

Holy to the Lord

You and the book of
Leviticus

Chapters 18 & 19

Complementary

Chapter 18

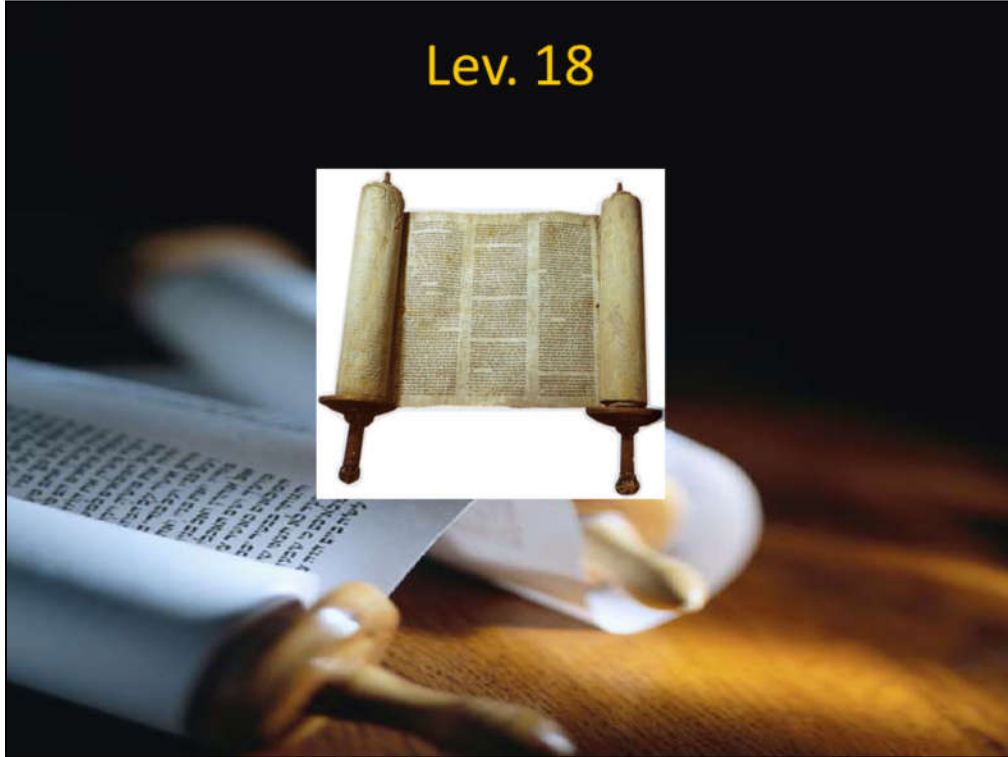


Chapter 20



Today we are going to look at two complimentary chapters. Chapters 18 and 20 are very similar in many ways. They both deal with the same topic, but 18 deals with the prohibitions and chapter 20 deals with the penalties when the prohibitions are transgressed. Chapter 18 will be our primary text, but we will supplement a few verses from chapter 20.

