



קרבו

Offerings



A Study of God and Those Who are His People
Pine Cove Summer Staff Bible Study :: 2009
www.pinecove.com



Dear Summer Staff:

Here are the notes to the 2009 summer staff Bible study on the Book of Leviticus. I hope the pages of Hebrew Bible have come alive for you this summer as you have seen the complexity and sublimity of the very words of God. It is my prayer that as you come to more fully appreciate the *offering* God has made on our behalf that you will more completely *offer* yourself to Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. I hope that this study has also enriched your understanding of the Scriptures as a whole and that you are able to articulate the gospel with greater clarity and specificity.

I encourage you to not be a bucket with what you have learned this summer. To the extent that we have invested this into you – reinvest it into the lives of the people you minister to back at home and school. It will not only be a blessing to those whom you choose to spend time with, it will further cement what you have learned this summer.

If you have questions about the study itself or need help in teaching it, I'm more than happy to help you. Once the Forge gets started in the fall, I may not be able to respond as quickly as I would like to, but I promise that I will get to it eventually. And if you think about it, let me know how it goes!

And don't forget – not only do you have the notes to this study, you also have access to the audio recordings as well! If you're not already subscribed to the podcast, you can find the feed and download the episodes at www.pinecove.com. Go to the summer staff login page, log in to your account and click on the podcast link. You will most likely have to download the older episodes manually since only the most recent episode will download.

I'll look forward to next summer when we'll get to do this all over again! In the meantime, don't forget about the opportunity you have at the Forge. If you are interested in applying, please give me a call – I'd love to speak with you about it.

Grace and peace be with you,

FORGE



Matt "DynoLight" Lantz
Forge Director
903.579.3674 - office
mlantz@pinecove.com
www.pinecove.com/forge

How To Use This Study:

- **Step 1:** Familiarize yourself with the text. These notes assume that you are already familiar with the passages being studied, so don't expect to be able to sit down with the note pack and easily walk through the study without some prep work.
- **Step 2:** Decide which parts of the passage are the ones you want to focus on. With most studies you don't have time to go over all the notes provided (and you probably shouldn't). Instead, you have to pick the most important points for the audience you are teaching and emphasize those.
- **Step 3:** Have a general outline of thoughts that will help you string all the ideas together – including your own personal illustrations and activities. Don't feel bound to these notes either. If you want to include things or replace things, please do!
- **Step 4:** Look for opportunities for application. With the Book of Leviticus there aren't as many practical correlations for application, so you will need to make sure this study isn't just an exercise in information transfer.
- **Step 5:** The note pack is designed for the one who is teaching the study – not so much for those who are learning. If you decide to distribute the notes to the people you're teaching – don't use the notes like a curriculum and simply read them out loud. The notes are intended to help you *prepare* to teach.

Remember: These notes are *mine*. You have to make them yours. You've been in classes where the teacher was reading something just because they had to, right? Until this information becomes something you are passionate about and familiar with it isn't yours. Change this up as much as you want – add more quotes/references. *Make it your own.* The most inspiring and effective teachers are those who own what they teach.

Tough Questions:

It's hard to replace the value of a good question to keep your students learning even after they leave your study. Each week there will be a question or two at the end of the study that is designed to make your students (and you!) think hard about the subject just discussed. Sometimes the questions aren't even answerable – but that's not the point. The point is that they are engaging the Word on their own (and they're motivated to do so!).

Don't Jump to the New Testament Too Quickly:

You will likely notice that I do not make immediate correlations to the New Testament – especially in the first five weeks of the study. My reasons for doing this are these: 1). If we really are going to fully appreciate and understand the Book, then we need to rightly understand it in the context in which it was written. 2). Most people who would be willing to study Leviticus are probably capable of making the connections to Jesus on their own already 3). It helps us not force the content of the New Testament into the Old and corrupt our hermeneutic.

Bibliography:

There is a *wealth* of information out there on Leviticus. As I compiled my notes and thoughts, these were the resources that I found to be the most helpful. If you would like to study further, I would recommend these resources to you first as good entry points into a seemingly overwhelming mountain of commentaries and books. So, to the degree you find this study helpful, you need to know it really comes from the wisdom of these brothers in Christ. I'm just the young guy standing on their shoulders.

Primary Sources:

- Constable, Tom. *Notes on Leviticus*. 2009 edition.
 - Dr. Constable was one of my seminary professors who makes his expository notes on the entire Bible available online for free! Feel free to download them at www.soniclight.com and enjoy this great resource!
- Ross, Allen. *Holiness to the Lord: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, Baker Book House, 2002.
 - I cannot say enough about this volume! Not only is it written in a manner that both the layman and the scholar can appreciate its contents – the way that Ross organized his exposition of the book was very helpful. A highly recommended volume for your biblical library.
- Wenham, Gordon J. *The Book of Leviticus*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament series. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979.
 - Wenham's book is regarded as the modern classic on Leviticus – and rightly so. It is a scholarly work and was most helpful in the more difficult aspects of the book where I wanted more specific information. It is not as easy of a read as Ross' volume, but highly recommended nonetheless.

Secondary Resources:

- Johnson, S. Lewis. *Sermons on Leviticus*
 - His sermons on the typology found in Leviticus were fascinating. I chose not to include much of what he wrote – simply because I wanted the study to focus more on the exegesis of Leviticus rather than the typology of Leviticus.
- Keil, C. F., and Franz Delitzsch. *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*. N.p.; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., n.d.
 - I found this resource later on in my study as a free download with my [E-Sword](#) Bible software. An insightful read, but not an easy one. Another fantastic free resource that can aid you in your study of Hebrew Bible.

Special Thanks To . . .

. . . Jason Wallace for convincing me to choose Leviticus as the topic for this year's study.

. . . Marty O'Connor for leading me around Israel and giving me a new appreciation and respect for the Hebrew Bible and culture.

. . . Ross Strader for introducing me to Alan Ross' commentary on Leviticus. So good!

. . . David Wilcox, Jon Foreman, Joe Purdy, and James Horner whose music helped to drown out all the distractions and keep me focused.

. . . My gorgeous, thoughtful and nurturing wife who put so much of her own wants and needs aside to help me write this study. Darcie, your love is a precious gift; I treasure it.

Offerings:

A study of God...and those who are His people

A Survey of Leviticus

Week 1: Introduction & Overview (Chapter 1:1-3)

Week 2: Offerings that Bring Him Pleasure (Chapters 1-3, 6-7)

Week 3: Offerings that Restore His Pleasure (Chapters 4-7)

Week 4: His Kingdom of Priests (Chapters 8-10, 21-22)

Week 5: His Holy Nation (Chapters 11-15)

Week 6: His Gift of Atonement (Chapter 16-17)

Week 7: His People's Offering of Holiness (Chapters 18-22)

Week 8: His People's Offering of Remembrance (Chapter 23:1-22)

Week 9: His People's Offering of Remembrance (Chapter 23:22-44)

Week 10: His Gift of Jubilee (Chapters 24-25)

Week 11: His People's Offering of Obedience (Chapter 26-27)



Why Study Leviticus?

1. Leviticus is one of the five books of Torah – the foundational books of Judaism. Biblical writers like Paul & Peter likely had the book committed to memory.
 - “It is no exaggeration to claim that the Book of Leviticus has had more impact on Judaism than any other book of the Old Testament. Traditionally it was the first book taught to Jewish children, and over half the commentary of the Talmud is concerned with understanding its contents.”¹
2. The very framework for our New Testament understanding of concepts like sacrifice, atonement, propitiation, sanctification, holiness, etc. all find their origin in the book of Leviticus.
 - “The Levitical rituals are still of immense relevance. It was in terms of these sacrifices that Jesus himself and the early church understood his atoning death. Leviticus provided the theological models for their understanding.”²
 - The entire Gospel is here – it’s just in seed form rather than a full-grown tree.
3. Leviticus reveals to us much of God’s character and purposes for His people.
 - “Leviticus is a collection of ordinances and instructions for the worship and service of the holy God. The legislation was designed to enable them to maintain a proper relationship with the LORD so that they would be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests.”³
4. No other book in all of the Scripture contains more direct communication from God than the book of Leviticus.
 - “If we have here instructions from God, then (Leviticus) is a study of the revealed will of God, and its teachings are authoritative and form a critical part of the unfolding of God’s plan of redemption.”⁴
5. Understanding the content and theology of Leviticus not only decreases our biblical illiteracy, it also enables us to articulate our faith with greater precision.

Title & Author of the Book:

- The actual title of the book in the Hebrew Bible is not Leviticus. “The Hebrews derived the title of this book from the first word in it, *wayyiqra*’, translated “And He [the Lord] called” (1:1).”⁵
- “The English title comes to us from the Vulgate (Latin version), which called this book *Liber Leviticus*. The Vulgate title came from the Septuagint (Greek version), which had as the title *Leuitikon*, meaning “relating to the Levites.” This title is appropriate since the book contains requirements of the Mosaic Covenant that relate to the Levites, or more specifically, the priests.”⁶
 - It should be noted that the Levites are only referred to once in the book itself – further underscoring that this book isn’t just for priests, but for the entire nation.
- As the first verse indicates, this book was written by Moses (1:1) shortly after the composition of Exodus in the second half of the 15th century B.C.

Recipients:

- The book of Leviticus was written to Israelites who believed in God and who already had a right relationship with him through the covenant (see Exodus 19:16).

¹ Rooker, Mark F. *Leviticus*, 22

² Wenham, Gordon J. *The Book of Leviticus*, 37

³ Ross, Allan P. *Holiness to the Lord*, 43

⁴ *ibid*, 16.

⁵ Constable, Thomas. *Notes on Leviticus*, 1

⁶ *ibid*, 1

- "Sacrifice in Israel was not a human effort to obtain favor with a hostile God but a response to the Lord who had first given Himself to Israel in covenant relationship."⁷
- Thus, the sacrifices served as a means of worship and covenant renewal – not as a means of salvation (for they had, in some manner of speaking, already been saved/redeemed from the nation of Egypt).
- The instructions of Leviticus (or the entire Mosaic Law for that matter) were never intended to lead a person or nation into covenant with God.⁸
 - "Many people think that in the Old Testament people were redeemed by keeping the law, whereas Christians are saved by grace. No one has ever been redeemed by keeping the law or by doing any works; salvation has always been by grace through faith."⁹
- In keeping the ordinances of God, the Nation set herself apart from all other nations on the earth – helping her to more fully be recognized as God's chosen people as well as fulfill her destiny in God's economy.

Structure:

- Leviticus is divided into two main sections. The first focuses on how the Nation, though sinful, can be in the presence of a holy God. The second half is the subsequent lifestyle of a people who have God in their midst.
 - Chapters 1-16: The Priestly Responsibilities of God's People
 - 1-7: Types and role of Sacrifices
 - 8-10: The Mediation of Priests
 - 11-16: Laws of Purity and Cleanliness
 - Chapters 17-27: The Holy Lifestyle of God's People

Biblical Context:

- The Exodus was only the first part of the process of redeeming the Nation of Israel. Now that she was out of Egypt, it was time for her to draw near to God. Leviticus, then, is very much the sequel to the Book of Exodus.
- The words that God spoke to Moses took place while the nation of Israel was camped at Mount Sinai. Moses had just mediated the covenant between God and the Israelites and was given explicit instructions on how to build the tent of meeting. Leviticus is the second part of those instructions – given after the tabernacle was completed.
 - "The entire law in its final, canonical form is predicated upon the divine plan that the people of Israel were chosen to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests for God in the world (Exod. 19:5-6)."¹⁰
- For over 400 years the Nation of Israel had been living in a polytheistic culture – filled with different rituals and reasons for sacrifice and devotion to gods. Once out of Egypt, the Nation would encounter a variety of other cultures who also worshiped other gods.
 - "What God was doing with Israel, then, was using traditional forms and structures that people knew in order to develop his plan of salvation. The essential difference between religious institutions in existence and the covenant made at Sinai was the content."¹¹
 - Israel wasn't the only nation making sacrifices, building temples, ordaining priests, etc. Other nations were *hoping* to find right relationship with their gods – something which the Nation of Israel already possessed *before* the sacrificial system was ever instituted (Genesis 12, 15).

⁷ Lindsey, F. Duane. *Leviticus*. Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁸ Bramer, Stephen. *Class Notes on Leviticus*.

⁹ Ross, 59. See Genesis 15:6 and Paul's exposition of this fact in all of Romans 4.

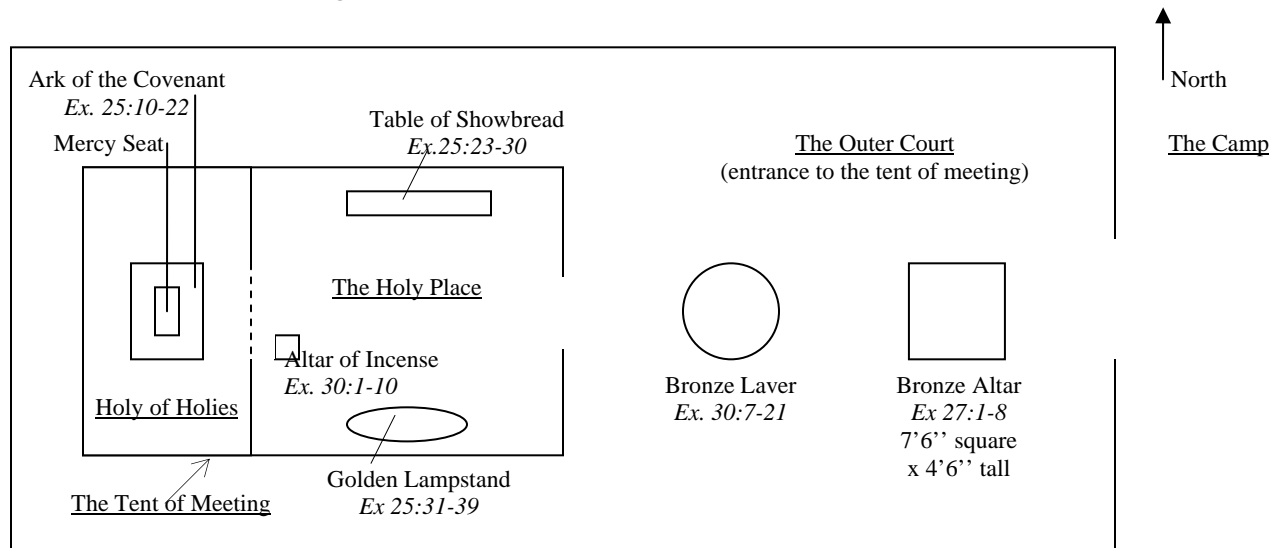
¹⁰ Ross, 18.

¹¹ *ibid*, 21.

- God took these forms and functions of Israel's day and developed the scope of their meaning beyond their present context.¹²

The Tent of Meeting:

In the book of Exodus, Moses is given instructions on how to build the tabernacle. Once the tabernacle is built, what is contained in Leviticus are the instructions for how worship is to take place within the tabernacle. A familiarity with the general layout of the tabernacle is necessary for a proper understanding of Leviticus.



Theology

- God has been in the process of creating a people for himself that will be his representatives on the earth. He called out Abram from Ur and promised him that he would be the father of a multitude. By the time of the Exodus, Abraham's descendants had multiplied to a nation of over 2 million people. God, then, called the nation out of Egypt so that God would be their God and they would be His people. Obedience to the ordinances of the Mosaic Law gave the Nation the opportunity to receive the blessings originally promised to the one man, Abraham.
- "Leviticus then in general is a collection of ordinances and instructions for the worship and service of the holy God. Much of what was given in these laws and exhortations was designed to serve as a hedge against pagan corruptions, and so the laws and rituals that seem to be similar to those other cultures also had theological aspects or meanings that made them distinct. They had a sanctuary, priests, sacrifices, festivals, and purity rituals – but it was all done in loyalty to the one and only sovereign Lord. The law as a whole taught the people that if they maintained their faith and walked in obedience to the laws, then their covenant with the Lord would be a prosperous and enjoyable experience. The legislation was designed to enable them to maintain a proper relationship with the Lord so that they would be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests."¹³
- We shall also see that the book of Leviticus is a rich study in the character and traits of God: his holiness, power, righteousness, presence, sovereignty, graciousness, jealousy, wrath, provision & will (just to name a few).

¹² Ross's treatment of this fact is exquisite – especially in regards to the role of priests, temples, and holy mountains as paralleled in the New Testament.

¹³ Ross, 43.

Purpose of the Book (then & now):

- “For the Christian, the theology of an Old Testament passage or book is incomplete without the New Testament correlation. And the New Testament draws heavily on Leviticus. Many parts of the Gospels simply assume the reader has a knowledge of Leviticus. But beyond that, the interpretation of the person and works of Jesus the Messiah in books like Romans, Hebrews and the Petrine Epistles shows that *the foundation of the gospel* is here in the Book of Leviticus.”¹⁴
- “New Testament theology makes full use of the idea of holiness. All Christians are holy, ‘saints’ in most English translations. That is, they have been called by God to be his people just as ancient Israel has been (Col 1:2, 1 Pet 1:2, 2:9-10, Ex 19:5-6). But this state of holiness must find expression in holy living (Col 1:22; 1 Pet 1:15). Sanctification is expressed through obedience to the standard of teaching (Rom 6:17-19), just as in Leviticus through obedience to the law. Peter urges his readers to make the motto of Leviticus their own: ‘Be holy, for I am holy’ (1 Peter 1:16). The imitation of God is a theme that unites the ethics of Old and New Testaments (cf. Matt 5:48).¹⁵

Sacrifice:

Why do gods require offerings? Whenever you survey a culture of people, if they worship a higher power, sacrifice is usually part of their worship. Even within ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures, gods have always demanded sacrifices (agricultural, animal, and even human) of those who choose to worship them.

