largest percentage in the world)<sup>6</sup>, at great cost to the taxpayer by the way, and with a very high recidivism rate. By contrast, Singapore, which still practices public caning as an attempt at rehabilitation before prison, incarcerates 388 people per 100,000 citizens. Is it possible that God’s ways are more effective at deterring crime and rehabilitating criminals?

I maintain that the wisdom of God’s law in this area far exceeds our system of welfare, homelessness, jails, prisons, etc. that have contributed to the financial burden that is nearing the point of self destruction. Just the cost of incarceration is staggering - \$63.4 billion per year, or about a \$200 per every man, woman and child in America.<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that the Mosaic Law does not have one verse about incarcerating citizens in Israel.

**In summary**, slavery – actually, indentured servitude – in ancient Israel arose from financial necessity among the Jewish population. God permitted it, but established rules that protected the servant, women and children – including foreigners who wanted to live in Israel to worship Israel’s God and come under His law and protection. God’s laws were based on love, compassion, and justice. It kept the poor off of the streets and allowed them to learn a trade under their master, but it also punished the evil-doer, providing justice for those who were wronged, an incentive for the criminal to repent, and a deterrent to other would-be criminals. When observed, the law eliminated the need for people to be locked up and avoided the crippling costs to society for doing so.

I believe we have now covered every verse in the Law of Moses pertaining to slavery. I hope the reader has been persuaded that the law of God permitted a type of “slavery” that was completely different than the slavery practiced by the colonial powers during the 1700-1900s. Our form of slavery was based on racism, greed, thievery, hatred, and oppression – all wicked in the eyes of God.

When America does ultimately fall off of our “financial cliff,” Americans will experience the real and costly effects of our foolish ways. Perhaps then, some will recognize that God’s law is wise and good, rather than mocking it as the “Dear Dr. Laura” letter author has done.

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<sup>6</sup> [www.nationmaster.com](http://www.nationmaster.com), October 2012

<sup>7</sup> [www.cbsnews.com/8301-3445\\_162-57418495/the-cost-of-a-nation-of-incarceration/](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-3445_162-57418495/the-cost-of-a-nation-of-incarceration/)

### **Addendum 3. Why did God forbid sexual intercourse during the woman’s menstrual cycle?**

**The Cultural Context.** One must read all of Leviticus Chapter 15 in order to understand the context of these instructions, which were instituted to protect the health, safety, and continuity of the Jewish people. Leviticus 15 deals with the need for cleanliness whenever there are male or female discharges, which are breeding grounds for bacteria and viruses. The laws add additional concerns if blood is involved. Anyone who reads Leviticus 15 with knowledge of biological contamination control – especially in light of lack of access to sanitation during ancient times – will recognize its thorough, common sense approach to health and safety. And these instructions were written thousands of years before we understood how diseases were spread!

Further, understand that Israel was surrounded by nations that participated in immoral sexual practices that in turn produced sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Because some Jews ignored God’s instructions on sexual behavior, STDs did make their way into the Jewish community.<sup>8</sup> It is now well-established that the risk of contracting some STDs increases during a woman’s period.<sup>9</sup> Obedience to this law would *help* contain the spread of the disease throughout the nation. To the Jews, health (sexual *and* general) resulted from obedience to *all* the laws that governed cleanliness, diet, and sexual behavior (virginity until marriage and sexual faithfulness in marriage), including these in Leviticus 15.

Unlike modern “safe sex” methods, the law of God is 100% effective if obeyed (Deuteronomy 7:15). In fact, except for contaminated blood transfusions (which were not performed in ancient Israel), all STDs in America would cease to exist within two generations if everyone obeyed the law of God. In addition to saving lives and the misery that accompanies STDs, our society would save billions of dollars each year.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For example, Numbers 25 relates an incident in their history when Jewish men engaged in sexual relations with these surrounding people; Judges 20 relates that some would participate in deviant sexual practices among themselves. As a consequence, STDs were introduced into the population of Israel (Joshua 22:17).

<sup>9</sup> <http://std.about.com/od/riskfactorsforstds/f/Does-Period-Sex-Increase-STD-Risk.htm>

<sup>10</sup> In 2007, the US spent \$15.3 billion to treat STDs! (<http://www.cdc.gov/std/stats07/trends.htm>)

#### **Addendum 4. Why did God Make the Israelites Make all those Sacrifices?**

**The Cultural Context.** The burnt offering was a voluntary sacrifice of a bull “without blemish.” It signified the offeror’s desire for relationship with God and an acknowledgement that fellowship with a holy God required a blood sacrifice to cover over (atone) their *lack* of holiness. A (perfect) bull was also sacrificed as an offering for personal sin (Leviticus 4:1-35, 6:24-30). Before the animal was slain, the offender symbolically transferred their sin to the animal by putting their hands on it while confessing. The animal then died in place of the sinner.