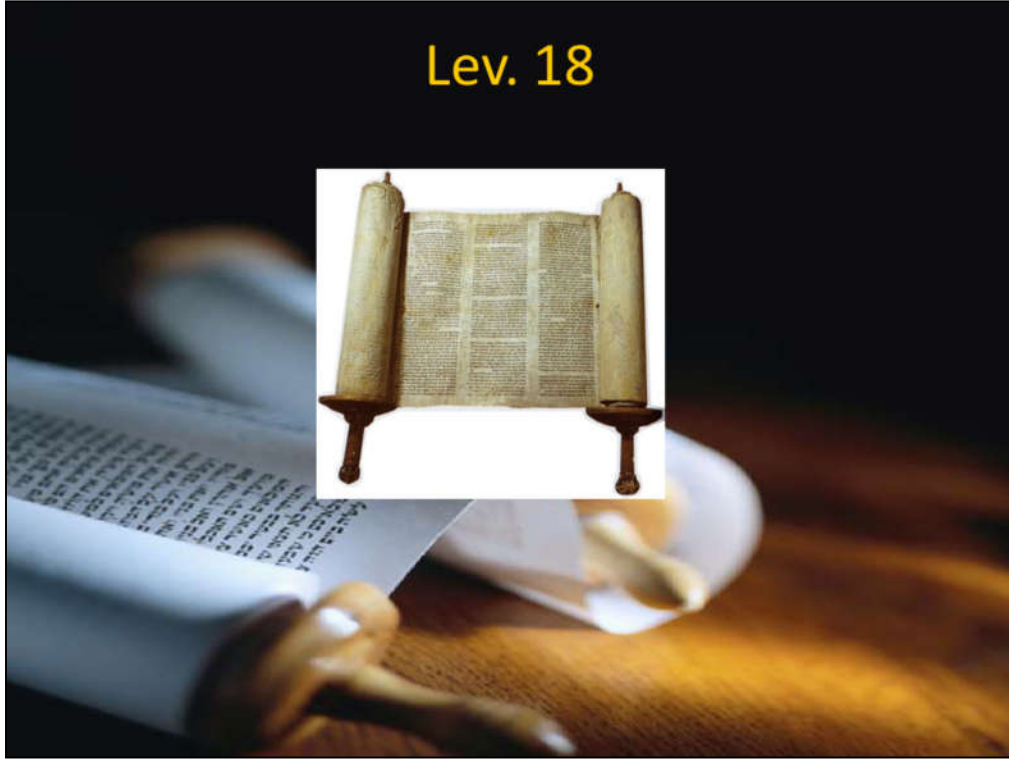
Lev. 18



Listen to a recording of the entire chapter of Leviticus 18.

Afterwards ask what the groups initial thoughts or questions are about this chapter.
(Just brainstorm at this point)

Lev. 18



Where are they?

Lev 18:3

Lev 18:24



They are in the wilderness, between Egypt and Canaan (the Promised Land).
Read Lev 18:3 & 24. Why does God mention Egypt and Canaan? (These are the places they came from and are going to. They are not to adopt any of the pagan customs of these people (as immigrants often do.)

Personal tone



As the reader begins to look at chapter 18 you may be struck by its personal tone. (Although this is lost somewhat in the English translation)

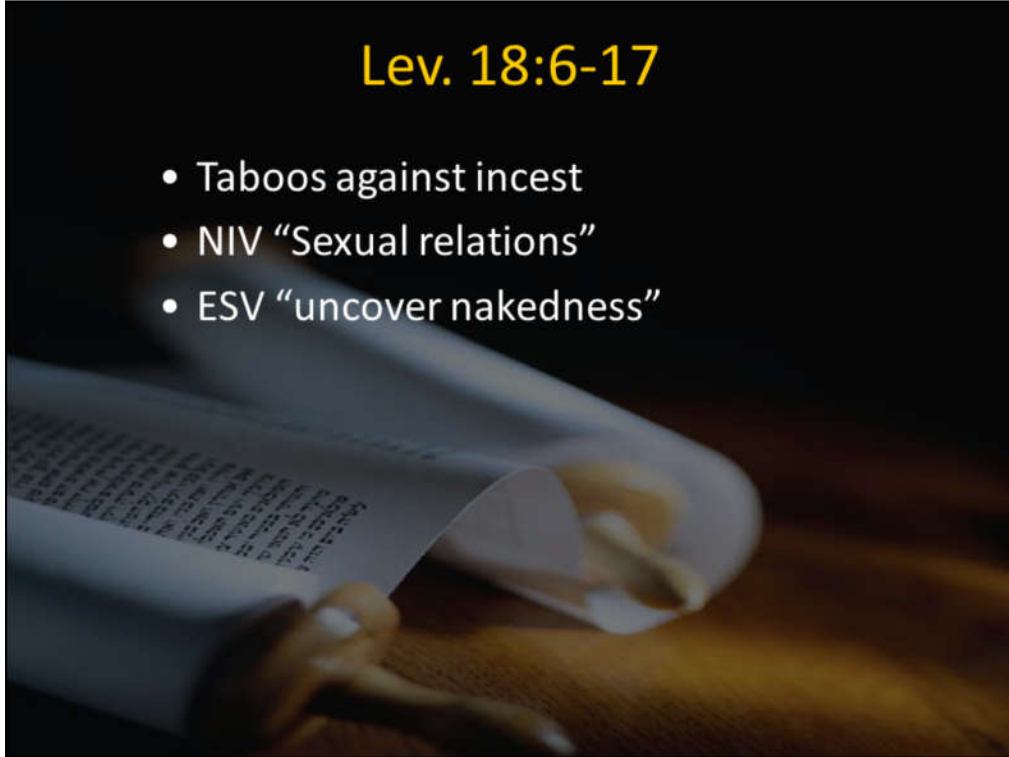
It's as though He is speaking to them directly.