How are the sacrifices of the LORD any different from a sacrifice to a Hittite god? If their rites and rituals are similar, who’s to say that their god is any different than the LORD? There are aspects of the offerings themselves that give us some insight into the god that is being worshipped. Consider:

- The sacrifice for Adam & Eve (Genesis 3:21)
 - The ideas of substitution & death as a consequence for sin were present from the beginning
- The sacrifices of Cain & Abel (Genesis 4:3-8, c.f. Hebrews 11:4)
 - Why didn’t God care for Cain’s offering? Perhaps because Cain’s offering was from the work of his own hands and not one offered in faith. The object of the offering isn’t as important to God as the heart of the one bringing the offering (Is 1).
- The sacrifice of Noah (Genesis 8:20-21)
 - The offering of a sinful man still produces a sweet aroma to the LORD. Noah’s submission to God, both before and after the flood, make his sacrifice pleasing to God.
- The sacrifice of Abraham (Genesis 22:1-ff)
 - God desires the death of the will of every one who would bring an offering to him. Once someone is willing to offer their own will to God – regardless of how unusual (or pagan) the request might seem – that is the sacrifice God desires.
 - “The narrative informs the reader at the outset that this was a test, that God was not actually going to let Abraham go through with it. Accordingly, the chapter forms a strong polemic against child sacrifice in Israel.”¹⁶

“Sacrifice is at the heart of all true worship. It serves as the consecrating ritual for participation in holy rites, it forms the appropriate tribute due to the LORD, and it represents the proper spiritual attitude of the worshipper... The proper motivation in making a sacrifice is the desire to please God by the submission of one’s heart and soul to him. Sacrifice was an expression of helplessness and therefore dependence – but with confidence in the Lord.”¹⁷

- **Big Idea:** *Sacrifices were not a means of manipulating the LORD* (as were the pagan sacrifices of the day). They were confessions of faith, submission, loyalty, and resignation that God would act on behalf of the worshipper. The offering didn’t make the worshipper right in God’s eyes – the LORD is the one who makes right.

¹⁴ Ross, 43 – emphasis mine.

¹⁵ Wenham, 25.

¹⁶ Ross, 77

¹⁷ Ross, 73 and 75.

The LORD required sacrifices from Israel for three main reasons:

1. Teach the Nation what was necessary to maintain (not create!) communion with Him.
2. Restore that communion when it was broken by sin/defilement.
3. Provide them a means of being who He called them to be in Exodus 19

The offerings detailed in chapters 1-7 can be categorized into two groups:¹⁸

1. Soothing aroma offerings (those that are made in communion to celebrate communion)
 - a. Burnt Offering (Lev 1)
 - b. Meal Offering (Lev 2)
 - c. Peace Offering (Lev 3)
2. Offerings with no aroma (those made to expiate sin and restore communion)
 - a. Sin (purification) Offering (Lev 4:1-5:13)
 - b. Guilt (reparation) Offering (Lev 5:14-6:7)

The God of the Offerings:

What makes an offering acceptable to the LORD...especially if it is being brought by a sinful worshipper?

- **(1:3)** 'Accepted' is *ratsah*, which means to be pleased with or to satisfy a debt.¹⁹ There are several indications throughout the Hebrew Bible that sacrifices and other acts may not be accepted by God if done improperly, hastily or without proper motive (Jer 14:12, Hos 8:13; Amos 5:22). Sacrifice is necessary because "it is the appointed means whereby peaceful coexistence between a holy God and sinful man becomes a possibility."²⁰ Acceptance with God is always the goal of sacrifice.

"Offering" is the Hebrew word, *qorban* which describes not only the bringing of a literal sacrifice, but also the drawing near to the altar that the bringing requires. In fact the word 'brings' is a cognate of the word 'offering' (the two words come from the same root – almost as if to say, 'when any man of you shall offer your offering...').²¹ Offerings are always given for a reason – the expiation of sin, paying tribute, confessing praise & thanksgiving, etc.

Thus, there must be requirements for both the offering itself and the one who is drawing near to the altar to present the offering. What we have here in Leviticus 1-7 is the way God has provided for His people to have access to Him (and also a revelation of His character & nature).

As we begin our study, it is important to extract the bigger picture of the system God has ordained before dealing with the specifics of each sacrifice.

1. Relationship is the prerequisite for an acceptable offering

- **(1:2)** "Speak to the sons of Israel," is an indication that all of the contents of the Book of Leviticus were not intended for a universal audience. In fact, these were made to people who had *already been redeemed* from Egypt. As God's chosen people, they needed detailed instruction so that both their relationship with God and role on the earth could be maintained. God does not accept sacrifices from those who are not in relationship with Him.
- The relationship that God enjoyed with his chosen people was not one earned – but promised to Abraham through covenant sacrifice²².

¹⁸ Wenham, 47

¹⁹ Strong's Hebrew dictionary

²⁰ Wenham, 56.

²¹ Strong's Hebrew dictionary. The translator notes from the NET Bible were also helpful on this point.

²² Genesis 15:8-21 is yet another example of sacrifice that occurred before the authoring of Leviticus. This sacrifice is especially unique and important because it is an example of God using a common ratification to convince Abraham that he would receive all that had been promised to him.

2. Acceptance does not come without an offering

- (1:2) “when someone among you presents an offering to the LORD” assumes that if the people are to be a kingdom of priests and entering into the presence of the LORD, then sacrifices will be offered. There is a way that the LORD has for his people to approach him – and though it may seem boring and legalistic to us, it was good news to the people of Israel.
 - (1:3, 2:1, 3:1, 4:3, 5:6) The Israelites learned that one never approaches the presence of God empty handed. There is no walking up to the LORD and slapping him a high five – you must be accepted by Him first (by satisfying him) and then you draw near.

3. Acceptable offerings are the best of one’s best

- (1:2) “From the herd or flock” means that the animal brought to offering could not be a wild animal – even if it was without blemish. It must be one’s own possession. It is easy to see from the very beginning that “an essential ingredient of sacrifice was that it had to be costly.”²³
 - See also 2 Samuel 24:24, Malachi 1:7, 13-14
 - (1:3) Males were regarded as more valuable than females
 - (2:2, 12,14) Fine flour is the most purified and finely ground flour one possessed indicating that “careful preparation of the best product was expected in making this tribute.”²⁴ The firstfruits of any harvest were also regarded as the most choice of the crop.
 - (1:3, 3:1) without defect was another indication of the value of the animal and the worthiness of the sacrifice (since it was meant to replace the blemished worshipper).
 - (3:4-5) The fat of the animal was regarded to be the best part of the animal
 - “In the overfed West we can easily fail to realize what was involved in offering an unblemished animal in sacrifice. Meat was a rare luxury in OT times for all but the very rich. Yet even we might blanch if we saw a whole lamb or bull go up in smoke as a burnt offering. How much greater pangs must a poor Israelite have felt.”²⁵
- God never required the people to sacrifice that which they did not possess. A poorer family did not have a bull, so the offering of a goat or dove. The significance is not so much in what kind of animal is offered – but how costly the sacrifice is to you.

4. The sacrifice of the offering must be by the hand of the one making the offering.

- (1:5, 2:2-4, 3:2, 4:4, 7:1-2) The worshipper’s participation was mandated as a part of the process of presenting the offering. And we’re not just talking about reciting some liturgy or dropping some coins in an *offering* plate. In the case of most of the offerings, “he had to choose an unblemished animal from his own flock, bring it to the sanctuary, kill it, dismember it with his own hands, and then watch it go up in smoke before his very eyes.”²⁶

Tough Questions:

1. How did Cain, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. know how, when & why to make sacrifices *before* the book of Leviticus was written?
2. If salvation has always been by grace through faith, then who/what did the Nation of Israel place their faith in? Is it appropriate to say they are a ‘saved’ people if they couldn’t believe on the actual person of Jesus? Or could they?

²³ Wenham, 51.

²⁴ Ross, 103.

²⁵ *ibid*, 51

²⁶ Wenham, 55.

Offerings

Offerings that Bring Him Pleasure :: Chapters 1-3

How do you take a nation who has lived in a polytheistic culture for 400 years and raise them up to be a kingdom of priests of the One True God? You make them holy. Holiness is just as much as state of being as it is a way of behaving. The 5 types of sacrifices existed not only to cleanse and atone, but also to teach & remind the entire Nation of their new identity in God's economy as his covenant people.

Overview of the 5 Sacrifices¹

1. The Burnt Offering (1:1-17)(cf. 6:8-13, 8:18-21, 16:24)
 - a. Big Idea: "The LORD accepts with pleasure whoever comes into his presence by substitutionary atonement through the shedding of blood."
 - b. "It was the commonest of all the sacrifices, performed every morning and evening, and more frequently on holy days."²
2. The Grain (Meal) Offering (2:1-16)(cf. 6:14-23, Num 6:14-17, 28:3-6)
 - a. Big Idea: "The LORD expects his people to offer themselves and the best they have as a token of their dedication and gratitude."
 - b. Rarely offered by itself – usually accompanied the burnt offering, sin offering, and fellowship offering.
3. Peace (Fellowship) Offering (3:1-17)(cf. 7:11-34)
 - a. Big Idea: "Those who surrender their hearts to God and come before him on the basis of shed blood of the sacrifice may celebrate being at peace with God (in a communal meal)."
 - b. This offering included a communal meal
4. Sin (Purification) Offering (4:1-5:13)(cf. 6:24-30, 8:14-17, 16:3-22)
 - a. Big Idea: "God will restore the sinner who appeals to him for forgiveness on the basis of the purifying blood of the sacrifice. Anyone who becomes aware of obligations left undone or impure contacts left unpurified must make confession and find forgiveness through God's provision of atonement."
5. Guilt (Reparation) Offering (5:14-6:7)(cf. 7:1-6)
 - a. Big Idea: "Anyone who violates the covenant by defrauding the LORD or another person must confess the sin and make full restitution in order to find full forgiveness and restoration."

The Burnt Offering (1:1-17)

"Burnt" in Hebrew means more literally to 'go up' (i.e. to go up in smoke). In other places the same sacrifice is associated with the word for fire. The Greek translation is *holokautoma* from which we get the word holocaust. The burnt offering is, thus, given to God and completely burned on the altar.

"The purpose of bringing this offering to the entrance of the tent was to find favor or to be accepted by God. Here the offerer is seeking to please the LORD and find acceptance in his presence. The Book of Leviticus thus begins with the good news of the way to find acceptance with God."³

The Ingredients

- Bull (1:5-9), lambs or goats (1:10-13), turtledoves or pigeons (1:14-17)
- "Generally, the higher the individual Israelite's responsibility (e.g. priests, rulers, common people, etc) the larger and more expensive was the animal that he had

¹ Bramer, 5 and Ross, 95. All the 'big ideas' come from Ross – see also pages 108, 119, 134, 144, 152.

² Wenham, 52.

³ Ross, 89.

to offer. People with greater responsibility would have had more money and therefore more ability to bring the more expensive sacrifices."⁴

The Frequency of the Offering:

- Twice daily by the priests (Num 28:4), every Sabbath (28:9), beginning of every month (28:11), on Passover and every day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (28:24), the Feast of Weeks (28:26), throughout the seventh month (Num 29).

The Ritual⁵

- The animal is brought to the entrance of the tent of meeting (v.3)
- Laying hands on the animal's head (v.4). It is likely at this point that the worshipper explained to the priest why he was bringing the offering. It is also probable that the priest would verify the acceptability of the offering.
- The worshipper had to slay the animal himself (v5). During this process all the blood was drained out of the animal's body and collected in a basin by the priests who would subsequently splash the blood on the sides of the altar.
- Meanwhile, the worshipper quartered the animal into its pieces (v6) and placed on the altar – beginning with the head and the fat (the most choice pieces of the animal)(v8). The hind legs & entrails were unclean and thus needed to be washed before being placed on the altar – thus making the animal completely spotless(v9).
- The entire animal (with the exception of the skin) was burned on the altar (v9).

The Result/Purpose

- A soothing aroma: The idea of a soothing aroma originates with Noah's sacrifice after the flood in Genesis 8:21. "Though man was unchanged in his sinfulness, God's attitude towards man altered, thanks to the burnt offering...The burnt offering does not remove sin or change man's sinful nature, but it makes fellowship between sinful man and a holy God possible."⁶ The fact that the offering was consumed by the fire was verification that the offering and the worshipper were accepted by God – *and it gave him pleasure!*
- Atonement:⁷ in Hebrew is *kipper* and has two basic meanings: 'to wipe clean' or 'to pay a ransom'. The meaning connected with the burnt offering is centered around the concepts of appeasing, pacification, and expiation rather than cleansing or being clean. The word occurs in Leviticus more than any other book.
 - "The English word atonement goes back to the 13th century rhyming chroniclers and meant "to-make-at-one-ment" or reconcile. In Israel an atoning sacrifice was not the condition of a relationship to the LORD; rather, it was offered as a means of *strengthening the relationship that already existed*. The existing tie between God and worshipper was renewed and maintained through atonement."⁸
 - "The purpose of this sacrifice was to turn away or appease God's wrath against sin and defilement and thereby purge the offender. Thus, the burnt offering indicated on the one hand that God's holiness was satisfied and that the offender was now accepted; but on the other hand also indicated that the offerer in order to be accepted had completely surrendered to God – it was an expression of commitment. Forgiveness and purification were graciously bestowed by the LORD on the individual who by faith submitted to him and followed through with this ritual."⁹

Other Biblical Examples of Burnt Offering:

- Genesis 22, 2 Sam 24:25, Job 1:5, 2 Chron 29, 1 Kings 18:38-39
- Psalms 20:3, 40:6, 50:8, 51:19, 66:15

⁴ Constable, 10. This is generally true of all the sacrifices and will not be re-explained

⁵ Wenham's treatment of the ritual of each sacrifice is most helpful

⁶ Wenham, 56-57. Note that after Noah's offering, God promises never to destroy the earth again, fruitful harvest, etc.

⁷ We will deal more with the concept of atonement when we get to chapter 16.

⁸ Ross, footnote on p92. Emphasis mine.

⁹ Ross, 94.

Theological Implications:

1. God has provided a way for his people (sinners) to have relationship with him and be in his presence!
2. The way God has provided is an extension of his grace and participating in the sacrifices is an expression of faith and worship.
3. "Ritual was part of the regular worship of Israel. It was repeated as a part of the ongoing sanctification of the people. Every time the believing community gathered to worship the LORD, this offering was given as a public acknowledgement that the basis of communion with God was blood atonement."¹⁰

The Grain (Meal) Offering (2:1-16)

Grain is the Hebrew word *minha*. In Leviticus it specifically means grain or cereal, but outside of Leviticus it is used in a broader context. Often the word carries a meaning of 'tribute' – especially in non-religious contexts. Thus, as Constable says, "it was a type of tribute from a faithful worshipper to his divine overlord."¹¹ Grain offerings were rarely presented by themselves. They typically accompanied burnt offerings and peace offerings (See Num. 28).

The Ingredients

- Unleavened fine flour...uncooked (v1), cooked in an oven (v4), on a griddle (v5), pan fried (v7) or roasted (v14) mixed with oil (v1), salt (v13) and incense (v15).
- 'Fine' flour could mean the type of flour that was offered or how fine the flour was ground in preparation for the offering. In either case, the best is expected.
- The offering had to be free of leaven & honey. Leaven was restricted because "the people should not offer to God anything with corruption working in it. If this understanding extended to the idea that they were offering themselves by offering the gift, then it certainly meant that they should not offer themselves with malice, wickedness, conflicts, or guilty fears."¹² Honey was likely forbidden because of its ability to ferment which also causes corruption.
- Salt was emphasized from the tradition of covenant making of the day. When a covenant was made, each party ate the salt as a means of ratification (see Num 18:19, 2 Chron 13:5). Salt is a symbol of a covenant because it cannot be destroyed by fire or time or any other means of the day.

Frequency of the Offering

- Since the grain offering was rarely offered alone, it occurs most frequently with the burnt offering. The priests would offer a meal offering twice daily for themselves (6:19-ff)

The Ritual

- The offerer prepared the grain as specified in verses 1-7 & 14-15.
- The cakes were then presented to the priest for offering (v8, 16)
- The priest took a portion of the mixture and burned it on the altar (v9)
- The leftovers were kept by the priesthood (v10, 6:7-11, 2:3)
 - "The priests and the Levites had no land of their own and were entirely dependant on the sacrificial offerings, and particularly on the cereal offering, as it was the most frequent of the sacrifices which went to the priests. The priests in their turn gave a part of their income to God, by burning a handful of the cereal offering on the altar as a memorial portion."¹³

The Result/Purpose

- A soothing aroma (v9) (same as burnt offering)
- A memorial portion (v2,9) "The verb often carries the nuance of beginning to act on the basis of what is remembered. The 'memorial portion' thus reminded or prompted worshippers to live according to covenant obligations, that is, to live as

¹⁰ Ross, 96.

¹¹ Constable, 12.

¹² Ross, 105.

¹³ Wenham, 72. One should also consider 1 Cor 9 for modern-day application of this practice as Paul did.

if all they had truly came from the LORD; and it prompted the LORD to honor and bless those who offered it.”¹⁴

Other Biblical Examples of Grain Offering:

- Lev 6: 14-18 (daily offering of the high priest), Lev 14: 10-20 (cleansing the leper), Num 6: 15-19 (fulfilling Nazarite vow).
- Psalm 40: 6-8, 1 Kings 18: 36, 2 Kings 3: 20
- Luke 17: 11-14, Acts 21: 22-26

Theological Implications:

1. “God having granted forgiveness of sins through the burnt offering, the worshipper responded by giving to God some of the produce of his hands in cereal offering. It was an act of dedication and consecration to God as Savior and covenant King. It expressed not only thankfulness, but obedience and a willingness to keep the law.”¹⁵
2. Dedication is demonstrated by offering the best one has as a tribute of gratitude and thanksgiving (cf. Psalm 40: 6-8, Romans 12: 1-2, Phil 4: 18).