Fifteen hundred years later, Jesus put an end to the need for animal sacrifice when *He* became the perfect sacrifice for sin, as explained in the New Testament book of Hebrews. When He died on the cross, Jesus took our sins upon Himself and shed His *own* blood.

*But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. Hebrews 9:11-15*

## **Addendum 5. Do the Sabbath laws apply today?**

The Law of Moses sets aside the seventh day of the week (Saturday) as a day of rest for *the Jews*, their animals, and foreigners who lived among them in Israel.

*Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.* Exodus 31:16-17

*Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.* Deuteronomy 5:13-14

Since God created us, He knows that we need a day of rest every week. (This is why Jesus taught that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27)).

When the Jews obeyed this law, they rested and used the day to learn the Word of God from the Priests. With this knowledge they were able to obey God in their relationships with one another (and God), and they prospered as a result. God made violation of the Sabbath a capital offence because He knew how important Sabbath observance would be to keep His chosen people from forgetting His laws due to their neglect of attending Synagogue teachings on Saturdays.

When the Jews disobeyed the law of the Sabbath, and instead used Saturday to squeeze another money-making work day into their schedule, they soon afterward collapsed into sin, idolatry and judgment. Their love of money did not leave room for them to spend a day meditating on the Word of God. As a result, they lost their relationship with God and ironically became impoverished, the very thing they thought they were avoiding.

The Sabbath law was also established to show that man needed to cease from his own works in attempting to please God. The New Testament book of Hebrews (Chapter 4) teaches that when a person believes in Jesus as their Savior, they enter into the eternal rest of God. They have ceased from their works of trying to earn favor with God and instead are trusting in the saving work of Jesus on the cross.

Therefore, Jesus has fulfilled the law of the Sabbath for the Jew and the Gentile, which is why Paul taught that strict observance to the Saturday Sabbath was no longer required (Romans 14:5-6, Colossians 2:16). This does not mean that there is no longer a need for man to rest one day a week, or that we should not be using that day of rest to learn about the God who loves us; failure to do so will have the same consequences that it did for the Jews. Paul was simply stating that honoring Saturday as the special day was no longer needed. The "Church" was now consisting of Jew *and* Gentiles who were putting their trust in Jesus as their Savior. Under the New Covenant, God is writing His law on our hearts and all biblical Christians have a desire to learn God's word and to love Him. It no longer matters what day we do so.

Those who do not set aside a day or time to rest and fellowship with other believers will suffer spiritually and physically. Failure to keep the knowledge of the law of God in the land has had disastrous results as evidenced by the exponential increase in broken families, financial chaos, crime,

unwed mothers, etc. that had their beginnings when Americans stopped honoring the teaching of God’s word in the schools and the churches started to emphasize the social nature of gathering rather than teaching the Bible to the people.

## Addendum 6. Why all those Food Rules?

Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 delineate the dietary laws for the Jews. Things allowed by the law are called clean (or kosher). Things not allowed are considered unclean (or un-kosher). Shellfish are among the sea life and animals that were listed as unclean. But why?

The following FAQ pertaining to red tides (algal blooms), posted to the State of Texas website, <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/water/environconcerns/hab/redtide/faq.phtml#q9>, provides a possible clue:

“*Is it safe to eat oysters during a red tide?*”

Oysters and other shellfish such as clams, mussels, whelks and scallops can accumulate red tide toxins in their tissues. People that eat oysters or other shellfish containing red tide toxins may become seriously ill with neurotoxic shellfish poisoning (NSP). Once a red tide appears to be over, toxins can remain in the oysters for weeks to months. For this reason, the Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS) closely monitors oyster growing areas for the presence of red tide and red tide toxins.”

Algal blooms can happen at any time, can last for weeks, and often cannot be visually detected by the color of the water. The only reason the fishing industry in Texas can harvest billions of dollars of shellfish for human consumption is because they can test the water and control the harvest to ensure humans are not poisoned.

Many of the Mosaic laws were designed to protect the Jewish people from disease and death. (The Jews had to survive as a people group in order for God to fulfill His promise to send a Redeemer from the descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.) God created the earth and everything in it – and in the beginning it was good (Genesis 1). When man fell into sin in the garden, the conditions of the world changed and paradise ended. Death and disease became man’s nemesis. God knew that shellfish would (at times) be unhealthy, even deadly, for people to eat. Thus He banned shellfish entirely from the Jewish diet. But why does God use the term *abomination* for shellfish?