He does this firstly by using His personal name, Yahweh, (I am)

Secondly He speaks to them—instead of “The Lord your God says,” it is “say to them, ‘I am the Lord, your God.’”

Lev. 18:6-17

- Taboos against incest
- NIV “Sexual relations”
- ESV “uncover nakedness”



The prohibitions contained in verses 6-17 have often been taken to specify which persons may not be married to each other. It does, of course, entail this, but that is not its main concern. Its main concern lies in the avoidance of incest.

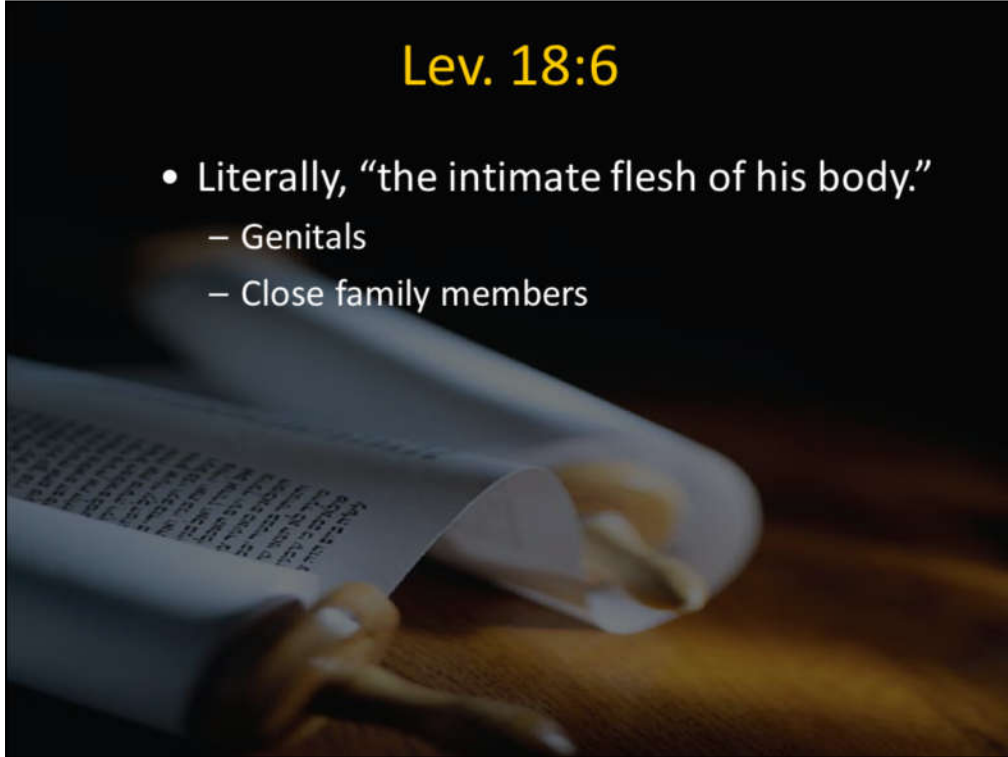
In this section, the NIV uses the phrase “sexual relations” but the ESV chooses to go with “uncover nakedness.”

How does the translation affect the meaning?