The Peace (Fellowship) Offering (3:1-17)(7:11-34)

The Hebrew word for this offering is most closely related to *shalom* which means health, prosperity, and peace with God.¹⁶ The sacrifice was generally celebratory in nature with regard to the good news of being at peace with God or rejoicing being delivered from a situation where peace was absent (with God or man).

“All the participants fed together on this sacrifice: the offerer, the priest, and God (symbolically). Eating together had great significance in the ancient Near East. People who ate a ritual meal together were committing themselves to one another in a strong bond of loyalty. Eating together also symbolized fellowship. In this sacrifice the offerer fed on the same offering he had made to God. In the burnt offering God got the whole sacrifice. In the meal offering God and the priest shared the sacrifice. However in the peace offering all three participants shared a part.”¹⁷

Leviticus 7 gives us more information about this offering – namely that it was an optional sacrifice and could be brought for three possible reasons:

1. Thank (Confession) Offering (7: 12-13)
2. Votive (to fulfill a vow) Offering (7: 16-17, Num 6: 17-20)
3. Freewill Offering (7: 16, 22: 18, 21)

The Ingredients

- A bull (3: 1-6), a lamb (3: 7-11) or a goat (3: 12-17).
- For thank offerings: unleavened cakes, wafers & flour mixed w/oil (7: 12)

The Ritual

- The animal was brought by the offerer to the entrance to the tent of meeting.
- Hand was placed on the head of the animal (3: 2, 8, 13) and the purpose of the offering was explained (thank, votive or freewill).
- The animal was slain and its blood was gathered and splashed on the altar (3: 2, 8, 13). Remember, no one could approach the presence of God without atonement (as discussed in the burnt offering) which is why the peace offering is somewhat similar to the burnt offering both in ingredients and in procedure.

¹⁴ Ross, 107.

¹⁵ Wenham, 71.

¹⁶ The translation of this Hebrew word is a matter of some difficulty as most commentaries will indicate in detail

¹⁷ Constable, 14.

- The offering was quartered, but only the fat that covers the entrails, the kidneys and the fat on them, and the long lobe of the liver were burned on the altar.¹⁸ (3:3-4, et al) The priest received the breast & right thigh of the animal (7:31-ff).
- The rest of the offering was to be consumed by the worshipper and his friends/family within two days (7:15-18, see also Deut 12:7). All participants in this meal had to be ceremonially clean (7:20).¹⁹

Frequency of the Offering

- Since this offering was not compulsory, there are no specific requirements as to its daily or yearly frequency

The Result/Purpose

- A soothing aroma (as previously discussed)
- "Because the peace offering is the culmination of sacrificial worship for Israel, because all the laws of atonement and purification in the Book of Leviticus lead to this point, one is not wrong in saying that the goal of the ritual is joy and gratitude in the presence of God. After all, the message is that the entrance of believers into the presence of God is by God's gracious provision of a sacrifice that brings peace with him. Believers gather in his presence to celebrate with one another that this and all other gifts are from him; and they do this by eating the communal meal together, a holy communion and not a common meal, and by sharing their faith and their bounty with one another in joy and generosity. Rightly understood, then, the law was indeed sweeter than the honey from the honeycomb."²⁰
- Consider Psalm 84. "Better is one day in your courts" is not a reference to heaven as the popular worship song often makes us think. It's a reference to the temple courts.

Other Biblical Examples of Peace Offering:

- Thank (confession) Offering: Psalm 56:12-13, Psalm 100
- Votive Offering: Jacob's vow at Bethel (Gen 28:18-21), the birth of Samuel (1 Samuel 1)
- Freewill Offering: Exod 35:29, Ezra 1:4, 8:28, Psalm 54:6
- Other Peace Offerings that are unspecific: Exod 24:5, Deut 12, 27, Psalm 26, 50, 54, 107, 116

Theological Implications:

1. "The culmination of all worship ritual is when believers share a common meal (from the altar) in the presence of God in celebration of the benefits of the covenant they share."²¹
2. Peace with God is not only possible, but enjoyed! (cf. Romans 5:1-8)

Tough Question:

1. What bearing should these sacrifices have on the way we approach the LORD in worship today? Are they irrelevant because we no longer have to offer sacrifices or do they have something to teach us about the way the LORD should be worshipped?
2. What does God smell like (to an Israelite)? ☺

¹⁸ The obvious question here is, "why these parts?" The text is not specific as to why, so commentators only offer suggestions as to plausible meanings – most of which are not worth going into here.

¹⁹ We will discuss the topics of cleanliness and uncleanness in a later study

²⁰ Ross, 121.

²¹ Ross, 120.

Offerings

Offerings that Restore His Pleasure :: Chapters 4-7

Although similar in some regards, the final two types of sacrifices are different from the first three in that they are not soothing aroma sacrifices. Another major difference in these two offerings is that they are focused more on the reason for sacrifice rather than the object to be sacrificed. This is most noticeable in the organization of chapters 4 & 5 compared with chapters 1-3. The first three chapters are divided up by the types of offerings allowed. The fourth and fifth chapters are divided by the types of offenses committed.

The Sin (Purification) Offering (4:1 - 5:13)

This offering is called a "sin offering" because the Hebrew word *hattat* means 'sin.' According to commentators, however, that can be misleading because nearly all the other sacrifices deal with sin to some extent. To conclude that this sacrifice is the one that deals primarily with sin and atonement is inaccurate. Hence, the more distinctive title of "purification offering" is often used because it is focused on purifying the barriers sin and impurity create for the worshipper and the place of worship.

"The point is that sin and its effects defiled God's sanctuary and that such defilement put people in mortal danger should they enter the sanctuary in that condition. Someone guilty of sins needed forgiveness not so much because of the act, but because of the consequences of the sin – they defiled the sanctuary. This is why throughout Lev. 4 the blood of the sacrifice is applied to various sancta in the sanctuary."¹

It should also be noted that there are some sins that the Sin Offering did not cover. Sins of open defiance (with a 'high hand') were not included in the scope of the offering. "The Levitical code assumed that this kind of sin would not characterize the worshipper of the LORD; and so the purification offering did not cover sins of the high hand."²

The Reason for Sacrifice

- Unintentional sin (ch 4) – not premeditated or intentional
- Sins of omission (5:1-13) – an act of carelessness without defiance
- Physical impurities (ch 12-15)³
- Whatever the particular situation for the individual or congregation, the primary motivation for the sacrifice was a discovery of the sin and remorse for it.
- "The sin offering covered only sins committed unintentionally. This category included sins done by mistake, in error, through oversight or ignorance, through lack of consideration, or by carelessness. That is, this sacrifice covered sins that sprang from the weakness of the flesh (cf. Num. 15:27-29). It did not cover sins committed with a "high hand," namely, in haughty, defiant rebellion against God. Such a sinner was "cut off from among his people" (Num. 15:30-31). Many reliable commentators interpret this phrase to mean the offender suffered death. Not all deliberate sins were "high handed," however, only those committed in defiant rebellion against God."⁴

The Frequency of the Offering

- Numbers 28 & 29: Regularly offered on the Festival of the New Moon, each day of Passover, each day of the Feast of Weeks, on the Feast of Trumpets, each day of the Feast of Booths, and on the Day of Atonement (see also Exod 29-30).

¹ Ross, 124-125. And, as Constable says, "Sin does not endanger God, it endangers humans." (Lev 15:31)

² Ross, 130.

³ We will deal with these specifically when we get to ch's 12-15, but it is important to note here that a "sin" offering was offered for physical impurities (i.e. after childbirth, healing of skin diseases, etc) which, in most cases, were not sinful.

⁴ Constable, 18.

The Ingredients

- Bull (4: 4, 14), goat (4:23), lamb (4:32), doves/pigeons (5: 7), or a tenth of an ephah⁵ of fine flour (5: 11) depending on your financial status.

The Ritual

- This offering began much like the others: bringing of the animal to the entrance of the tent, laying hands on the offering while stating the reason for bringing it (in this case an open confession of the sin 5:5), and then slaying it.
- "This offering was not a soothing aroma. It was for expiation, namely, to make amends. The offerer ritually charged the sacrificial animal with his sin (cf. Isa. 53:5; 1 Pet. 2:24). The animal had to be without defect (cf. 1 Pet. 2:22). The offerer executed God's judgment for sin on the sacrificial substitute when he slew it. In every sin offering an innocent substitute replaced the sinner (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21)."⁶
- Some of the blood was collected in a basin (4:5) and the rest of it was allowed to drain at the foot of the altar (4:7). The blood was used differently depending upon who the worshipper was . . .
 - The anointed priest or the entire congregation (4:3-12, 13-21) – the blood was sprinkled seven times on the veil of the sanctuary and the horns of the incense altar.
 - A tribal leader or commoner (4:22-26, 27-35) – the blood was not taken inside the holy place but was placed on the horns of the bronze altar of burnt offering.
 - "The purification offering dealt with the pollution caused by sin. If sin polluted the land, it defiled particularly the house where God dwelt. The seriousness of the pollution depended upon the seriousness of the sin, which in turn related to the status of the sinner..."⁷
- The blood was not splashed on the sides of the altar as with the soothing aroma sacrifices. It was placed on the horns of the altars and then poured out in the base of the trench of the high altar. For the most influential people, it was sprinkled on the veil "suggesting that the covenant relationship itself had been endangered."⁸
- The fat portions of the animal were placed on the altar as a soothing aroma for the LORD (4:31)
- After the ritual was complete it is assumed that the veil and the vessels on which the blood was sprinkled or smeared were completely cleaned since they were contaminated by sin.⁹
- The remainder of the animal was carried outside the camp & burned (unless the sacrifice was a grain offering or brought by a commoner in which case the priest could eat the remainder of the flour/animal – see 5:11-3 & 6:26-ff) likely symbolizing the complete removal of impurity (see also John 12:3-5). What a waste, right? The least valuable portions of the animal are used & the most valuable parts are disposed of.

Like the other Levitical sacrifices, "the ritual alone did not cleanse sin. Forgiveness came with the acknowledgement of and remorse for sin (5:5). Performing the ritual was necessary for the full restoration of forgiveness; it purified the sanctuary and made the restoration possible. Bringing this offering was an expression of faith in God's willingness to forgive and restore the sinner who comes before him with a repentant heart. Not to follow through on the ritual was great folly, for this left the sanctuary defiled and the relationship not restored. The individual in

⁵ Wenham says that the exact size of an ephah is unknown, but suggests that a tenth of an ephah is about 2lbs.

⁶ Constable, 17.

⁷ Wenham, 96.

⁸ Ross, 135.

⁹ Ross, 135. I could not find biblical support for this.

that case had only the sense of relief that human forgiveness can bring; there was no clear response from heaven that all was well once again."¹⁰

The Result/Purpose

- Purification: (4:8-12, 19-21, 26, 31, 35) "Sin defiles men and particularly God's sanctuary, and the proper means of purification is animal blood. If there is no purification, death will follow (Lev 10:2)."¹¹ The result of the sacrifice was the purification of the worshipper and also the purification of the sanctuary.
- Atonement: (4:26, 31, 35) as previously discussed
- Fellowship restored: It was now safe for the worshipper to enter into the presence of God because God had granted purification.

Other Biblical Examples of Purification Offering:

- 2 Chron 29:21-24, Ezra 6:17, Psalm 40:6, 130:3-4, Hebrews 9:22, 1 John 1:7-9

Theological Implications:

1. Sin & defilement pollute people, places & things.
2. Sinful or unclean people cannot be in the presence of God – not because God is in any kind of danger, but because it would mean certain death for the worshipper.
3. "Unintentional sin is just as much sin in God's sight as deliberate wrongdoing."¹²
4. Sin is costly – both in the fact that a sacrifice had to be made and also in that they varied based on the status of the person who sinned. The result of sin was the same for all people, however.
5. Forgiveness & purification are made possible only through blood and are available to all who confess their sin.
6. Sin and defilement must be dealt with as soon as it becomes known.

The Guilt (Reparation) Offering (5:14 - 6:7)

This is the final offering that is explained in Leviticus. The Hebrew word that is translated as 'guilt' is *asham*. It can certainly mean guilt, but it also carries with it a tone of 'reparation.' Since other sacrifices deal with guilt as well, 'reparation' is helpfully associated with this sacrifice to assure clear distinction between this offering and the purification offering.¹³

The Reason for Sacrifice

- Unintentional sin against the LORD's holy things (5:15) such as eating holy food, failing to fulfill a dedicatory vow, or the covenant oath itself.¹⁴
- Someone suspects that he has sinned, but is not sure how (5:17-19)
- Cheating one's neighbor and swearing falsely about it (perjury) (6:2-3).¹⁵
- "The Israelites were to offer it when they had wronged someone—either God (5:15, 17) or God and man (6:2). Every trespass against one's neighbor involved a trespass against God, but not every trespass against God involved a trespass against one's neighbor (cf. Ps. 51:1-4). Even though the offender may not have been aware of his trespass, he was still guilty. When he became aware of his sin or even suspected his guilt, he had to bring this offering. The repentance reduced the guilt of the crime to that of an involuntary act."¹⁶

The Frequency of the Offering

- The offering itself is circumstantial as indicated and this offering was brought as necessary and not required on a regular basis.

The Ingredients

¹⁰ Ross, 133-134.

¹¹ Wenham, 94.

¹² Wenham, 103.

¹³ Constable, 20.

¹⁴ Wenham speculates these as possibilities because the text is unspecific, but there are some biblical examples: 2 Chron 26:16-18, 28:19, 36:14, Joshua 7:1, 22:20.

¹⁵ Wenham cites Exodus 22:7-ff as an example of people 'swearing by God' to settle disputes where proof was lacking.

¹⁶ Constable, 21.

- a ram (5:14) or a male lamb (14:12)
- This is a clear distinction between the guilt and the sin offerings. A male lamb or ram could never be offered as a sin offering.

The Ritual

- "The ritual side of the reparation offering is described much more briefly than is the case with the other sacrifices, and it is difficult to be sure of the exact procedure."¹⁷
- The ram or lamb was brought to the altar and slain and its blood was applied to the sides of the altar (7:1-2).
- The animal was quartered and the fat and entrails of the animal were burned on the altar (7:3-5)
- The priests could keep the remainder of the animal to cook and eat in a holy place (7:6-7) just as with the purification offering.
- Depending upon the reason for bringing the offering, there were also animal and monetary elements of restitution brought for this offering (5:14-6:7).

The Result/Purpose

- Reparation / Restitution: "The offending Israelite had to pay restitution to the injured party in some cases (5:16; 6:5). The guilty party had to restore whatever the victim of his sin had lost. In addition to restitution the offender had to add 20 percent (5:16; 6:5). God considered the fifth part a debt the offender owed because of his offense, not a gift to the victim. The victim ended up better off in one sense than he was before the offense."¹⁸
- "It seems likely that atonement for deliberate sins was possible where there was evidence of true repentance, demonstrated by remorse (feeling guilty), full restitution (v. 4), and confession of sin (cf. Num. 5:6-8)."¹⁹

Other Biblical Examples of Reparation Offering:

- Specifically: 1 Samuel 6, Prov 14:9, Isaiah 53:10
- Alluded to: Matthew 3:8, 5:23-24, 6:12, Luke 19:8-9

Theological Implications:

1. Sin defrauds people & God of what is rightfully due to them.
2. Reparation is evidence of true repentance – which, in this case, is a pre-requisite for forgiveness offered by the sacrifice. Remorse alone, however, is not sufficient for cleansing – animal sacrifice and reparation are required as well.

"The sacrificial system therefore presents different models or analogies to describe the effects of sin and the way of remedying them. The burnt offering uses a personal picture: of man the guilty sinner who deserves to die for his sin and the animal dying in his place. God accepts the animal as a ransom for man. The sin offering uses a medical model: sin makes the world so dirty that God can no longer dwell there. The blood of the animal disinfects the sanctuary in order that God may continue to be present with his people. The reparation offering presents a commercial picture of sin. Sin is a debt which man incurs against God. The debt is paid through the offered animal."²⁰

Tough Question:

1. How does Jesus' death fulfill all five types of sacrifices? Be specific!
2. We've been saying that this was grace through faith, but isn't the slaughtering of an animal for sanctification a work? If not, how is it an act of faith?

¹⁷ Wenham, 105.

¹⁸ Constable, 22.

¹⁹ Wenham, 109.

²⁰ Wenham, 111.

Offerings

His Kingdom of Priests :: Chapters 8-10

The first seven chapters of Leviticus establish the sacrificial system through which atonement and purification were made available as a part of the LORD's program of redemption for his chosen people. However, until Leviticus chapter 8, there is not an ordained priesthood to speak of that can carry out the sacrificial system that the LORD has prescribed. Chapters 8-10 are a narrative of that process that flows directly out of God's commands to the people in Exodus 29:43-46.

Until now, Israel really hadn't 'existed' as a nation independently. Israel grew up in the shadow and polytheistic culture of the Egyptians for 400 years and, now, freed from their bondage, were well on their way towards experiencing corporately what God had promised to Abraham years earlier in Genesis 12-15. Now that the nation had been redeemed, the abiding presence of the LORD in the center of the camp and the availability of atonement for sin were the next steps in God's unfolding plan of redemption. The inauguration of the priests was a vital part of this process.

"The institution of the Aaronic priesthood constituted the fulfillment of God's commands recorded in Exodus 28—29 and 40. Almost every verse in chapter 8 is a quotation or allusion to commands first given in Exodus 29."¹

What Is A Priest?