Well, if I tell my children not to eat candy because it is not good for them, they may still eat it because it tastes good and don’t understand or believe my warning to be true. However, if I tell them not to eat it because it is an *abomination*, they may be more inclined to stay away from it and thus be spared the consequences.

In the case of shellfish, He called it an abomination to emphasize they were *never* to eat it. Without this strong warning, the Jews might have watched Gentiles eat shellfish without any harm and then joined them in doing so. This could have continued for a long time until an algal bloom occurred, causing the deaths of many people. Once again, obedience to the Law of God protected the health, safety, and continuity of the Jewish people.

Regarding pork, most people now know that swine can be infected with the larvae of a species of roundworm *Trichinella spiralis*, commonly called the trichina worm. A person who eats infected meat that is raw or undercooked can contract Trichinosis and suffer serious neurological damage and in some cases death. God was protecting the Jews from trichinosis and many other swine-borne diseases that can easily be transmitted to humans, including parasites that tunnel into the brain and kill the host (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cysticercosis>).

However, scientists have recently learned that even *touching* pigs can lead to illness. Here is a recent news item that emphasizes that an all-knowing God must have been the author of the Law of Moses:

**Enjoy the State Fair, don't touch the pigs**

[http://www.anchorapress.com/news/enjoy-the-state-fair-don-t-touch-the-pigs/article\\_92bac3a2-e803-11e1-9c1f-001a4bcf887a.html](http://www.anchorapress.com/news/enjoy-the-state-fair-don-t-touch-the-pigs/article_92bac3a2-e803-11e1-9c1f-001a4bcf887a.html)

**Watch out for that pig**

Posted: Thursday, August 16, 2012 4:36 pm

Mary Lochner

It's the time of year when Americans start descending on their local state and county fairs for food, music, farm exhibits and carnival rides, but you might want to think twice before petting that pig—or at least wash your hands thoroughly, to government standards, afterward. Ten cases of swine flu were linked to a county fair in Ohio last week, with a number of the cases being children who interacted with pigs at an exhibit.

The Centers for Disease Control is warning people to wash their hands after being around pigs, and for people with compromised immune systems to take extra precautions. People should not bring food or drink into areas where there are animals, according to the CDC.

There were 29 cases of swine flu total so far this year. The current strain of swine flu is generally mild, the CDC says.

On a January 2013 flight between Denver and Seattle, I had the privilege of sitting next to Dr. Gerald Nepom, an immunologist who is the director of the Benaroya Research Institute. I enjoyed a fascinating discussion with him that touched on this topic. He explained to me that the reason Asia is typically the source of the yearly flu virus strain is because of the way Asians keep pigs in close proximity to people and other animal populations, which allows the pig-borne viruses to jump to man.

So to protect ancient Jews from diseases caused by contact with or eating pigs, God commanded them to stay completely away from swine. When the Jews obeyed, they stayed healthy; when they disobeyed, they suffered needlessly.

Today, we know how to make sure pork is thoroughly cooked before we eat it. As a result, we can usually enjoy pork without getting sick. But are we really sure that the pork we eat is entirely safe? Is there some still *unknown* swine-borne pathogen that contributes to the decay in our health when we eat pork? Perhaps one day, when science catches up with the Bible, we will discover that this is the case.

## Addendum 7. The Ceremonial Laws and Jesus Christ

**The Historical Background.** Leviticus 21 puts restrictions on those who were allowed to perform the duties of a High Priest inside of the temple (i.e., "approach the altar.") During this time, members of the tribe of Levi could serve as priests, and only descendants of the family of Aaron (the brother of Moses, of the tribe of Levi) could serve as *High Priests*.

The priests officiated at the ceremony that provided a way for sinful man to have a relationship with a holy God. As we discussed earlier, the way man had access to God before Jesus came was through sacrificial offerings performed at the Tabernacle (during the days of Moses, Joshua, and the judges) or in the Temple (later built by Solomon, destroyed in 586 BC by the Babylonians, rebuilt after the captivity, then destroyed again in AD 70 by the Romans).