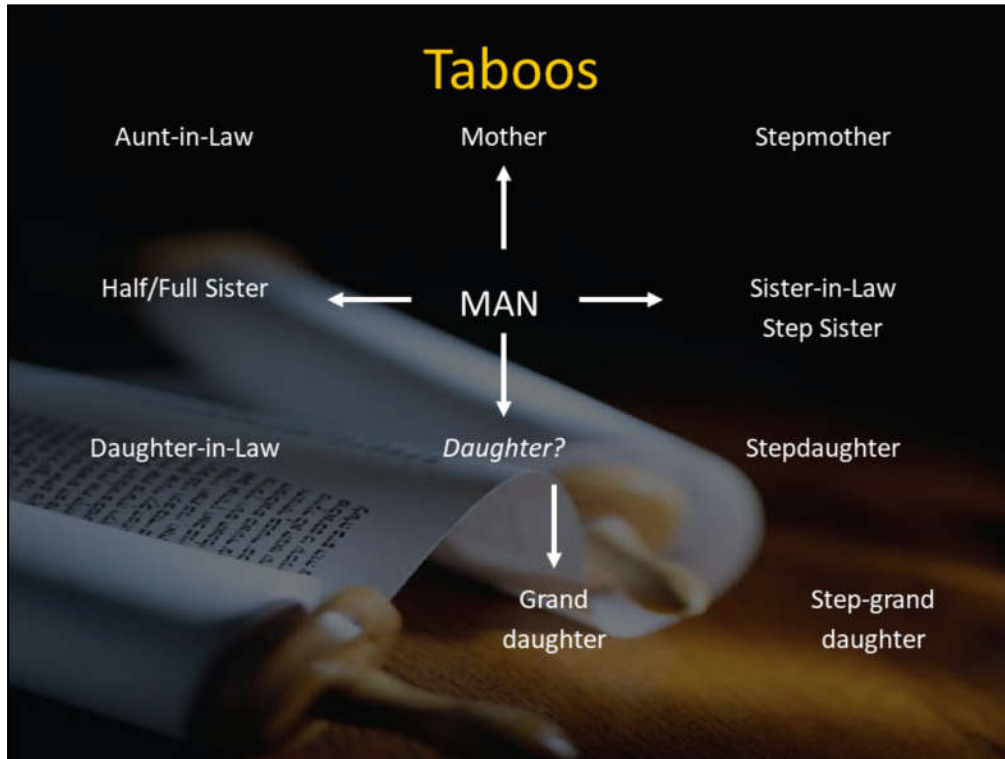
(uncover nakedness seems more personal, not necessarily consensual, it captures a sense of shame)

Lev. 18:6

- Literally, “the intimate flesh of his body.”
 - Genitals
 - Close family members



The Hebrew word here in verse 6 literally means “the intimate flesh of his body.” Depending on the context, this word can be used to refer to a person’s genitals or to their close family members (father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, and grandchild. Why would this word have this double meaning? (The family, of course, comes from the genitals; they are linked. Therefore it makes sense that the word is similar, if not the same. Much like the word “seed” can mean “semen,” [seed for people] or it can mean “offspring,” [that which comes from the seed].



Although the prohibitions define incest from a man's point of view, the heading in 18:6 gives the general rule that includes both men and women. No one shall have any form of sexual intercourse with a flesh-relative in an extended family.

In this chart, why is there a question mark after "daughter?" (Daughters are not specifically mentioned in chapter.)

Why? (The reason for this omission is not obvious and has become a matter of some speculation. The most satisfactory explanation is that it was so self-evident that it did not need to be mentioned.)



The best reason why God sees incest as an abomination is that it goes against the example he lays out with the creation.

Read Genesis 2:18-25

Since this is before sin entered the world, what we read here is the way that God intended relations to be.

Is the “2 becoming 1” just a physical thing? (No. Emotional, psychological, spiritual.)



11 of the offences in this chapter begin with the word “Nakedness.”

Nakedness among God’s people was something that was not to be either flaunted or violated. Especially since their understanding of nakedness connected them with the rest of the family.

Today we would say family members are “of the same blood,” or are “blood brothers,” but the Israelites viewed family members as being of one flesh. That is why when the two become one in marriage, the wife is truly thought of as being part of the family just as much as if she were born into it.

How would this knowledge explain verses like Lev. 18:7, 8 and 10? (There is a connection between them. i.e. if one person’s nakedness is uncovered then it is as if the nakedness of the family members are also uncovered. **Note: this concept is really lost in the translation of the NIV)

Foundational Relationships



One of the practical reasons that incest is prohibited is that it disrupts the foundational relationships of the family. It is destructive and confuses the roles in the family and causes it to be dysfunctional.

What is the punishment?

Lev 20:10-12



What is the punishment for these offences? (Stoning)

Does that seem too strong? (In a sense, these offences were all crimes against the life of the family. They disrupted the flow of life from God through the family. Since they violated that family life they were viewed as lethal, or suicidal. Therefore the penalty of death did not seem too severe. An example of this would be a father who sexually molests his child. How that father to still act as a respectable head of the household and convey God's Fatherly love to the child. Because his offence, it is next to impossible to carry out that role in the family.

Other Sexual Taboos

- Lev 18:18-23
 - Sister-in-law as a rival wife
 - During menstruation
 - Adultery with a neighbour
 - Child sacrifice
 - Homosexual intercourse
 - Bestiality

Read Lev 18:18-23

What other sexual taboos are listed here?