- The Hebrew word for priest is *kohen* and is first used of Melchizedek in Gen 14:18. The root of the word means to mediate or officiate.² The word itself is used 741 times in Hebrew Bible – 25% of those occurrences are found in Leviticus. As such, they were not supposed to be like anything else – they were to be a reflection of the God whom they served.
- Within the Nation of Israel the priests were responsible for four main areas:³
 - Revealing the will of God using the Urim & Thummim (until the advent of prophets within the nation)
 - Teaching the law & giving advice on holy living (Deut 33:9-10)
 - Intercessory prayer & mediation
 - Performing the sacrificial rites
- "The main functions of priestly service were designed to bring about sanctification by making the people holy before God so that God could dwell with them and they with him."⁴
- There was also a hierarchical structure present for the priesthood. The High Priest was the spiritual head of the nation. Below him were the other priests. Below the priests were the people of the nation (who were called to be a kingdom of priests – Exod 19:6). It is easy to see this same hierarchy present in the arrangement of the tabernacle: courtyard = people, tent of meeting = priests, holy of holies = high priest.

The Anointing of a Priest (8:1-13)

- 8:6 – washing with water for a Israelite was and is an outward cleansing that represents a desire for spiritual cleansing.⁵
- 8:7-9 – Describe the uniform of the high priest, Aaron. There is not enough time to go into detail about the meaning/significance of each item of the uniform. What is important to understand is "a uniform draws attention to the office or function of a

¹ Constable, 28.

² Strong's Hebrew Dictionary.

³ See Ross, 203.

⁴ Ross, 203.

⁵ c.f. Exodus 29:4-6, 30:17-21, 1 Cor 6:11, & Luke 4:18 with Matt 3:15

person. It emphasizes his job rather than his name.”⁶ The elaborate nature of the priestly garments – especially in those times – would have set apart the person wearing them from all the people. The elaborate nature of the garments also served as a constant reminder (as they were removed and reapplied) of their role as priest.

- 8:10-13 – Describe the anointing of the priests (see also Exodus 30:26-29 & 40:9-11).
 - The Hebrew word ‘anointed’ is *masah* which has the same root as the adjectival form *masiah* which in English is messiah.⁷
 - Traditionally throughout the Hebrew Bible, the anointing is an act of separation unto the Lord as well as a symbolism for the presence/activity of the Holy Spirit.⁸
 - Both the holy elements in the tabernacle and the priests themselves were anointed because they were to be used in the LORD’s service unlike any other vessel or person. It is important to note that Aaron and his sons did not want to be anointed – they were chosen to be anointed. This was an important fact that both the congregation and the priest needed to recognize.

The Offerings for a Priest (8:14-30)

- As we have been learning, no one enters the presence of God without an offering. Priests are no different (at least in the Hebrew Bible). In fact, because they are the ones mediating the offerings, they must make doubly sure they are without the stain of sin or impurity. Three sacrifices were made at the ordination ceremony:
 - A Purification Offering (8:14-17) of a bull removed the pollution of sin from the priests as well as from the sanctuary that had been defiled by them.
 - A Burnt Offering (8:18-21) of a ram is made for the atonement of the priests thereby restoring right relationship with the LORD.
 - A Peace Offering (8:22-30) of a ram is made symbolizing the connection between sacrifice and priesthood and, thus, that Aaron was now ordained to offer sacrifices. The placement of the blood is unusual but is most likely symbolic of the consecration of the priests ears (to hear the voice of God), hands (to do God’s work), and feet (to walk in his ways).⁹
- Only after these sacrifices are completed are the priests ready for their final step. . .

The Consecration of a Priest (8:31-36)

- The removal of sin and atonement still did not make the priests fit for service in the tabernacle. The final step of consecration required time – not sacrifice.
- “The repetition for seven days stressed the completeness and perfection of the process of being installed in ministry. The priests underwent this weeklong rite of passage to move from one life to the entirely new life of the priesthood. The drawn-out yet complete process of the week impressed upon them the importance of entering and following the ministry as obedient servants of the LORD.”¹⁰
 - “A man may defile himself in a moment, but sanctification and the removal of uncleanness is generally a slower process.”¹¹
 - If the priest is not obedient to the commands of the LORD, then who will be? If the priest is not sanctified, then how can he mediate sanctification for the people? If the priest is not consecrated, what makes him a priest?

The Obedience of a Priest (9:1-21)

- With the inauguration of the priests now complete, their time of service began immediately. God had given his instructions and now that his priests were ordained for service, it was time to begin the sacrificial system for the people. Their service,

⁶ Wenham, 138.

⁷ Ross, 211

⁸ 1 Samuel 10:1, 16:13, Isaiah 61:1, Zech 4:1-6

⁹ See Wenham, 143. Also, can you find any correlation between the order of these sacrifices and how Paul organizes the entire book of Romans? Though Wenham addresses this idea, Ross’ treatment of it is more helpful. Ross, 229.

¹⁰ Ross, 213.

¹¹ Wenham, 144.

however, had to be in complete obedience to the Lord's commands – *just as Moses had modeled for them in chapter 8.*

- NOTE: the word 'commanded' is repeated 20 times in these 3 chapters.
- "Worship has always been an act of obedience, for the word of the LORD calls the covenant people to come and appear before him. And when they come into his courts, they must do so properly."¹²
- 9:2 – a bull calf: "Jewish commentators have long noted the irony of this command to Aaron."¹³
- 9:4,6 – the entire reason the sacrifices were being made is stated twice. The 'glory of the Lord' is euphemistic for the abiding presence of the LORD in their midst. If he was not present, what was the point of sacrifice? How were they to know they had been accepted by him?
- 9:8-21 – Look! Perfect obedience to the commands of the LORD! No deviation, no improvisation, no cutting corners, no substitutes. Complete obedience. With the exception of a reparation offering – Aaron offers every type of sacrifice without error.

The Blessing of a Priest (9:22-24)

- After all the sacrifices were placed on the altar – there remained only one final act to complete the rite of the first sacrifices made on behalf of the people: the entrance into the holy place. "Along with the ritual of the sacrifices made for purification and atonement, a mediating high priest was required to take blood into the innermost shrine and complete the process of its intercessory work. There was no other way for the people to gain access into the presence of God except by this representative. There was no other way that the blessing of God could be given to the people except by this mediator."¹⁴
- 9:23 – "Blessed them." Once they emerged from the tent, Aaron blessed the people – perhaps the first reference to the traditional Aaronic blessing quoted in Numbers 6:23-ff.
 - "For Aaron and Moses to pronounce the sacerdotal blessing was to declare God's gift or gracious bounty for the people. What was that blessing? At the very least it declared that the system was working, that the way of access into God's presence had indeed been opened. The people had previously pulled back in fear at the sight of the presence of the LORD. Now they had a high priest who actually went into the presence of the LORD God on their behalf and came out with the good news that intercession had been made, the blood had been applied, and atonement had been completed."¹⁵
 - His blessing was verbal, but also functional as well. Without his service, their right relationship with God would never be realized. A priest's blessing of the people is always multi-faceted.
 - The raising of hands was significant and was something only the priest could do when offering a blessing to the people. Bering that in mind, it's interesting to consider Luke 24:50-51.
- 9:24 – The consumption of the offering was indeed proof that God had accepted it and was pleased by it.¹⁶ It also signified their obedience to his commandments. He promised that their obedience would yield his presence – and it did.
 - "On the basis of the direct revelation in Lev. 9, people knew that the sanctuary was God's dwelling place among them. They could look to God in time of need and know that he was with them. Without this truth, the Book of Leviticus loses its meaning."¹⁷

¹² Ross, 221.

¹³ Wenham, 148. See also Exodus 32.

¹⁴ Ross, 223.

¹⁵ Ross, 224. His aside here on blessing was eye-opening and helpful, but too detailed to go into within this study.

¹⁶ Note the 3 other occasions of this: Judges 13:15-ff, 2 Chr. 7, 1 Kings 18:38-ff

¹⁷ Ross, 227.

The Sin of a Priest (ch 10)

- 10:1-3 – Nadab and Abihu were Aaron's two eldest sons (Ex. 6:23). They had been up to Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24:1), had just been ordained as priests of the LORD (Lev. 8:30), and fallen on their faces as the glory of the LORD appeared to them (Lev. 9:23). They were two of only five people in all the Nation of Israel (at this point) who were ordained as priests of the most high God.
 - The 'strange fire' they brought as an offering is unknown. Whatever the case, it was unauthorized and, therefore, not pleasing to the LORD.
 - The same fire that earlier had been an awe-inspiring re-assurance of atonement and right relationship with God now consumes Nadab & Abihu as a fire of judgment. In all likelihood, it doesn't seem as though the two were malicious in their intent – simply careless. . . not only with God's commands, but also in revering his holiness and glory.
- 10:4-11 – Sin affects the entire assembly – especially those closest to you. However that doesn't give license for others to disregard the commandments of God – even in the midst of shock & sorrow. As priests, they would defile themselves by touching the bodies – so they were not allowed even to mourn their family members just to make sure the assembly didn't misunderstand the severity of the situation.
 - "The surviving priests, even though they were brothers, had to identify themselves entirely with God's viewpoint and not arouse any suspicion that they condoned their brothers' sins."¹⁸
 - "Those set aside for service to the holy God must sanctify the LORD before the people by how they conduct themselves in ministry."¹⁹
- "In many parts of the Church the biblical view of divine judgment is conveniently forgotten or supposed to be something that passed away with the OT. Heine's famous last words, 'God will forgive me. That's his job,' have become the unexpressed axiom of much modern theology."²⁰
- "People are ever prone to think that their way, their fire, their ideas, are better than God's primitive or unpopular ways. And the temptation does not usually remain with the nonessentials but quickly strikes at the heart of the faith. Rather than believe and obey, some spiritual leaders try to improve and innovate, to make new procedures and rulings – but too often sacrifices the basic elements of the faith for something more pleasing to them and more in harmony with other religions."²¹

Tough Question:

1. Understanding the role and necessity of priests in Leviticus 8-10, how was God expecting the entire Nation of Israel to function as priests (Exodus 19:6)?
2. Why don't people get consumed by the fire of the LORD anymore?

¹⁸ Wenham, 157.

¹⁹ Ross, 238.

²⁰ Wenham, 153.

²¹ Ross, 239. This, of course, is most clearly illustrated in the story of the fall of Adam and Eve and, thus, the corruption of all of humanity and sinful state of human nature that never seeks the will of God.

Offerings

His Holy Nation :: Chapters 11-15

Nadab and Abihu learned the hard way that the way God has provided for his people to have communion with him is available – but only on his terms. There was no room for ‘strange fire’ or other improvisation. As priests, it was imperative for them to know and obey this way so that the people could function in the world as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Chapters 11-15 are built upon the foundation of the story we have just heard and also show us the need for the next story in chapter 16 about the Day of Atonement. God’s people were to be holy, but they didn’t always behave that way. When they weren’t holy, they were either clean or unclean and it was important to keep those distinctions clear:

- “You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them by Moses.”¹
- The distinction is *vital* important to the life of Israel because only the holy can come into the presence of God. If someone did not know whether they were clean or unclean and approached the LORD – it would mean death for the individual because God can never be common or profane.
- “These chapters on purity help explain what uncleanness means and teach how the holiness of God requires cleansing and purification from the contamination of this life.”²

The laws in chapters 11-15 were designed to “prevent Israel from being influenced by the beliefs of the neighboring nations and to preserve them from the degrading defilements and vices of the Canaanites.”³ These laws also “express God’s will for his people at a particular time, but as the NT makes clear they were not intended to apply forever or to Gentiles (Mark 7:14-ff; Acts 10; 15; 1 Cor 10:23-ff). If we can see why such regulations were first imposed on Israel, we may discover both why they were abrogated under the new covenant and what they can still teach us today.”⁴

Unclean & Clean :: Holy & Common⁵

“In Hebrew thinking everything was either clean or unclean, holy or common. But what exactly constituted holiness and uncleanness? How do the different concepts relate to each other? Can something be holy and unclean at the same time?”⁶

Unclean (*tame*): “commonly described what was contaminated, diseased, or impure; and when defilement was the reason for someone being unclean, then no sin was involved and so no forgiveness was required. The only thing needed was washing for cleansing and the sanctifying ritual for reentry into the sanctuary.”⁷ It is important to understand that sins were always unclean, but not the only occasion that could make a person unclean.

- “The English word *unclean* is so freighted with negative connotations that one should try to find another translation, or else take time to explain that unclean does not necessarily mean sinful or loathsome.”⁸
- Whatever is unclean was also contagious. Unclean things and people could contaminate clean things and people – the reverse, however, was not true.

¹ Leviticus 10:10 (see also Ezekiel 22:26)

² Constable, 38.

³ Ross, 250.

⁴ Wenham, 162.

⁵ Wenham, 19. His treatment of these terms is the standard for most commentators and all diagrams are his.

⁶ Wenham, 19.

⁷ Ross, 244.

⁸ Ross, 244.

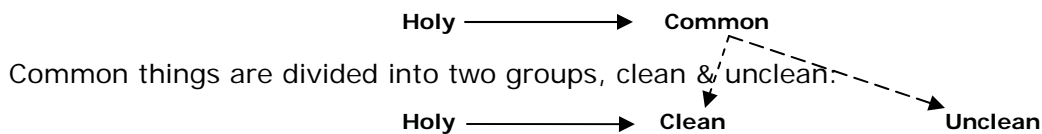
Clean (*tahor*): is, conversely, surrounds the meanings of normal, healthy, pure, natural, and sinless. 'Pure' gold, for example, had to be used in the construction of the tabernacle (Ex 25:11). The use of water for cleansing also reinforces the picture of the word.

Holy (*qados*): is an essential character trait of God's. There is never a time when he is not holy nor is there a possibility of it. The traditional definition of the word is to be set apart. Naturally, if something is not set apart, it is common. God's people can be holy like he is holy (11:44-45) when they are called to be so & obey.

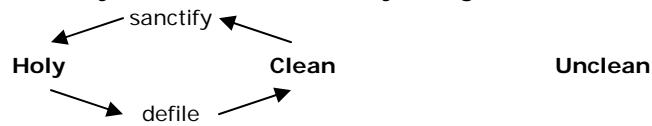
- "Holiness is not simply acquired by ritual action or moral behavior. Leviticus stresses that there are two aspects to sanctification, a divine act and human actions. God sanctifies and man also sanctifies. Only those people whom God calls to be holy can become holy in reality (Num 16:7, Lev 20:8, 21:8)."⁹

Common (*hol*): is the antonym of *qados* and can be translated as common or profane. It encompasses everything that is not holy. Everything that is not holy is either clean or unclean. A holy thing could be profaned and thus render it no longer holy – but not necessarily unclean (see 1 Sam 21:4-5).

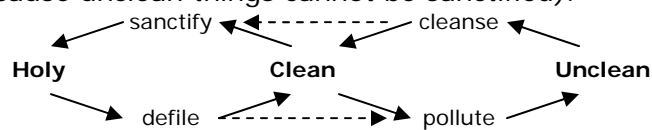
So, everything that is not holy is common (some translations have 'profane'):



Clean things become holy when they are sanctified & holy things can be defiled and become common:



Pollution degrades the clean into the unclean and unclean can only become clean through purification or cleansing (because unclean things cannot be sanctified):



The unclean & the holy are two states which must NEVER come into contact with each other!!

"Through the natural course of life, defilement and disease were frequent, almost daily. The LORD made the provision for the people to return to his holiness; but the people had to show their faith by complying with his laws and performing the prescribed ritual."¹⁰

Chapters 11-15 seem to be organized by the length of time a person is unclean as a result of defilement:

- Chapter 11: Dietary laws (unclean for hours)
- Chapter 12: Childbirth laws (unclean for month)
- Chapter 13 & 14: Skin disease & mold laws (unclean for years)
- Chapter 15: Laws regarding discharges (hours, weeks, or years)

⁹ Wenham, 22

¹⁰ Ross, 246.

Dietary Laws – Chapter 11¹¹

"The dietary laws were designed to make Israel distinct from the other nations, associating unclean animals with the nations and clean animals with Israel. They legislated that the diet should follow the order of creation in which God made a number of distinctions. Thus, by their diet, the people were imitating the holiness of God and living according to the design of the Creator of all life."¹²

11:1-23: Distinctions between clean animals and unclean

The division of clean & unclean animals was not new information as Genesis chapters 1 & 7 indicate. Thus, it should be assumed that an animal was clean due mostly to its created order as 11:46-47 implies:

- Animals of the heavens: winged creatures that did not kill to eat
- Animals of the waters: scaly creatures that had fins
- Animals of the dry land: four-footed creatures that chewed the cud, that had cloven (divided) hooves, and which did not kill to eat.

Remember, clean is a reflection of normalcy, so these animals were a reflection of the most general and normal representatives for each class – who did not deal with blood in their eating. Also, just because an animal was unclean for food did not negate its usefulness in other aspects of life.

11:24-43: Dealing with defilement from unclean animals

All dead animals were unclean (unless they were sacrifices) and were not to be touched. Defilement was only temporary and lasted only until the evening.

11:44-47: Holiness must be followed

The holy God has redeemed his people and demanded that they imitate his holiness. The laws made a distinction between clean and unclean just as God is calling for his people to be distinct from the nations. Every time they ate, the Israelites were reminded of their holy calling and their holy God. Thus, their separation unto God was daily demonstrated in their obedience.

- "Since he who called you is holy, so be holy in all that you do." 1 Peter 1:15
- "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Cor 10:31

Childbirth Laws – Chapter 12

"The law is short & simple. When a baby is born, the mother is contagiously unclean for one or two weeks, *as unclean as she is during her menstrual period*. This is more fully explained in 15:19-24. After the period of purification is over (40 days for a boy, 80 days for a girl), the mother must bring a purification offering and a burnt offering."¹³

"It is not the birth itself that makes the woman unclean, but it is the discharge of that follows childbirth that make the woman unclean (since her discharges can last 2-6 weeks)."¹⁴

Skin Disease & Mold Laws – Chapters 13-14

"Skin disorders were examined by the priest to determine if the carriers should be declared unclean and relegated to life outside the camp until recovery of health."¹⁵

"Many translations and commentaries have regarded the legislation in these chapters as

¹¹ We could spend a week on each chapter in 11-15, but in the interest of time and overview – we will only emphasize the high points and big ideas of each chapter as they relate to the book as a whole. How cool that my 11th footnote goes right next to chapter 11 too!

