

## **Sex and Shell-fish** **Leviticus 18:1-6; 19-30**

### **The Call to be Different**

The chapter begins, and ends, with the Lord calling the Israelites to live distinctive lives. We all worship one god or another, and are shaped by some or other guidelines for life. Who that God is, and what those guidelines are, will determine how we view sex.

Because God's people are called to live differently, it does not matter what other people think of sex. Just because others think sex before marriage, or same sex relationships are ok, does not mean that God's people should. Something else is shaping how we see these things.

The Lord describes sexual immorality – hetero and homo- as abomination. That is a strong word. It comes from the word to hate. God hates sexual immorality because of what it does to people, and marriage, and because it dishonours him.

But to speak like this, especially about homosexual relationships, is increasingly unacceptable in our society.

### **The Charge of Inconsistency**

Christians are accused of being inconsistent because we say that Leviticus says homosexuality is wrong, but we ignore the rules that ban eating shellfish, or wearing clothing of mixed fabrics.

### **It's all about Jesus**

Traditionally God's law has been divided into the ceremonial, civil and moral law. The Ceremonial Laws governed Israel's worship life, sacrifices and rituals. Jesus fulfilled all these. He was the perfect sacrifice and high priest. He declared all foods clean. It would be inconsistent to Jesus if we did keep those laws.

The Civil Laws regulated Israelite society. But now, because of all that Jesus has done, the people of God are not one tiny nation state, they are from multiple nations. And the church is not the government. It *would* be inconsistent to all that Jesus has done if we said they did still apply.

The Moral Law contained rules such as these about sexual behaviour. In the New Testament God's moral law is not abolished. Jesus intensified it. It reflects God's character. To say the moral law no longer applies would be inconsistent with the character of God. And the New Testament reaffirms all that Leviticus says about sexual immorality. And because Jesus amplifies it, we are all guilty under his law. But Jesus doesn't just save us from the ceremonial and the civil law, he also saves us from God's moral law.

### **Jesus the Perfect Israelite**

Jesus said that he had come to fulfil the law. He fulfilled it by being the perfect high priest, and perfect atoning sacrifice. But he also fulfilled it by being the perfect law-keeper. At the cross he took our place, and suffered for all our sins in our place – including all our sexual sins. Because of him we can be declared not guilty. As we turn from our sin and turn to him in faith, his righteousness becomes ours. Whether our problem is hetero- or homosexual, it's only in him and not in our sin, that we can all find the loving acceptance and embrace of our heavenly Father.