- 1) Sister in law as a rival wife (interesting the insertion of the word “rival” here)
- 2) During menstruation (pagan cultures believed the menstrual blood had great powers)
- 3) Adultery with a neighbour (mixing the “nakedness” of the families)
- 4) Child sacrifice
- 5) Homosexual intercourse (the reversal of what is normal and natural for sex; treating a man as if her were a woman. Note that the strong word “abomination” is attached to this)
- 6) Bestiality (a violation of the boundaries between humans and animals)

Which one of these seems to stand out as not being a sexual taboo? (child sacrifice—since children are “seed” [offspring] it was seen as a desecration of the seed that has been given by God when it is offered to a false, non-existent god)

Molech



1 Kings 11:1-8

Jer. 32:32-35

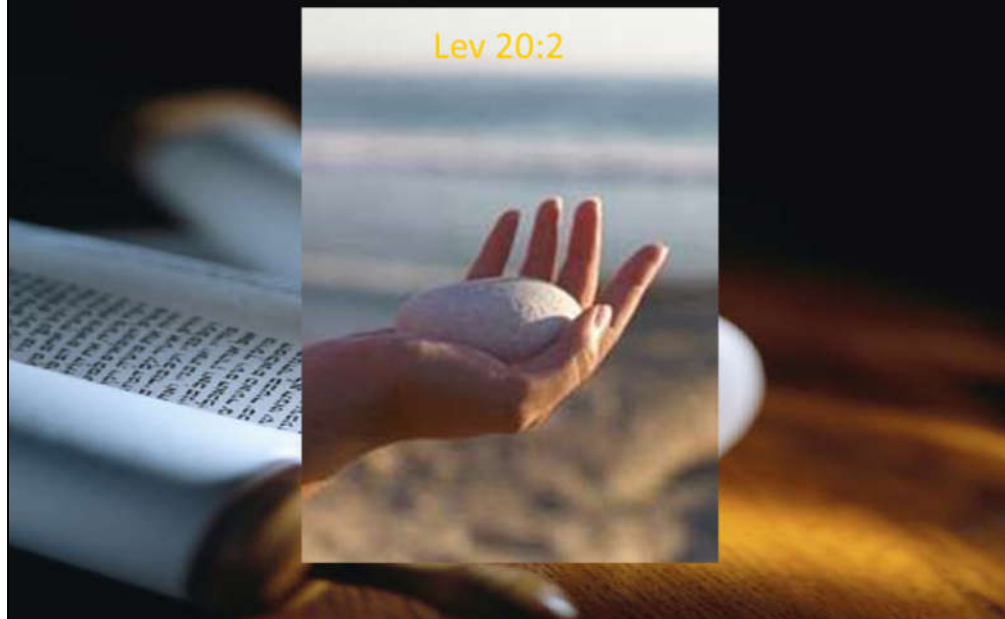
2 Kings 23:10

Molech was a fertility god worshipped by the Canaanites, Phoenicians, and Ammonites. Israel began sacrificing her children in fire to this pagan god. The Canaanites were a Semitic people who occupied Palestine between the Jordan and the Mediterranean centuries before Israel invaded the land. The Phoenicians occupied what is today the area of Syria and Lebanon and were the foremost navigators and traders of the Eastern Mediterranean by 1250 B.C. The Ammonites (also a Semitic people) lived East of the Jordan in what is present day Jordan. The worship of Molech was well established centuries before Israel settled in the land of Palestine.

(Read the passages associated with Molech.)

Ask: Why would the Israelites worship such a God? (Some possible answers: If this god worked for the Canaanites, it should work for us. If the cost of the sacrifice is high—a child—then the “payoff” from the god should be substantial. Regardless the Israelites participated in this horrific act.

What is the punishment?



What is the punishment for this offence? (Stoning)

This one is maybe not so hard to understand.

Other punishments

Sex during menstruation

Cut off from people

Sex with aunt

Die childless



Not all punishments involve stoning.