¹² Ross, 255.

¹³ Wenham, 187. You see this in the story of Mary & Joseph in Luke 2:22-24.

¹⁴ Wenham, 188.

¹⁵ Ross, 278.

dealing with leprosy, but this is misleading. The confusion has arisen because the term "leprosy" appears in most English texts in these chapters, and English readers automatically think that what we know as modern leprosy is in view. However as the chapters unfold, it becomes increasingly clear that what is in view is not modern leprosy (Hansen's disease).¹⁶

Chapters 13 and 14 indicate strongly that bodily diseases and mold are not normal, and, thus, those who have been contaminated by them are not allowed in the presence of the LORD. Nevertheless, God still provided them a way of purification through atonement.¹⁷

Laws Regarding Discharges – Chapter 15

"God demanded that those defiled by chronic discharges or seminal or menstrual discharges separate themselves until their condition changed, bathe for ritual purification, and bring the appropriate sacrifices for the ritual, in order that the people might not die by defiling the tabernacle with their impurity."¹⁸

The chapter is divided equally between men (15:2-18) and women (15:19-30) showing that both genders are under the same predicament of being an unclean vessel.

"The world into which the Israelites were moving had to have some significance for these laws. God was saying very clearly that sex, any aspect of sex, any bodily functions connection with sex, had to be kept completely apart from the holy place. He was not saying that sex and bodily functions were dirty or sinful. . . The law was simply restricting sexual acts from the sanctuary, keeping the boundaries from the physical and the holy."¹⁹

Implications for Today

"Under the new covenant, believers are free to eat foods that were formerly prohibited, and they are not prevented from worshipping in local assemblies because of pregnancy or mildew in their houses. The many unclean things that required cleansing under the Levitical system require no such ritual now. However, those laws revealed eternal truth and so remain intact: without holiness it is impossible to see the LORD. Thus, the New Testament affirms that nothing unclean will enter the heavenly sanctuary, the presence of the holy LORD God."²⁰

- This fact is illustrated and underscored by Peter in 1 Peter 1:14-15. Why else would Peter invoke a verse from Leviticus after mentioning that we have already been sprinkled by the blood of Christ?
- "It is folly – it is dishonest to argue that because the purification regulations of Old Testament Israel were fulfilled by the death of Christ, the sins listed in Leviticus are no longer sins."²¹

Tough Questions:

1. How does chapter 11 give you insight into Peter's vision in Acts 10?
2. Why is childbirth an unclean event when God commanded humanity to be fruitful and multiply?

¹⁶ Constable, 46-47

¹⁷ Consider Matthew 26:6, Mark 1:40-45, Luke 17:11-19

¹⁸ Ross, 305. Consider the story of the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years in Mark 5:25-34

¹⁹ Ross, 307-308.

²⁰ Ross, 246. His perspective on these 5 chapters is excellent and should be read by the teacher if time permits.

²¹ Ross, 247. He makes an important point here – especially regarding homosexuality. "To argue that because the laws of the sacrifices came to an end, then what they covered is no longer a violation, sounds profound, but it is wrong."

Offerings

His Gift of Atonement :: Chapters 16-17

Unclean happens. It's not normal, but it is somewhat a process of being human – and fallen. It is imperative for the people to know whether or not they were clean or unclean so they wouldn't defile the sanctuary when they approached it for worship (Lev 10: 10) as Nadab and Abihu learned the hard way. Despite their obedient living, however, it was nearly impossible for each person to account for *every* defilement and sin committed on a daily basis. So, once a year, God called for a general atonement for all sins and defilements of all people, places and priests. That day is called the Day of Atonement, or, Yom Kippur.

- "The Day of Atonement took place six months after the Passover. These two great festivals were half a year apart. Whereas the Passover was a day of great rejoicing, the Day of Atonement was a time of great solemnity in Israel."¹
- *Kippur* is a Hebrew word that essentially means 'to cover over.' The word *kapar* occurs more in Leviticus than in any other book of Hebrew Bible.²

The Day of Atonement (Chapter 16)

It is important to note that the Day of Atonement, as do all the laws of Leviticus, occur within a specific historical context (as 16:1 reveals). "They were revealed to Moses to prevent any other priests meeting an untimely death when they served in the tabernacle. This shows that Leviticus is basically concerned to relate the history of Israel, in the course of which the Law was given."³

16:1-2 – The Context of the Day of Atonement

- Notice that God is still revealing things to Moses even though Aaron has already been inaugurated as High Priest. This is a strong indication of Moses' superiority even to the High Priest as the mediator of the covenant between God and Israel.
- Atonement: "Christian scholars tend to think of the term *atonement* as equal to *redemption* in the salvific sense, which is fine if New Testament doctrine is being discussed. But in Israel an atoning sacrifice was not the condition of a relationship to the LORD; rather, it was offered as a means of strengthening the relationship that already existed. The existing tie between God and worshiper was renewed and maintained through atonement. Thus, atonement is closer to the New Testament doctrine of sanctification. But it serves typologically to foreshadow the atoning work of Christ, which is the ultimate sanctifying sacrifice. Indeed, the New Testament uses 'sanctify' and related words for regeneration, ongoing sanctification, and ultimate glorification, for all have the characteristic of making someone holy."⁴
 - Atonement is the entire process of turning away of the potential wrath of God to a substitute which results in the reconciliation of the worshipper with God. An Israelite could experience forgiveness and purification, but it was not permanent. The next time they sinned, they would be under the potential wrath of God again.
- The Mercy Seat: "Inside the holy of holies was the Ark of the Covenant; and on the ark was a covering or lid commonly referred to as the mercy seat. The item was a solid gold slab measuring 44" by 26" with statues of angels on either end, their wings touching in the middle. The Hebrew word *kapporet* ('place of propitiation'; related to *kipper*) is translated in the Septuagint with *hilasterion* (same Greek word used for propitiation in Romans 3:25). It referred to the place in the holy of holies where the blood sacrifice was made effectual, where God was present with his people, and from where he revealed himself to them."⁵

¹ Constable, 60.

² *Vines Complete Expository Dictionary*, 10.

³ Wenham, 228-229. He continues: "We tend to think of Leviticus as a law book, not as a history book. But the reverse is really the truth...The history provides a setting for the laws, not vice versa" (129).

⁴ See footnote in Ross, 92-93.

⁵ Ross, 317.

- *kipper* [Hebrew] → *hilasterion* [Greek] → *propitiation* [English]
- Propitiation is the process whereby a righteous God renders an unrighteous person righteous in a just way, thus allowing God to demonstrate his love and mercy towards the sinner righteously. The just way that God has provided for unrighteous sinners happens through the sacrifice of a vicarious substitute – thereby expiating the guilt of the sinner upon the sacrifice. Thus, Romans 3:26.
- Expiation makes propitiation possible as it is the act whereby guilt is justly dealt with on a substitute. It differs from propitiation in that it has nothing to do with relationship or the staying of wrath – it is actually the enforcement of wrath.
- Summary: “Christ’s work consisted of suffering and obedience, and these were vicarious, i.e., were not merely for our benefit, but were in our stead, as the suffering and obedience of our vicar, or substitute. Our guilt is expiated by the punishment which our vicar bore, and thus God is rendered propitious, i.e., it is now consistent with his justice to manifest his love to transgressors. Expiation has been made for sin, i.e., it is covered. The means by which it is covered is vicarious satisfaction, and the result of its being covered is atonement or reconciliation. To make atonement is to do that by virtue of which alienation ceases and reconciliation is brought about.”⁶
 - We sin → God’s wrath is kindled
 - We present an offering → God’s wrath is expiated
 - We receive purification/forgiveness → God’s wrath is propitiated
 - The word for the entire process → Atonement (‘at-one-ment’)
- “God is always the same and, since He Himself is immutable, His relative attitude does not change toward those who change. He can act differently towards those who come to him by faith, and solely on the ground of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, not because He has changed, but because He ever acts according to his unchanging righteousness.”⁷

16:3-5 – The Animals & Dress Required

- A bull (purification offering) and a ram (burnt offering) were required for Aaron
- Two goats (purification) and one ram (burnt) were required for the congregation
- It is important to notice the difference in the priestly garments for the Day of Atonement. Typically the High Priest is adorned in regal dress that make him look kingly and remind the people of his high position. The linen tunic, sash and turban, however, were remarkably less lavish. In fact, as Wenham suggests, Aaron must have looked more like a slave than a High Priest:
 - “Among his fellow men his dignity as the great mediator between man and God is unsurpassed, and his splendid clothes draw attention to the glory of his office. But in the presence of God even the high priest is stripped of all honor: he becomes simply the servant of the King of kings, whose true status is portrayed in the simplicity of his dress.”⁸

16:6-10 – Outline of the rite

- Aaron offers the bull as an atonement for himself and his household (the priests)
- The two goats are brought before the LORD. Lots are cast to determine which goat is the offering and which is the scapegoat.
- One goat is presented as an offering and the other is led into the wilderness
- *Azazel* (verses 8, 10, 26 in ESV & KJV – ‘scapegoat’ in NAS, NLT)
 - The meaning of the Hebrew term is much debated. There are three or perhaps four major views: (1) Some derive the term from a combination of the Hebrew word for ‘goat’ and ‘to go away,’ meaning “the goat that departs” or “scapegoat”. This meaning suits the ritual practice of sending the so-called “scapegoat” away into the wilderness (vv. 10, 21-22, 26). Similarly, some derive the term from Arabic word for ‘to banish, remove’, meaning “entire removal” as an abstract

⁶ *Easton’s Bible Dictionary*

⁷ *Vines Expository Dictionary*, 493.

⁸ Wenham, 230. He also notes that angels dressed in white linen (Ezek 9:2-11; 10:2-7; Dan 10:5, 12:6-7)

concept. (2) Some see the term as a description of the wilderness area to which the goat was dispatched, deriving it somehow from the Arabic word for 'rough ground' or perhaps 'to be strong, fierce'. (3) The most common view among scholars today is that it is the proper name of a particular demon (perhaps even the Devil himself) associated with the wilderness desert regions. Perhaps a play on words between the proper name and the term for "goat" has occurred so that the etymology has become obscure. Even if a demon or the demonic realm is the source for the name, however, there is no intention here of appeasing the demons. The goal is to remove the impurity and iniquity from the community in order to avoid offending the Lord and the repercussions of such (see esp. vv. 21-22 and cf. Lev 15:31).⁹

16:11-28 – Specifics of the rite

- 11-19: We notice here that the process Aaron begins for himself and the priests is done just as the purification offerings have been previously described. The major difference on the Day of Atonement is where the blood is sprinkled. For purification offering it's sprinkled on the outside of the curtain/veil to the holy of holies. In this occasion, however, the blood is sprinkled seven times on the mercy seat.
 - While he was walking into the holy of holies with the blood of the bull, he also had to be holding a pan of coals & burning incense so there would be a screen of smoke in between himself and the presence of God.
 - After his atonement is made with the bull, the blood of the sacrificial goat is taken in the holy of holies in much the same fashion.
 - Then, Aaron is to take blood of both the goat and the bull and sprinkle it on the bronze altar – thereby cleansing it as well.
 - "These atonement-day rituals make the impossible possible. By cleansing the sanctuary they permit the holy God to dwell among an unholy people."¹⁰
- 20-22: The scapegoat is next brought before the High Priest who lays both of his hands upon the head of the live goat and confesses the national sins of Israel – symbolically transferring the sins of the people onto the life of the goat.
 - The goat is then taken out into the wilderness beyond the camp (v.21) into a solitary land (v.22) where it is cut off from the people literally & figuratively removing the sins from the people – never to return.¹¹
- 23-28: To prevent immediate recontamination of the temple, Aaron had to immediately remove the linen garment, wash himself and then put on the high priestly uniform again to perform the final burnt offering of the rams. Then, everything was taken outside the camp and burned – thus completing the ritual of the Day of Atonement.

16:29-34 – Response of the People

- The people were to deny or afflict themselves during the Day of Atonement and not do any work as it was a holy Sabbath for them and even aliens living in their midst. It is likely that the term rendered 'afflict' is most closely connected with the ideas of prayer, repentance, fasting and self-examination. In denying themselves some of their regular luxuries it enabled them to set apart this day as sacred above all others as well as enabling them to focus on the importance of the occasion.
 - "If they did this, then they were clean before the LORD. The ritual of the Day of Atonement was effectual only with true humility and spiritual preparation to receive what God was providing. Appropriate heart preparation had to precede the removal of sin, for ritual alone cannot atone."¹²

⁹ NET Bible translation notes. In surveying all the commentaries on this word – no one speaks definitively. Truly an example of something being lost in translation.

¹⁰ Wenham, 233.

¹¹ The NET Bible notes that the Hebrew word rendered "solitary land" NAS derives from a root meaning 'to cut off'

¹² Ross, 322.

Major Division within the Book of Leviticus

The end of chapter 16 marks the major division point in the book of Leviticus. The first half of the book is focused on the LORD and the relationship His people can have with him if they are obedient. The second half of the book shifts and focuses more on the holy day-to-day lifestyle of the people of God.

- "Leviticus 17—26 has been called the Holiness Code because of the frequency of the occurrence of the phrase, attributed to Yahweh: 'You shall be holy because I am holy,' which corresponds to the theological theme of the other priestly laws but here receives a special emphasis. One other phrase is characteristic of these chapters: 'I am Yahweh' (sometimes 'I am Yahweh your God')."¹³
- The focus on the first half of the book has been more with the priests than the congregation. The second half of the book focuses more on the congregation than the priests.
- "The main concern of this section is the standard of holiness. It emphasizes that God is holy and that it is the special duty of the covenant people to be holy because he is holy. After all, they were, according to the revelation at Sinai, to be a holy priesthood."¹⁴
 - How is holiness demonstrated? Obedience.

The Sanctity of Blood (Chapter 17)

"The laws in this chapter deal with various problems connected with sacrifice and eating meat. These matters have already been discussed in chs. 1—7 and 11 (cf. 7:26-27 with 17:10ff. and 11:39-40 with 17:15-16). This chapter draws together themes that run through the previous sixteen: in particular it explains the special significance of blood in the sacrifices."¹⁵

"Rather than the priests, the emphasis of this chapter is centered around mistakes that the ordinary Israelite could make that would affect his or her relationship to God. Food and sacrificial meals were a prominent part of heathen worship. Therefore what the Israelites ate and how they ate it demonstrated their consecration to Yahweh."¹⁶

17:1-9 The Killing of Animals Outside the Camp

- Under no circumstances were the Israelites allowed to slaughter the main sacrificial animals anywhere except within the tabernacle. "If an Israelite wished to eat meat, he must bring his chosen animal to the tabernacle as a peace offering."¹⁷
 - Deut 12:20-ff makes it clear, however, that "this law could only be effective when eating meat was a rare luxury, and when everyone lived close to the sanctuary as during the wilderness wanderings. After the settlement it was no longer feasible to insist that all slaughtering be restricted to the tabernacle."¹⁸
- Being cut off is the penalty for disregarding this law. This is a phrase that is used throughout the Hebrew Bible and is the most stern of warnings from the LORD. If an Israelite disobeyed God's word, then he/she would be dealt with directly by God himself and perhaps cut off from God and his/her people forever.
- Why couldn't they use an ox for dinner meat? It appears the motivation for this law comes from verse 7: "They shall no longer sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat demons with which they play the harlot."
 - "The goat demon was a god that the Egyptians and other ancient Near Easterners worshipped. It was supposedly responsible for the fertility of the people, their herds, and their crops. They believed it inhabited the deserts. A goat represented this demon (cf. 1 Cor. 10:20), and part of its abhorrent rituals involved goats copulating with women votaries." ¹⁹

¹³ Whybray, as quoted in Constable, 64.

¹⁴ Ross, 330.

¹⁵ Wenham, 240.

¹⁶ Constable, 66.

¹⁷ Wenham, 241.

¹⁸ Wenham, 243.

¹⁹ Constable, 66.

17:10-16 The role & importance of blood in ancient Judaism:

- “By refraining from eating flesh with blood in it, man is honoring life. To eat blood is to despise life. This idea emerges most clearly in Gen. 9: 4ff., where the sanctity of human life is associated with not eating blood. Thus one purpose of this law is the inculcation of respect for all life.”²⁰
- “Throughout the Bible blood is not only the symbol of life – it is the life. When blood is shed, life is relinquished. Draining blood from an animal formed a graphic picture for the worshipper that the lifeblood was taken. God had designed it this way so that the people were confronted with the loss of life and reminded of the sacrifice every time the blood of an animal was shed. Therefore, to eat blood denigrated life and disregarded its divinely intended purpose.”²¹
 - Not only was blood the life of the creature, but it was also the means of atonement that God had ordained for his people. If they were to start treating blood as a common object for every-day use, it would cease to be a holy thing in the sanctuary – it would be common.

The Pathway to Holiness for Israelites:²²

Trust in the Lord that the death of the Passover lamb redeemed them → Repudiation of God's revealed will could result in divine fatal judgment (a sin leading to death) → Breaking God's moral will required confession & sacrifice → Violating laws requiring cleanness required ritual purification → Serving God required additional limits on one's personal freedom → Closest contact with God required additional self-sacrifices → [Intimacy with God]

Tough Questions:

1. If it is impossible for the blood of bulls & goats to take away sins (see Hebrews 9 & 10), was the Day of Atonement just an elaborate hoax?
2. What insight does chapter 17 give you to Jesus words to the people in John 6:53-54?²³

²⁰ Wenham, 245.

²¹ Ross, 336.

²² Constable, 59.

²³ Chapter 17 also has some implications on other unrelated passages such as Acts 15:29 & 1 Cor 10:20-27.