God established the Jewish priesthood as a "shadow" (or "type" that pointed to the real thing to come) of what He was going to accomplish in the first coming (advent) of the Messiah, Jesus. Jesus Himself became not only the once-and-for-all *perfect* sin sacrifice through His death on the cross, but also a permanent, eternal High Priest through His resurrection and ascension back to Heaven, where He is today. The Law mandated that those descendants of Aaron who officiated the duties of the High Priest in the Temple were to be "without defect" in order to maintain the "type" or "shadow" that was pointing to the perfect sacrifice and High Priest, Jesus:

*...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 1 Peter 1:18-19*

*But He [Jesus], because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever. Hebrews 7:24-28*

## Appendix A. Why did God command the Israelites to destroy the Canaanites?

God gave the Mosaic Law to the Israelites after He delivered them from slavery in Egypt, on their way to the Promised Land, which was at that time occupied by the Canaanites. He instructed them to completely destroy the Canaanite people and take possession of this land. There, they were to be governed by God according to His laws (a form of government called a theocracy). So discussions on the Mosaic Law, such as the one we are having here, often lead to questions about God’s command to destroy the Canaanites. How could a loving God give a command to wipe out an entire people, including men, woman, children – *and all the animals?*<sup>11</sup>

The answer is that God is a God of love and mercy – and He is also just. He will not tolerate sin forever. The Canaanites were, by this time, a completely depraved people. They (and the nations around them) practiced human sacrifice and participated in every form of immorality and violence. They were now suffering all the consequences of their depravity, including disease that had spread throughout their own people, and even the animals. This is described in several places in Scripture (and confirmed by archeological evidence).

*“If you [Jews] do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD, then the Lord will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues — great and prolonged plagues — and serious and prolonged sicknesses. [described in other passages with symptoms of various forms of STDs] Moreover He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. Also every sickness and every plague, which is not written in this Book of the Law, will the Lord bring upon you until you are destroyed. Deuteronomy 28:58-61*

Thus, the Canaanites were already well on the way to self-destruction when God ordered the Jews to wipe them out.

Further, God had waited hundreds of years, giving the Canaanites opportunity to repent of their sin and turn from their wicked ways. Four hundred years earlier, God told Abraham that his descendants (the Jews) would be slaves in Egypt before He would bring them into the Promised Land. Why? Because the *“wickedness of the Canaanites / Amorites was not yet complete.”* (Genesis 15:16) In other words, God made His chosen people suffer misery under the Egyptians for hundreds of years as he patiently waited for the Canaanites to repent. But when the evil of the Canaanites had reached a point of no return, God brought judgment upon them, using the Jews to do so. God makes it clear to the Jews that he was leading them into the Promised Land because of the evil of the Canaanites, not because they (the Jews) were perfectly righteous:

*“Hear, O Israel: You are to cross over the Jordan today, and go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself... Do not think in your heart... ‘Because of my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land;’ but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out from before you. **It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.** Therefore understand that the Lord your God*

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<sup>11</sup> The Israelites actually failed to obey this command completely, and ended up paying a heavy price for their disobedience. Psalms 106

*is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people. Deuteronomy 9:1-6*

After the Jews took the cities and land of the Canaanites, they were still surrounded by other nations (Moabites, Ammonites, Sidonians, Amalekites, Philistines, and others) who worshipped idols, sacrificed their own children, committed every form of sexual perversion and were otherwise just as wicked as the Canaanites had been. At times, their influence would spread into Israel and God would judge the Jews for allowing these sins of idolatry and immorality to corrupt their own people (read Judges – 2 Chronicles)

But these other nations lived outside of the area that God had told the Jews to conquer, so Israel was expected to not adopt their ways rather than to destroy them. However, these surrounding nations were constantly trying to attack and wipe out the Jews, as they are to this day.

*You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations [immorality, etc], either any of your own nation **or any stranger who dwells among you** (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled), lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you. (Leviticus 18:26-28)*

## **Appendix B. Why Did God Allow Polygamy?**

It is clear from the creation account (which Jesus quotes), that God's definition of marriage was (and is) one woman and one man, for life. However, at the same time, the Bible does not specifically condemn a man for having multiple wives and female servants. Why is that?

God allowed concubines and multiple wives for the reasons stated in response to question 2, and because of the effects sin would have on the Jewish nation. When Israel was in sin, they would be defeated in battle and lose tens-of-thousands of men (brothers, husbands, and fathers) in one day. (2 Chronicles 13:17-18 describes one such example.). When Israel was attacked, the men would leave their walled city, crops, children, and wife to go fight in the battle, and often never return. If the surviving men did not take these women in as their wives or servants, then they and their children would also die. God loves the widow and the orphan and made provision in the law for them to be cared for.

*Your men shall fall by the sword, and your mighty in the war. Her gates shall lament and mourn, and she being desolate shall sit on the ground. And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, "We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by your name, to take away our reproach." Isaiah 3:25-4:1*