Vomit

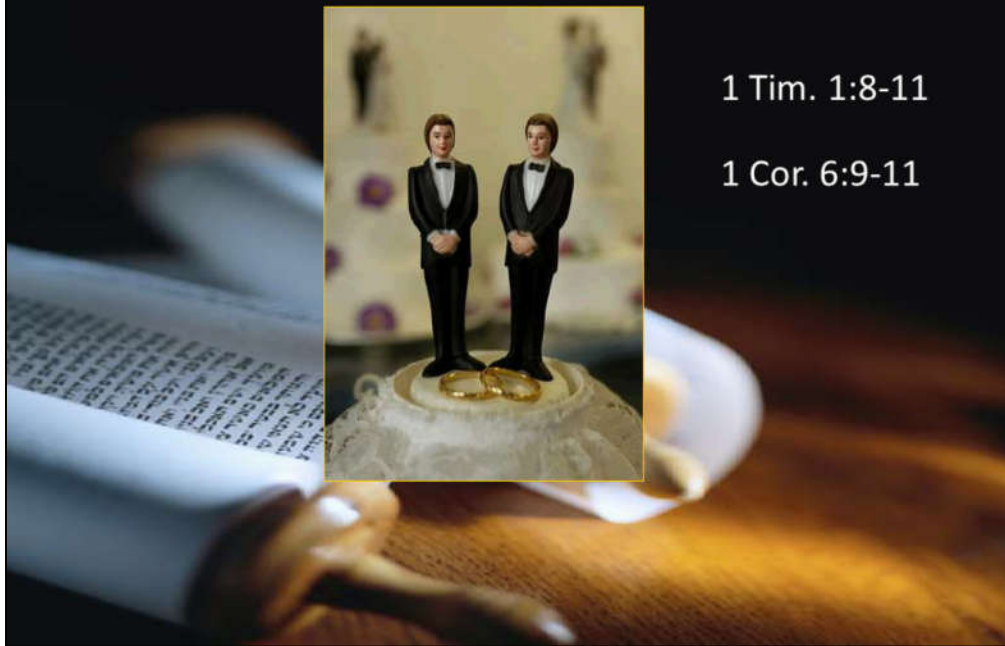


What does God say will be the result if the Israelites practice these prohibitions?

Read Lev 18:24-30

What did happen to Israel? When God brought the Assyrians and especially the Babylonians to remove them from the land.

What about today?



1 Tim. 1:8-11

1 Cor. 6:9-11

Do these laws still apply today?

(The church doesn't take a stance on sex during menstruation because the New Testament is silent on that matter. Other issues are mentioned and reaffirmed in the New Testament. Therefore those are wrong who say this is just Levitical law that doesn't apply to a New Testament world.)

It is interesting that Lev chapters 18 and 20 both mention that homosexuality was one of the reasons why the Canaanites were vomited out of the promised land, meaning this law doesn't just apply to the people of God, it is an abomination no matter who practices it.

****Note:** There is hope for those who live a lifestyle that opposes God. What does Paul say in verse 11? (And such *were* some of you. But...)

Christ

John 8:2-11



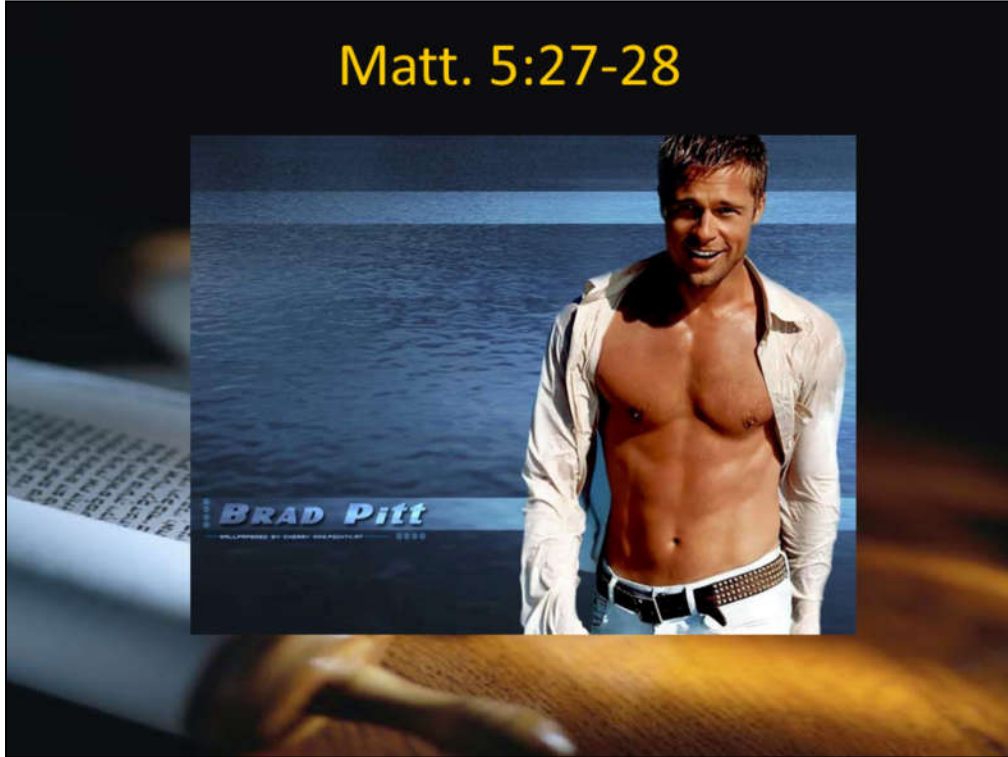
What about Jesus? What did He do? (He didn't avoid the unclean, He helped them. -Evil spirits, adulterous woman.)