Offerings

His People's Offering of Holiness :: Chapters 18-22

Holiness is not something that is achieved and then made permanent. It must be maintained in a disciplined manner on a daily basis – not haphazardly or presumptuously. Our fallen culture is far too influential for us to simply assume that our holiness will not be adversely affected by it. As a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, Israel was not to be influenced by the pagan culture – they were to be the influence. The nation was about to inherit a land that had been defiled by years of abominable sin and inhabited by people who would not quietly change their ways – no matter how much they conflicted with the holiness of the LORD. Thus, God prepared them for what they would have to face and, if they were obedient, they would receive the blessings that God had promised to Abraham by living out their new identity as the holy people of God.

Be Holy as I am Holy

This phrase in 19:2 is the motto of the Book of Leviticus, a large part of New Testament teaching (Matthew 5:48, 1 Peter 1:15-16) and a good summation of the implications of the identity of the people of God (Exodus 19:6, 1 Peter 2:4,9). We have already learned much about how one becomes holy: God must call someone to be holy, provide a way for that to be possible, and then the person must respond in that specific way. It must be emphasized that holiness is first an identity and second a behavior. Behavior is a manifestation of our faith and our identity. Chapters 18-20 illustrate *the result* of knowing the LORD and confessing dependence & allegiance to him as such.

These chapters are not simply a list of do's and don'ts to be followed mindlessly. They describe the day-to-day lifestyle of a person who has received a priestly and holy identity from the LORD and is living it out in every facet of their life – just like an apple tree naturally produces apples because it is an apple tree. If we love the LORD with all our heart, soul, and might (Deut 6:4), then our lives will reflect a conformity to his will and his way rather than a conformity to the way of the world (Romans 12:1-2).

“One can say that the way to become holy is to keep the commandments, but the way to keep the commandments is by loving God and loving people.”¹

Thus, a simple identity statement becomes not only a direction for daily living, but also a provision for resisting the abundant temptations of a corrupt and abominable culture that was about to surround Israel on every side for the rest of her days.

18:1-5: Introduction to the Holiness Code

- I am the Lord (cf. Exodus 6:7; 20:2)
 - “The statement “I am the Lord” reminded the people of their covenant relationship with and responsibility to Yahweh. It was because He is who He is that they were to be who He wanted them to be. It was a constant reminder to the Israelites of who they were and whom they served.”²
- The people were not to revert back to what had rubbed off on them during their infancy as a Nation while in Egypt nor succumb to the future temptations of the Canaanites. Instead, they were to live out the identity they had been given and not be swayed by those temptations – not just worship rituals, but in every facet of their daily living.
- “Holiness is thus not so much an abstract or mystic idea, as a regulative principle in the everyday lives of men and women. Holiness is thus attained not by flight from the world, nor by monk-like renunciation of human relationships of family or station, but by the spirit in which we fulfill the obligations of life in its simplest and commonest details: in this way – by doing justly, loving mercy and walking humbly with our God – is everyday life transfigured.”³

¹ Ross, 351.

² Constable, 69.

³ Hertz as quoted in Wenham, 265.

The Holiness Code

Behaviors that are consistent/inconsistent with a kingdom of priests and a holy nation:

Chapters 18 & 20 - Behaviors that were acceptable in Canaan that Israel should avoid:

- Incest (18:6-18)(20:11-12, 17, 19-21)
 - “A man may not marry any woman who is a close blood relation, or any woman who has become a close relative through a previous marriage to one of the man’s close blood relations.”⁴
 - The origins of the practice of incest within and among the Canaanites go all the way back to Genesis 9. Ham, Noah’s son, was the father of the Canaanites (9:18) acted irresponsibly when he saw his father’s nakedness (9:22). Noah thus cursed the Canaanites (9:25) and, ever since, have been apart from the blessing of God and continuing in the same moral irresponsibility of their father, Ham.
 - “close/blood relative” is actually the same term as Gen 2:23 – one flesh.
 - “uncover his nakedness” means to have sexual intercourse.
 - This list of behaviors in chapters 18 & 20 was not randomly generated. It was populated by the wickedness of the Canaanites who were already actively engaging in all of these activities. They were unholy because God has set up a clear definition of what marriage relationships can be and going outside those boundaries was inappropriate and disobedient.
- Unclean Sexual Relations (18:19)(20:18)(cf. 15:24)
 - This seemingly smaller offense is included for instances of willful disobedience. Leviticus 15:24 made provision for those who become defiled without knowledge or by accident. This passage is more focused on those who know God’s standard of holiness and knowingly disobey it (which is no longer a matter of defilement – it is now a matter of rebellion as well).
- Adultery (18:20)(20:10)(cf Exodus 20:14)
- Child Sacrifice (18:21)(20:2-5)
 - “Molech was a Canaanite god often represented by a bronze image with a bull’s head and outstretched arms. The idol was usually hollow, and devotees kindled a fire in it making it very hot. The Canaanites then passed children through the fire (cf. 2 Kings 23:10) or placed them on the hot outstretched arms of the idol as sacrifices (Ezek. 16:20).”⁵
 - Those who participate in the worship of Molech are to be put to death (20:2)
- Homosexuality (18:22)(20:13)(Gen 19:4-8)
 - Homosexuality is clearly prohibited both here in Hebrew Bible and in the New Testament (Rom. 1:27; 1 Cor. 6:9) as a behavior that is inconsistent with those who know the LORD.
 - “In an effort to justify the homosexual lifestyle, various modern writers try to revise the interpretation of these passages in Leviticus. The argument often takes a simplistic approach like this: the Book of Leviticus condemned homosexuality, but it also called menstruation unclean, and so the book reflects primitive thinking about ancient taboos. Because Christians do not have the same fears that ancients had, those laws that were part of the ritual of ancient Israel have been done away with now in the New Testament. Christians, therefore, have no need to oppose homosexuality any more than they have to prevent a woman from worshiping during her period. This argument is frequently effective because people are ignorant of Leviticus. It is true that the regulations connected with the sanctuary have been done away with (for different reasons); but the moral infractions of God’s created order were never merely part of the purity ritual of the sanctuary. And they have not been done away with. That the New Testament fully endorses the law on this point should be sufficient to settle the matter.”⁶

⁴ Wenham, 255.

⁵ Constable, 71.

⁶ Ross, 375.

- Bestiality (18: 23)(20: 15-16)
 - “Bestiality is condemned in most of the legal collections in the Pentateuch because it is confusion. Such a nation is unnatural; it transgresses the God-given boundaries between man and animal. Holiness in the Pentateuch is a matter of purity, of keeping apart what God has created to be separate.”⁷

Chapter 19: *Behaviors that demonstrated allegiance with the LORD in being holy as He is holy*

- Honor your Father & Mother (19: 3)(20: 9)(cf. Exodus 20: 12)(Eph 6: 2)
 - “As far as a child is concerned, his parents are in the place of God: though them he can learn what God is like and what he requires. It is therefore fitting that in his younger years a child should honor and fear his parents, as in later years he will fear God.”⁸ Holiness begins in the home!
- Keep the Sabbath (19: 3, 30)(cf. Exodus 20: 8-11)(Hebrews 4: 3,9)
- Abstain from Idolatry (19: 4)(cf. Exodus 20: 3-5)(1 John 5: 21)
- Care for the Poor (19: 9-10)(Deut 24: 19-22)(Ruth 2)(Matt. 19: 16-22)(Heb. 13: 15-16)
 - “Farmers could not harvest the corners of their fields; that was left for poor people and strangers to come in and glean what they could. The amount left in a field was determined by the landowner.”⁹
 - Since poor people didn’t own animals, whatever they were able to glean from the fields also helped them worship and present offerings – not just eat.
- Be honest (19: 11-12, 13, 35-36)(Exodus 20: 7, 15)(Matt 20: 8)(James 5: 12)
- Don’t take advantage of others (19: 14)
- Preserve justice (19: 15)
- Don’t gossip or slander (19: 16) (Exodus 20: 16)
- Don’t murder (19: 16)(Exodus 20: 13)
- Love your neighbor (19: 17-18)(Exodus 20: 17)(Matthew 5: 21-26, Luke 10: 29-37)
- No mixing of breeds, crops & clothing (19: 19)
 - “The Israelites learned from these rules to keep separate what God had divided. These rulings for Israel’s daily life were not retained in the New Testament. However, the principles of spiritual separation, order in creation, and purity in life all emerge in the new covenant to guide the believer in the way to live daily.”¹⁰
- No Adultery (19: 20-22)(Exodus 20: 14)
- Temporary abstinence from fruit (19: 23-25)(Genesis 2: 16-17)(Prov. 3: 9-10)
 - “Holiness involves the total consecration of a man’s life and labor to God’s service. By dedicating the first of everything to God, the man of the Old Covenant publically acknowledged that all he had was from God, and he thanked him for his blessings.”¹¹
- No drinking of blood, magic, sorcery or necromancy (19: 26, 31; 20: 6-8, 27)(1 Sam 28)
 - When God was silent, the Israelites could not seek direction from false prophets but were, instead, to walk by faith in keeping with the covenant.¹²
- No cutting or disfiguration of the flesh or the hair(19: 27-28)(Deut 14: 1)(1 Cor 6: 18-20)
 - Pagans would often disfigure their bodies as an act of mourning or worship, but God’s people are supposed to remember that their bodies belong to the LORD and mourn accordingly.
 - “Man is not to disfigure the divine likeness implanted in him by scarring his body. The external appearance of the people should reflect their internal status as the chosen and holy people of God.”¹³
- No prostitution (19: 29)(Exodus 20: 14?)
- Honor the presence of your elders (19: 32)(Isaiah 3: 5)
- Love strangers (19: 33-34)

⁷ Wenham, 260.

⁸ Wenham, 265.

⁹ Ross, 359.

¹⁰ Ross, 362.

¹¹ Wenham, 271.

¹² Wenham, 272.

¹³ Wenham, 272.

20:22-26 – The Conclusion: Be Holy

- "God's people must conform to his holiness by keeping his commandments (the letter of the law), by dealing with others in love (the spirit of the law), by living according to his standards of separation in the world, and by demonstrating kindness and justice to others."¹⁴
- The promises of the Abrahamic blessing were contingent upon the Nation's obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. As they obeyed, they continued to see the promises realized. Ultimately the Nation decided not to honor the LORD or keep his commandments and they found the same fate that the Canaanites did: the land spewed them out. God will not allow his name to be defamed by disobedience (see Ezekiel 36:22-32)
- "Follow God's order and live with his blessing, but rebel against his order and confusion and destruction are introduced. It is one thing to fall into sin or be enslaved to it for a while; it is quite another to embrace a thoroughly pagan worldview that seeks to sanction sin by religion."¹⁵

Chapters 21 & 22:

We have already spent some time discussing the role of the priests within the congregation. Chapters 21 and 22 form a very similar code of holiness for priests themselves – specifically regarding what disqualifies a priest (and a sacrifice) from service. In the interest of time I will not take time to review these chapters here as they are very straight forward and review much of what we have already discussed. It will also give us an extra week to discuss the feasts and festivals of Israel.

New Testament Correlation:

"The New Testament writers restated the laws on incest (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1-5), adultery (cf. Rom. 13:9), idolatry (cf 1 Cor. 10:7-11; Rev. 2:14), and homosexuality (cf. Rom. 1:27; 1 Cor. 6:9). They are binding on us who live under the New Covenant."¹⁶

"Since the church contains people of every nation it is no longer necessary for Christians to observe the laws that typified Israel's uniqueness among the other nations. Nevertheless God still calls Christians to imitate Himself (cf. Matt. 5:48; 1 Cor. 11:1), to "be holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16). Application of the imperatives in this chapter is different for Christians, but the fundamental principles of holy living remain the same."¹⁷

In as much as some of the Holiness Code is no longer applicable, there are several New Testament passages that we should consider that resemble the same *spirit* of these laws:

- Galatians 5:16-26
- Ephesians 4:17-5:21
- Colossians 2:8-3:17
- Titus 3:1-9
- 1 Peter 4:1-6

Tough Questions:

1. Why do some laws carry over to the New Testament while others do not? It's obvious that those which do not carry over are irrelevant – but what makes them so? Is it only a matter of cultural differences?
2. Can we (Christians) decide for ourselves which laws are irrelevant/relevant for today? What if we disagree?

¹⁴ Ross, 365. See also John 15:9-17, 1 John 3:11-15

¹⁵ Ross, 349.

¹⁶ Constable, 73.

¹⁷ Constable, 78.

Offerings

His People's Offering of Remembrance :: Chapter 23: 1-22

We've seen in Chapters 18-22 that his people and his priests are to be holy as he is holy. There are also certain times of the year that are to be set apart has holy days unto the LORD as well. The feasts were designed to help the people of God remember all that God has done, continues to do, and will do for his people. If they forget the reality of his protection and provision – they will wander off into the pagan nations and become lost. Thus, throughout the entire Hebrew Bible you see an emphasis on remembrance, ebenezers, and not repeating the mistakes of the forefathers. The observance of these festivals year round would provide the people with further reminders of their identity as the people of God.

The feasts are divided up in order in the 23rd chapter by spring feasts and fall feasts. This week we will focus on the feasts celebrated in the spring: unleavened bread, firstfruits, and weeks. As one might expect, Jesus fulfills the symbolism in all of the feasts. In the spring feasts we have symbolism of events in Jesus' life while he ministered on the earth. In the fall feasts, we have symbolism of events that have yet to be fulfilled until his return.

"The form of Lev. 23 is that of a calendar that identifies the occasions for festivals, the times assigned for them, and various ritual acts to be followed."¹ These feasts were based on a Jewish (agricultural) calendar that was based on the 28 day cycle of the moon. Today, we use a solar calendar that is based on the time it takes for the earth to orbit the sun. Jews still to this day observe their holy days based on the lunar calendar which explains why the festivals shift on our 365 day calendar each year.²

The Sabbath (Shabbat) 23:1-3

- **Genesis 2:2-3** represents the first Sabbath rest of the LORD. He had created earth and all that was in it and upon completion, declared it to be holy. On the seventh day of Creation, then, God rested – not because he was tired from six days of creating the universe, but because the work he started was completed.
 - The Hebrew word for Sabbath is *sabat* and "does not carry the modern connotation of resting because of exhaustion. It means 'to cease, desist, stop, bring to an end'; and in reference to the rest at creation it signifies a celebration of the completion of the work."³
 - "The text designates this day as a 'complete Sabbath,' using a superlative genitive construction: *sabbat sabbaton* ('a Sabbath of Sabbath rest')." This indicates that the Sabbath was meant to be a complete ending type of Sabbath.⁴
 - The Hebrew word for work (Lev. 23:3) meant ordinary labor or occupation. The Israelites got very specific on what those labors and occupations were – but the text only specifies the cessation of ordinary labor.⁵ Nevertheless, the Sabbath became the sign of the Mosaic Covenant (just as circumcision was the associated sign of the Abrahamic covenant) and obedience was mandatory as a part of keeping the covenant relationship with God intact.
- The fall, however, made the work of creation that was complete and good, fallen and in need of redemption. Thus, the LORD goes about the process of creation once again – only this time it is the election of a people through whom the LORD would bless all nations. Once he had redeemed this people from captivity in Egypt and established a covenant relationship with them, it is no surprise to see the Sabbath reinstated.⁶

¹ Ross, 401.

² Teitelbaum, David. *Neat Jewish Stuff for Christians*, 12.

³ Ross, 399.

⁴ Ross, 402.

⁵ See Ross, 401.

⁶ Unger, Merrill F. *The Significance of the Sabbath*. Bibliotheca Sacra, 123 (1966): 51-59.

- Thus, the Sabbath becomes somewhat prophetic in the history of Israel – not only commemorative of the act of creation, but predictive of the future rest that will come from being in the Promised Land, the coming of Messiah, & the presence of the Kingdom of God on the earth. Ironically, Israel has rejected this rest throughout her history: at creation, while in the Promised Land, and the rejection of Jesus as Messiah.
- There are 7 festivals in a year (each including a Sabbath as a part of them), the majority of them occur in the 7th month of the year, every 7th year is a Sabbatical year (Exod 21:2; Lev 25:2; Deut 15:1), after 49 years (7x7) there was a super-sabbatical year, the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:8).⁷
- For further instructions and specifics about the Sabbath, see also Numbers 28-29, Deut 5:12-15, Psalm 95, Isaiah 58, 66:1, Jer 31:25
- **New Testament Correlation:** Matt 11:28, 12:8-12, Mk 2:27-28, Lk 4:16-30, Heb 4
 - The Sabbath has been presented to us in Christ – not as a rest from daily labor, but a rest from having to earn our salvation. Those who have placed their faith in Jesus have a permanent Sabbath with the LORD and, thus, have no need to observe one day above any other. God's saving work has been made complete and, thus, believer can enjoy the rest of God (Hebrews 4:1-11).⁸ Thus, the Lord of the Sabbath (Mk 2:28) has, in his atoning death, annulled the observance of the Sabbath Day.
 - "The fourth commandment is not a binding law for the church. Or, to put it another way, the church is not to go back under the law to make that commandment active. Christians are not merely to give one day in seven to God, but all seven. Since they have entered the rest of God, every day should be sanctified. But they have to set apart some time to be used in voluntary gratitude for worship and ministry and for the rest of body, soul, and spirit."⁹
 - It is easy to surmise that the church's observance of worship on Sunday is simply the New Testament application of the Sabbath day – but that is quite to the contrary. A Christian worship service on Sunday is quite the opposite of Sabbath. One celebrates a rest already received – the other is a rest without rest.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread & Passover (*Pesah*) 23:4-8

- Passover began on the evening of the 14th of Nisan which typically falls in late March or early April (harvest season). The commemoration is first observed while the Nation was still in Egypt – just about to be delivered from bondage (Exodus 12:1-28).
 - Observance of Passover would involve a family cleaning their house from top to bottom and completely removing all leaven from the house. Then, the Passover lamb was killed at twilight, roasted, and then completely consumed that night.
 - Passover, of course, was the commemoration of the Nation's miraculous deliverance from slavery in Egypt by the blood of the Lamb to become the chosen covenant people of the LORD.
- The celebration of Passover began the Feast of Unleavened Bread the following day which lasted an entire week. For the seven days of the festival, the people ate bread made without yeast and offerings were brought to the LORD (see Num 28:16-25): a burnt offering of 2 bulls, 1 ram and 7 lambs along with a meal offering each day of the week. The first and last days of the feast were days of holy convocation (assembly) and complete rest from all labor.
 - The Hebrew word for feast "designates the event as a pilgrimage festival and so it could not be celebrated at home. It required a journey to the religious center of the nation, to the sanctuary of the LORD."¹⁰
 - "The significance attached to eating unleavened bread was that the people were in a hurry to flee. But in the legislation of the offerings, leaven came to signify

⁷ See Wenham, 301.

⁸ Ross, 404.

⁹ Ross, 405.

¹⁰ Ross, 412.

corruption that was supposed to be excluded from the meal offering and purged from the houses."¹¹

- **New Testament Correlation:** John 1:29-36; 1 Cor. 5:6-8; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Rev 5:12
 - Paul's words in Romans 6:2 present a good (yet unrelated) summary of the significance of these two festivals: "How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" The Passover commemorated the Nation's salvation from slavery in Egypt and the Feast of Unleavened Bread emphasized the pursuit of holiness that should result from no longer being enslaved to Egypt (cf. Romans 6:15-19).
 - Passover: Paul calls Jesus our 'Passover Lamb' in 1 Corinthians 5:7 who has died not for our emancipation from the Egyptians, but from our enslavement to sin. Once we were brought out of the darkness and into the light, we were united with Christ (just as Israel was united with the LORD in covenant) and now have right relationship with him through his provision of "a lamb unblemished and spotless" (1 Peter 1:19).
 - Unleavened Bread: If we have been freed from sin, then why would we continue to serve it as our Lord and Master when the LORD has become our God and King? Paul's argument links the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread in 1 Corinthians 5:8.
 - "For Christians, Passover foreshadowed redemption in Christ, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread looked to the life of holiness that should follow – not just for a week, or for a month, but forever. The point is that a life purged of corruption is evidence of a deliverance begun; if that was true in the old covenant, how much more is it true in the new."¹²

Firstfruits 23:9-14

- "The Feast of Firstfruits included the presentation of firstfruits of the spring barley harvest in the Promised Land. The Israelites also offered a lamb, flour, and wine, all representative of God's provisions of spiritual and physical food and drink for His people (vv. 9-14). They presented this offering on the day after the Sabbath following Passover. The ancients regarded the firstfruits as a kind of down payment with more to follow."¹³
 - "Is the Sabbath in question the ordinary Sabbath, i.e., the first Saturday after the beginning of the festival of unleavened bread? Or is the Sabbath the first day of unleavened bread when heavy work was forbidden? It seems slightly more natural to equate the Sabbath with Saturday than with the first day of the feast."¹⁴
- **New Testament Correlation:** 1 Cor. 15:20; Romans 8:23; James 1:18
 - Jesus enters Jerusalem 4 days before Passover (Passover lamb selection day for every Jewish family). He then celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples and was that night arrested [15 Nisan], tried and crucified the following morning – at the time of the first sacrifice [16 Nisan]. By the time of the second sacrifice (3pm), Jesus had died. He rose from the dead on Sunday – *the first day after the Sabbath* (23:11) - "the day the first sheaf was offered as a dedication offering."¹⁵
 - "The resurrection of Christ guarantees a future resurrection of all who die in the faith, just as the sheaf of firstfruits guaranteed a harvest to come. In fact, the entirety of 1 Cor. 15 draws upon that agricultural setting to make the point: a seed may be buried in the ground, but in due season it will shoot forth in a more glorious body."¹⁶

¹¹ Ross, 413.

¹² Ross, 414.

¹³ Constable, 85-86.

¹⁴ Wenham, 304.

¹⁵ Wenham, 306.

¹⁶ Ross, 419.

The Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot*) 23:15-22

- This feast was held fifty days after the Sabbath of Firstfruits – sometime around the end of the spring harvest of wheat, just before summer (June). Unlike the previous feast, it lasted only one day and was a festival of thanksgiving for all that God had provided for their needs (both physically and spiritually).
 - This feast is also referred to by most Jews as Shavuot (Sha-voo-oat). Shavuot is the Hebrew word for weeks which is where the name comes from. The feast was held 50 days or 7 weeks after Firstfruits. In Jesus' day, the Feast was known by its Greek name, Pentecost (meaning 50 days).
- The feast itself revolved around another offering of firstfruits (loaves of wheat bread this time instead of barley), appropriate sacrifices (7 lambs & 1 male goat), giving to the poor (23:22), and a day of rest from all labor.
 - Instead of bringing the grain for a sacrifice, the people were to bring loaves of bread with leaven in them – making this the only festival where leaven could be present in an offering (23:17, cf. 2:11, 7:13). "Thus, in two festivals, the Israelites commemorated the beginning and end of grain harvests: they celebrated at the first sign of God's provision, and they celebrated when they had the finished product," thus explaining why leaven was allowed in this sacrifice.¹⁷
 - They were to bring 2 loaves of bread for sacrifices – this came to symbolize and commemorate the giving of the Law at Sinai (which took place shortly after the Passover and Exodus from Egypt). Thus, as we shall see, the establishment of Israel and the Church happen with very similar circumstances.
- **New Testament Correlation:** Acts Chapter 2
 - Jesus, as mentioned earlier, dies just after Passover and is resurrected on Firstfruits. Over a period of 40 days following his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples, "speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3) and then ascends into heaven (Acts 1:3-11). On the 50th day after his resurrection, the feast of Pentecost, the disciples experienced the indwelling of the Holy Spirit .
 - Compare Exodus 24:12-18 and 32:1, 25-29 with Acts 2
 - "Just as the firstfruits were eventually turned into loaves of bread, Christ's death and resurrection produced the body of Christ – believers who were gathered into the church on this day of Pentecost. And just as Pentecost commemorated the giving of the law to Israel, the LORD chose this day to send his Spirit and unite the body of Christ. According to the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34, Ezek, 36:24-32) the Spirit will write the law on the hearts of the believers. And just as the loaves of bread made with leaven were placed before the LORD, the believers, imperfect in many ways, were presented to the LORD. Here, then, is what the firstfruits of the resurrected Christ produces, and they in turn are the firstfruits of the new creation (see Eph 1:10)."¹⁸

Tough Questions:

1. Do our religious festivals today help us remember the provision and promises of God and, thereby, lead us towards holiness? Why or why not?

¹⁷ Ross, 422.

¹⁸ Ross, 424.

Offerings

His People's Offering of Remembrance :: Chapter 23:22-44

The fall festivals all occur during the seventh month (September – October). It represented the end of the agricultural year and culminated in the most important feast of the year: The Feast of Tabernacles. The seventh month has great significance in the Jewish calendar:

"During the seventh month of Israel's religious calendar three festivals took place. This reflects the importance that God attached to the number seven in the Mosaic economy. Not only was the seventh day special (v. 3) but so were the seventh week (vv. 15-22) and the seventh month."¹

"In this month the dry hot summer draws to an end, the grapes and olives are picked, and the Israelite starts to look forward to the coming of the rains. In a good year these would begin in October and last until March. The seventh month, then, marked the end of the agricultural year and the beginning of a new one."²

"The seventh month of the year, like the seventh day of the week, was consecrated as a Sabbath or sabbatical month, by a holy convocation and the suspension of labour, which were to distinguish the first day of the seventh month from the beginning of the other months or the other new moon days throughout the year. For the whole month was sanctified in the first day, as the beginning or head of the month; and by the sabbatical observance of the commencement, the whole course of the month was raised to a Sabbath. This was enjoined, not merely because it was the seventh month, but because the seventh month was to secure to the congregation the complete atonement for all its sins, and the wiping away of all the uncleannesses which separated it from its God, viz., on the day of atonement, which fell within this month, and to bring it a foretaste of the blessedness of life in fellowship with the Lord, viz., in the feast of Tabernacles, which commenced five days afterwards."³

It should also be noted that the spring feasts seem to correlate directly with the earthy ministry of Messiah during his first advent and the fall feasts correlate with the aspects of Messiah's ministry that are still yet future.

The Feast of Trumpets (*Rosh Hashana*) 23:23-25 (Numbers 10:1-10, 28:1-5)

- The first day of the seventh month was commemorated with a Sabbath rest, a blowing of trumpets, and a holy convocation. It was 9 days prior to the Day of Atonement – gathering all the people of Israel to begin the preparation for a month of remembering their sin, God's goodness to them, and the blessings they had through covenant with him.
- "The trumpet in the Old Testament represented the voice of God calling to his people (Num. 10). Exodus 19:19 is the first biblical mention of the trumpet. God himself appointed it as a sign by which people knew when to approach the mount. Thus, whenever the people heard the sacred trumpets, they recognized, as it were, the voice of God."⁴
- The trumpets that were used were most likely the shophars – rams horns that produced a dull, far-reaching tone.⁵ "Trumpets play a major role in God's dealings with His people

¹ Constable, 87.

² Wenham, 305.

³ Keil & Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*.

⁴ Ross, 426.

⁵ Keil & Delitzsch

(cf. Exod. 19:16; 20:18; Isa. 27:13; Jer. 4:5; Joel 2:1; Zeph. 1:16; Matt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:16). They were part of Israel's ceremonial processions (e.g., Josh. 6:1, 13-16; 1 Kings 1:34, 39; 1 Chron. 15:24), and they assembled the Israelites for war, journeys, and special feasts (e.g., Num. 10:9-10). They also warned of the coming day of the Lord (e.g., Joel 2:1), and they announced the new year in Israel (e.g., Num. 29:1). Here they announce divine judgment in the day of the Lord (cf. Zech. 1:14-16).⁶

- "God calls his people away from their earthly labors to join the saints in his presence where they may worship him wholeheartedly."⁷
- Today *Rosh Hashana* is also recognized as the beginning of the Jewish new year (although not originally specified here in Leviticus) and has been a new year's celebration since Israel's return from Babylonian captivity.⁸
- **New Testament Correlation:**
 - There are a number of references to trumpets in the New Testament (Matthew 24:30-31, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Hebrews 12:19, Revelation 1:10, 4:1, and chapters 8-11). Not all the passages here are referring to the same circumstances or even the same type of trumpet, however.
 - 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 seem to be the most likely parallels (fulfillment) of this particular feast. In these two passages, the trumpet is a call for believers to be gathered to the LORD prior to a time of judgment (the Day of Atonement). Naturally the timing of these events in relationship to the tribulation is one that is often debated – but whatever position is taken the simple point is clear: the trumpet call of God will incite the final events of God's plan of redemption.

The Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) 23:26-32

- Just nine days after the Feast of Trumpets was the holiest day of the year for the Israelites: The Day of Atonement. The day itself was solemn – a time of fasting rather than celebration or feasting where the people of God afflicted themselves and observed another Sabbath rest.
 - "This was the day set aside for the removal of all the sins of the people. The slate was wiped clean, so to speak, and the people had the opportunity to make a fresh start for the following year."⁹
- **New Testament Correlation:**
- "Prophetically this day will find fulfillment at the second coming of Christ. Then God will purify His people who have returned to Him in repentance and self-affliction as a result of His chastening during the Tribulation period (Zech. 12:10; 13:1; cf. Heb. 9:28)."¹⁰
- "The Day of Atonement had two main emphases: the sacrificial animal that shed its blood to make atonement for sins, and the scapegoat that signified the complete removal of sin from the people. In his first advent the Son of God provide the full atonement through his shed blood, and in his second advent he will completely remove all sin, not only for all who believe in him, but for those who are yet to acknowledge that they have gone astray like sheep (Is. 53:6). For many Jews the prophetic element of the Day of Atonement has not yet become a reality, although the Apostle Paul fully anticipates that it will (Romans 11:25-32)."¹¹

The Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) 23:33-44

- Five days after the Day of Atonement, Tishri 15, was the final feast of the year for the Nation of Israel. The reason for this celebration was to commemorate the end of the fall harvest (Exodus 23:16) and the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness prior to their entrance to the Promised Land.

⁶ Constable, *Notes on Revelation*, 82.

⁷ Ross, 427.

⁸ Constable, 87.

⁹ Ross, 430.

¹⁰ Constable, 88.

¹¹ Ross, 432.

- The observance of this festival required the people to live in temporary dwellings (*sukkot*) for the duration of the week. Like the other festivals, it also required a Sabbath at the beginning and end of the feast as well as appropriate sacrifices (Num 29:12-39). This was also the only feast when the people were commanded to praise God.
- The purpose of this feast is explicit: "so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt." The observance of the festival called the nation to remembrance of from whence they had been delivered as well as all that God had provided throughout the summer & fall. It was the greatest feast of the Jewish year – culminating in a week of praise and thanksgiving to God for seven days and then practicing a Sabbath on the eighth (the 'great' day) day of the feast.
- Deut 8:11-12 (7:12-8:20), Is 52:7-12; Micah 5:2-5; Zech 12-14
- **New Testament Correlation:**
 - John 7:1-2, 37-39 - By the time of Jesus a ritual of petitioning God for the winter rains also developed as part of this festival where the priests would bring water from the Pool of Siloam up to the altar in the temple and pour it out as a request to God to send rain for the spring crops. "These symbolic ceremonies were acted thanksgivings for God's mercies in giving water in past days (probably looking right back to the smiting of the rock in the wilderness and then on to the giving of rain in recent years). They were also an acted prayer for rain for the coming year."¹²
 - "The appropriateness of the words at this feast is that, throughout the seven days, libations were made in the Temple with water brought from the Pool of Siloam, but on the eighth day no water was poured, and this would make Jesus' claim all the more impressive. At the same time his primary reference may not be the Temple rite, but to the supply of water from the rock in the wilderness. That water supplied the physical needs of the Israelites, whereas no one drank from the water poured out of the golden ewer. Whichever way we take it, the festal observance has included an acted prayer for water and Jesus is proclaiming the answer to the prayer in a way worshipers would never have expected."¹³
 - God has tabernacled with man in three ways:
 - In the Father in the Tabernacle and Temple with the Israelites
 - As the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, incarnated on the earth
 - As the Holy Spirit, living in the hearts of believers
 - "In that harvest the LORD of harvest will send for his angels to gather the good 'grain' into the barn and the 'chaff' to the judgment of unquenchable fire. The Old Testament ingathering came at the end of the year and marked the beginning of a new year; as a harvest festival it is prophetic of the eschaton. The last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the great day, was filled with joy and celebration because the people came out of the booths. It signified that future permanency when they would all have eternal rest."¹⁴

Feast of Purim & Feast of Dedication (*Hanakkah*)

"Leviticus does not mention the Feast of Purim (lit. lots) that the Jews added to their calendar later in their history (cf. Esth. 9:20-32). Neither does the Old Testament refer to the Feast of Dedication (Heb. *Hanakkah*) because the Jews instituted it much later in their history. The former feast celebrates the Jews' deliverance from the Persians in Esther's time. The latter feast, often called the Feast of Lights, commemorates the revolt and victory of the Maccabees (Hasmoneans) against Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria and the rededication of the temple in 165 B.C."¹⁵

¹² Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John*, 372-373. See also Isaiah 12:3.

¹³ Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John*, 374.

¹⁴ Ross, 438. See also 2 Corinthians 5:1-10

¹⁵ Constable, 90-91.

Summary of the Feasts

Dr Constable has a helpful chart that summarizes the basic information of each feast:¹⁶

FEASTS & FASTS IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF ISRAEL						
Season	Month			Day(s) of Month	Feast or Fast	Attendance by Adult Males
	Sacred	Civil	Modern			
Spring	1	7	March/April	14	<i>Passover</i>	Optional
Spring	1	7	March/April	14-20	<i>Unleavened Bread</i>	Required
Spring	1	7	March/April	The day after the Sabbath following Passover	<i>Firstfruits</i>	Optional
Spring	3	9	May/June	4	<i>Pentecost</i> (a.k.a. Harvest, Weeks)	Required
Fall	7	1	September/October	1	<i>Trumpets</i>	Optional
Fall	7	1	September/October	10	<i>Day of Atonement</i> (the only fast)	Optional
Fall	7	1	September/October	15-21	<i>Tabernacles</i> (a.k.a. Booths, Ingathering)	Required

Feast

Passover
Unleavened Bread
Firstfruits
Pentecost
Interval
Trumpets
Day of Atonement
Tabernacles

Correlation to Life and Ministry of Jesus

Crucifixion
Buried in the Tomb
Resurrection
Giving of the Holy Spirit
The Church Age
Return of Christ & rapture of believers?
The tribulation & day of judgment
The Messianic Kingdom

Again, the requirement of these festivals may look like God is burdening his people with more laws and regulations, but it is important to remember that these festivals (as with the sacrifices, holiness code, and the entire book itself) are designed to help the people remember their God, his covenant, and their new identity as his people.

Tough Question:

1. True or False: Jesus will return one year during the months of September/October.

¹⁶ Constable, 89.

Offerings

His Gift of Jubilee :: Chapter 24-25

The People of God were to be characterized by being holy (uncommon) in the midst of a common (unholy) world. Their sacrificial rites, their way of living, even their economy was to reflect an allegiance, reliance and attachment to the LORD as his kingdom of priests and his holy nation. To the degree that his people obeyed his commandments and walked in his ways – they received blessing. One of the blessings that God gave to his people was the gift of Jubilee. It is a remarkable insight into the character and heart of our LORD – and even though it may be difficult for us to comprehend – it should not be overlooked.

There seems to be little if no connection between what we find here in chapter 24 and the material that precedes and follows it, so – since we are only doing a survey of the book – we will not spend a large amount of time on this particular chapter so we can focus on understanding the Sabbath and Jubilee years in more detail.