Read John 8:2-11

He never condones their offences. What does he tell the woman at the end of this passage? (Go and sin no more.)

He does offer to help them. So should we.

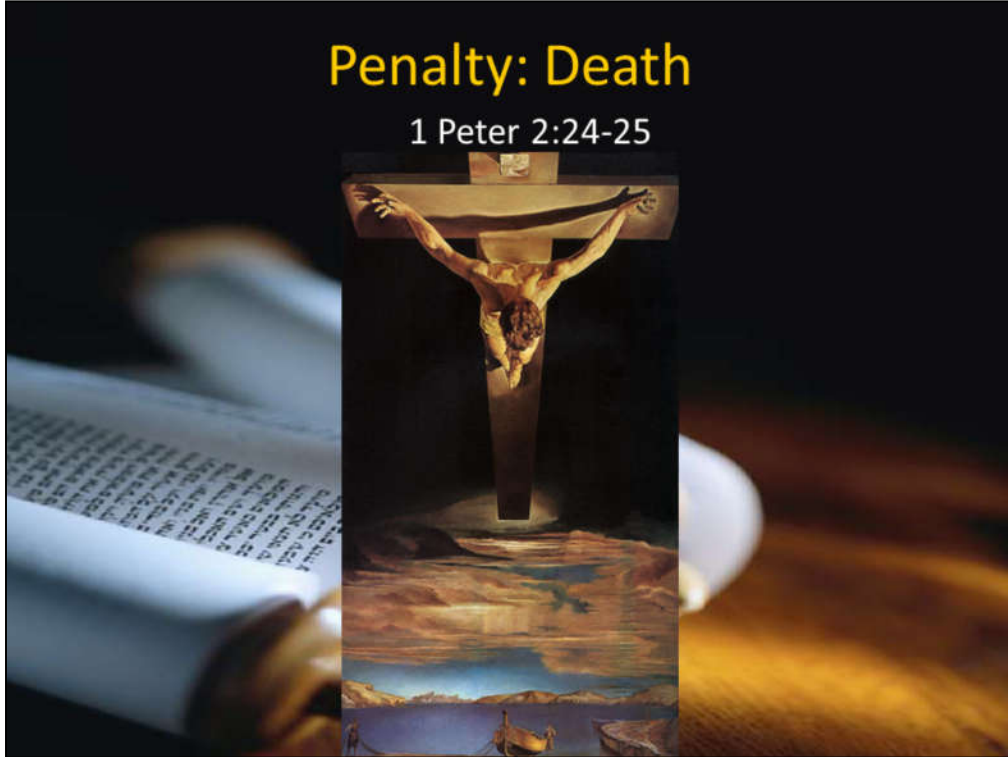
Matt. 5:27-28



And lest we get too self-righteous we need to be reminded that we, too regularly break God's law in this area. What did Jesus have to say in Matt. 5:27-28? Jesus talks about lusting after women, but turn about is fair play, and the ladies break this commandment as well. (Brad Pitt picture)

Penalty: Death

1 Peter 2:24-25



Death was the penalty for many of the offences listed in Leviticus 18 and 20, and when we examine our hearts we see we have committed these offences, if not in deeds then certainly in our thoughts. But Christ became our ransom and took our punishment on Himself. Let's close this study with 1 Peter 2:24-25.