Chapter 24:1-9 - The Lamps & Showbread

- “The connection of these instructions with what precedes is this: The Israelites were not only to offer themselves to Yahweh on special days of the year, but they were to worship and serve Him every day of the year. The daily refueling and burning of the lamps and the uninterrupted presentation of the showbread to Yahweh represented the daily sanctification of the people to their God.”¹
- “The bread the people brought was a token of God’s provision of food that the people were enjoying. But as it lay on the table in the sanctuary it symbolized all the LORD’s provisions for his people, both physical and spiritual. In the New Testament the Son of Man demonstrated that he could provide bread for his people; but the real bread that they needed was food for their souls, and so he declared that he was the bread of life that the Father had sent (John 6:25-59).”²
- 24:9 – Leviticus 6:9 reminds us that this bread could only be eaten by the priests and only in a place that was holy. 1 Samuel 21 tells us the story of how David, while fleeing from King Saul, approached Ahimelech the priest and asked, under false pretenses, for some bread. Having no common bread, Ahimelech offers David some of the bread of the presence (which, of course, doesn’t turn out so well for the priests in 22:18).
 - Matthew 12: Jesus quotes this passage when the Pharisees object to his picking grain on the Sabbath. “David ate even though it was unlawful for him to do so yet the Old Testament did not condemn him for his act. Therefore the Pharisees should not condemn Jesus’ disciples for doing something Scripture did not condemn David’s men for doing. Jesus was arguing against the Pharisees’ approach to Scripture more than their view of the Sabbath.”³
 - Jesus draws on this example for two reasons: first it shows the Pharisees the error in their interpretation of the Law. Second, it sets up a favorable comparison of himself with King David – the anointed of the Lord who, at that time, was being rejected by the authorities of the day. So, in a somewhat subtle way, Jesus is claiming to be the Son of David here as well.
- Other Scriptures to consider: 1 Sam 3:3, 2 Kings 25:30, Isa. 42:6, Zech 4

¹ Constable, 91.

² Ross, 442.

³ Constable, *Notes on Matthew*, 170.

Chapter 24:10-23 - Blasphemy

- Blasphemy: “comes from the Greek for ‘evil speaking.’ The expression is general, but portrays the idea of contemptible, derogatory, and irreverent remarks about the person of God.”⁴
 - “The Jews interpreted this blasphemy as a flippant use of the name Yahweh. The desire to avoid using the name of Yahweh in vain led them to omit the name Yahweh from their vocabularies completely. They substituted “the Name” in its place in conversation and in composition.”⁵
- “God evidently preserved the record of this significant incident in Scripture not just because it took place at the time God was revealing these standards of sanctification. It illustrates how God regarded those who despised the very standards He was giving. This event was a warning to the people concerning the seriousness of sanctification just as the death of Nadab and Abihu (ch. 10) was a similar warning to the priests.”⁶
 - 24:16-22 The incident of blasphemy also provides an occasion to expound on laws of retribution that Jesus later quotes from in the Sermon on the Mount (16-22). These laws were not entitlements (to be taken literally) as much as they were to illustrate that the punishment must fit the crime. It prevented injustice and extortion when a crime had been committed.
- “In Israel a name represents the whole person and thus becomes a powerful force, as powerful as the person named. The ‘name of the LORD’ is clearly a force to be reckoned with in the Old Testament because it represents the divine nature, all that God is known to be (Exod 34:4-7, Isaiah 9:6-7).”⁷

Chapter 25:1-7 – The Sabbath Year

- The underlying emphasis for all of chapter 25 is that the land belongs to the LORD (25:23) – not to the individual. These observances, as does the entire Book of Leviticus, help the people remember their allegiance to the LORD and that all they have comes from him. As they remember these simple truths, it enables both the individual and the nation to remain faithful to the LORD as he continues to give them everything they need for life and holiness.
 - One year out of every seven was a Sabbath year in which the people were not allowed to do any work to produce crops that year. Whatever sprang up on its own and the leftovers from the previous year’s harvest were fine to eat – but no one could labor to produce crops (25:1-7)
- “As God ordered the people to rest every seventh day, so He ordered them to let the land rest every seventh year. By resting the people renewed their strength and rejuvenated their productivity in His service. By resting the land’s strength likewise revived and its productivity increased. Modern agronomists have supported the practice of allowing land to lie fallow periodically. God did not want the Israelites to work the land “to death” (i.e., to rape their environment). It belonged to God. Ecologists have argued for the same careful use of the environment that God required of His people. By using the land properly the Israelites sanctified their possession of it. They set it apart to God.”⁸

⁴ Ross, see footnote on 446.

⁵ Constable, 92.

⁶ Constable, 92.

⁷ Ross, 446.

⁸ Constable, 94.

Chapter 25:8-55 – The Year of Jubilee

- God commanded the rest of the land every 7 years. The completion of seven Sabbath years (7x7 year periods) God declared to be the Year of Jubilee – a Sabbath rest again for the land and, additionally, a Sabbath rest for debts (land, money, & slaves).
 - Year 49 = Sabbath Year
 - Year 50 = Jubilee Year
 - In addition to the Sabbath observance for the land, if you owned a slave – he had to be set free (25:39-55). If anyone owed you any money – the debt was forgiven (25:25-38). If you had purchased any land since the last Jubilee year – it reverted back to its original owner (25:13-17).
- “The main purpose of these laws is to prevent the utter ruin of debtors. In biblical times a man who incurred a debt that he could not repay could be forced to sell off his land or even his personal freedom by becoming a slave. Thus, about once in any man’s lifetime the slate was wiped clean. The rich had to part with the land and slaves they had acquired in the previous forty-nine year, while the poor recovered their land and freedom.”⁹
- “The year of jubilee did for the land what the Day of Atonement did for the people. This year removed the disturbance or confusion of God’s will for the land that resulted from the activity of sinners eventually. During this year God brought the land back into the condition that He intended for it. The fact that the priests announced the year of jubilee on the Day of Atonement (v. 9) confirms this correspondence.”¹⁰
- 25:18-22 – Needless to say – aside from it being a year of rest for the land and emancipation from slavery to debts, the Jubilee year also required a large amount of faith in the LORD. Since the Sabbath Year preceded this one, the people faced the obvious question in 25:20. The answer? The provision of the LORD would be so abundant that they wouldn’t even need the harvest for two years of Sabbath and the one year of waiting for the new crops to grow (three years).
 - This would have been a tremendous test for any Nation and perhaps this is one of the major reasons why there is no Biblical account of Israel *ever* observing the Sabbath Year or the Year of Jubilee. Ever. Ironically, some commentators have noted that the time Israel was in captivity in Babylon is exactly the same number of Sabbath Years that Israel had disobeyed.
- Isaiah 61 / Luke 4:18-19 – “The messianic age brings liberty to the oppressed and release to the captives. This age was inaugurated with Christ’s first coming (Luke 4:21). It will be completed by his second coming (James 5:1-8, cf. Lk 16:19-31). The jubilee, then, not only looks back to God’s first redemption of his people from Egypt, but forward to the ‘restitution of all things,’ ‘for the new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells’ (Acts 3:21; 2 Peter 3:13).”

Tough Questions:

1. Is God a Communist? ☺
2. What famous piece of United States history has Leviticus 25:10 inscribed on it? Why would that verse be inscribed on that particular piece?

⁹ Wenham, 317.

¹⁰ Constable, 95.

Offerings

His People's Offering of Obedience :: Chapters 26-27

The final two chapters may seem like they don't fit with the rest of the book, but they are vitally important to understanding the rest of the Hebrew Bible and Israel's history – even up through today.

- God called his people out of Egypt and made a covenant with them. It was a Suzarian-Vassal treaty in form where the Suzarian would promise blessing and protection in exchange for obedience and loyalty. The Nation agreed (Exodus 19:8). To the extent they obeyed, they would receive the blessings promised to Abraham. However, not a few days later the people had not kept their vow and disobeyed the LORD at the foot of the mountain (Exodus 32).
- Both the components of obedience and the keeping of a vow are fundamental parts of Israel's growth after coming out of Egypt. It would continue to be an important part of her lifestyle in the Promised Land. Of course, we all know what happened to Israel – she failed to obey all that the Lord had commanded her (see also Deut 28) and suffered the disobedience here described in Leviticus 26.

"In the ancient Near East it was customary for legal treaties to conclude with passages containing blessings upon those who observed the enactments, and curses upon those who did not."¹ The final two chapters of Leviticus follow closely to this custom to underscore the importance of what has preceded it.

Chapter 26:1-13 – The Blessing of Obedience

- Blessing is some kind of enrichment of life or enablement of prosperity that comes from the LORD.² It can be physical blessing, but spiritual blessings also function in this way. Generally speaking, whenever God gives a blessing it is rarely intended for the solitary use of the one who has been blessed. As Abraham learned early on, we are blessed to be a blessing.
 - It is important to emphasize here that obedience is not a condition to be in covenant with the LORD – it was the proper response as a result of being in covenant with him.
- Chapter 26 takes us right back to the garden of Eden. If the Nation simply obeys the LORD – putting their own will aside – God will continue to give them all they need as well as give them all of what was promised to Abraham.
- "The benefits of faithful obedience to the law of God would be fruitful harvests (vv. 4-5, 10), and security and peace (v. 6) including victory in battle (vv. 7-8) and numerical growth as a nation (v. 9; cf. Gen. 17:7). The obedient would also experience increasing enjoyment of God's presence and fellowship (vv. 11-12)."³
- There are some striking comparisons between the blessings outlined here in the first half of chapter 26 and the promises awaited by the prophet Ezekiel as he speaks about the blessings becoming reality (see Ezekiel 34-37).⁴
 - It is interesting to note the blessings Jesus describes to those who are citizens in his Kingdom in Matthew 5:1-12. There, blessings are promised to those who are poor, persecuted, humiliated, afflicted, etc. Not exactly the same as what we see here in Leviticus 26. Nevertheless, Peter re-iterates the same principles in 1 Peter 3:14-ff.

¹ Constable, 99.

² See Ross, 467.

³ Constable, 99

⁴ Wenham, 330.

Chapter 26:14-39 – The Incongruity of Disobedience

If the nation does away with her covenant faithfulness to the LORD, there will be consequences – and they will increase in scope and severity the longer the nation remains in rebellion. It will begin as a sudden feeling of terror (14-17). Then, if there is no repentance, the land will dry up and be barren (18-20). If disobedience still persists, then it will increase to war, plagues and further famine (21-22). Finally, if the nation will still not repent – she will be utterly cast out from the land and her cities destroyed (27-33).

- Curses in Hebrew Bible center around the idea of “removing or banishing a person from the place of blessing. Without the blessing of divine protection and provision, the people would have a difficult time in this world. They were left to their own devices – and therein lay the curse.”⁵
- “For an application of this passage to the church the expositor must be very careful. By definition the ‘church’ means those who are believers (not the organized churches). God will discipline his people when they fall into sin, but the descriptions in this chapter do not fit true believers, for they do not despise and abhor the word of God, refuse to believe, and persist in living in sin. There will be rewards for the faithful and loss of rewards for the unfaithful at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:10-15; 2 Cor 5:10). But in this life God’s dealings with believers are more a matter of his disciplining those he loves (Hebrews 12).”⁶
- If the Nation’s new identity is to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation – then rebellion against God is incongruent with their position and calling in God’s economy.

Chapter 26:40-46 – He disciplines us for our good. . . (Hebrews 12)

- 26:34-39 – “The length of the Babylonian captivity was 70 years because the Israelites failed to observe 70 sabbatical years in the land (2 Chron. 36:21; cf. Jer. 29:10).”⁷
- “Confession springing from humility would restrain God’s hand of discipline on Israel (vv. 40-41). Apostasy and consequent judgment would not invalidate God’s promises to Abraham (vv. 42-45). Discipline would be a stage in God’s dealings with Abraham’s seed, but He would not reject His people or cut them off as a nation. These verses are a strong witness to the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic Covenant.”⁸
- “Judgment does not prove that God has rejected his people. Rather he punishes them because they are his own (Amos 3:2). So if they confess their sin and humble their hearts, God will remember his covenant with the patriarchs (26:42-45).”⁹
 - Israel’s obedience or disobedience did not change the promises of God. To participate in the blessings and receive them required faith and obedience. But even in rebellion, God’s promises to Israel remain intact. This principle continues even to this day: despite Israel’s rejection of her Messiah, God’s promises to her remain unchanged (Matthew 21:42-46, Romans 9:6-ff, 11:1, 25-32).

Chapter 27:1-34 – The Making & Fulfilling of Commitments

“God did not command the Israelites to make vows or to promise anything to Him. However vowing is a natural desire of people who love God or want things from God. Therefore God gave the Israelites regulations that were to govern their vowing and dedicating. Though God did not command vows He expected that once His people made them they would keep them (cf. Prov. 20:25; Eccles. 5:3-5). It may be that part of the purpose of these regulations was to discourage rash swearing by fixing a relatively high price on the discharge and changing of vows.”¹⁰

⁵ Ross, 477.

⁶ Ross, 483.

⁷ Constable, 101

⁸ Constable, 101.

⁹ Wenham, 332.

¹⁰ Constable, 103

- In this culture, a person would make a vow to the LORD not because it was commanded, but because they were motivated by gratitude or a need for deliverance, for example. The worshipper would promise an animal or piece of personal property in exchange for God's blessing. (see Numbers 6, Judges 13, 1 Sam 1:10-11, Jonah 2:9)
- In such moments of passion and haste, however, some Israelites wished to change or back out of their vow and this chapter provides a way for that to happen – even though the vow had already been given as an offering to the LORD. As we shall see in this chapter, breaking a vow was not cheap – there were penalties involved if you wanted to redeem your vow from the LORD.
- Vows that involve other People (1-8):
 - People could be offered to the Lord – most likely to be priests or assistants to the priests. First born children, however, could not be offered.
 - "These figures are very large. The average wage of a worker in biblical times was about one shekel per month. It is little wonder that few could afford the valuations set out here (v. 8)."¹¹
- Vows that involve other animals (9-13):
 - "When a man made a vow he would name a particular animal that he would offer (e.g., Judges 11:30-31). When the time came for the sacrifice, he might well think he had been too generous, and see to offer another less valuable beast. Verse 10 gives a stern warning against such a move."¹²
- Vows that involve other property (14-24):
 - In particular, this section focused on houses and farm fields. If someone vowed a house and wanted to keep it after changing his mind, he could buy it back from the priest for the original price, plus one-fifth of the value. If the same thing happened with a field of crops, "the estimated value had to be for the value of the crops up to the time of the next Jubilee Year plus one-fifth on top of that. . . so that the price of redemption was equal to the investment."¹³
- Prohibited Gifts (26-34):
 - If you wanted to redeem something you couldn't redeem it with something of lesser value – nor could you redeem it with something that already belonged to the LORD: first-born animals, tithes, etc.
 - "God claimed as His possession one tenth of the seed, fruit, and livestock of the Israelites. If the owner wished to keep some of this himself, he had to pay the value of what he kept to God plus 20 percent. This tithe was a commonly recognized obligation to God and for this reason it was not part of the Mosaic Law (cf. Gen. 14:20; 28:22).³⁹² Probably Moses included the directions concerning it in this section of Leviticus because this tithe was a gift to God."¹⁴

"The Bible reminds people that what they promise God they must do. Believers must keep their word and show to the world that truth and faithfulness can be found in the household of faith, for the faithfulness of the LORD's word is often seen in the words of his people."¹⁵

- For whatever reason, commitments are not regarded with much weight in our day and age. Whether it is the covenant of marriage or simply backing out of a contract – vows are rarely taken seriously. In fact, we are more prone to take our wants and desires more seriously when they come into conflict with a commitment we have made in the past – especially when we have failed to count the cost, regret the commitment itself, and/or ignorantly (or willfully) ignore it. This is not consistent with the behavior of people who are a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to the LORD.
 - Matthew 5:33-37 – vows are no longer the only things in which we should be truthful, but in all that we say we should keep our word with the same truthfulness as a vow.

¹¹ Wenham, 338.

¹² Wenham, 338.

¹³ Ross, 493.

¹⁴ Constable, 104.

¹⁵ Ross, 495.

- Mark 7:9-13 – “It would work something like this. If I purchased a new 80386 Compaq computer and my parents wanted to use it some for keeping their financial records or for writing letters, I would solve the problem of sharing with them by giving it to the church. The computer would then be “God’s computer.” When my parents asked if they could use it, I could piously respond, “Oh, I can’t let you do that, it is holy, only to be used by God’s priest.” Thus, the computer is restricted to my use only, and my obligation to help my parents is nullified. Sin always finds a convenient and pious-sounding way to use what is good to accomplish what is evil.”
- See also . . . Deut 23:21-23, Ecclesiastes 5:4-7, Proverbs 20:25, Ephesians 4:25, Colossians 3:9-10, James 5:12
- What is encouraging about this passage is that vows aren’t always binding. They may be expensive to get out of and carry some severe consequences, but sometimes (not always) they can be changed – but it is only on the terms of the one with whom you have already made the vow. . . *not your terms*.
- It may seem strange, but this chapter serves as a fitting end to the Book. God has called his people to himself, made a covenant with him, and they have promised to do all that He has commanded them (Exod 19:8). Will they fulfill their vow to the LORD now that they have a means of becoming who he has called them to be?

Tough Questions:

1. Is Joel Osteen really that far off base? It sounds like from this lesson that if I obey God, I will have my ‘best life now’. Why does he get so much criticism from other Christians?
2. Why isn’t a person’s word worth much these days? How much is your word worth?

Concluding Thoughts:

- “For centuries God was teaching people important theological aspects about his eternal plan. When the Son of God came into this world to fulfill this plan, a treasure of theological images and ideas was ready at hand. People knew exactly what God meant by sacrifice, because the Spirit of God had taught it to and through Israel in the revelation of the sacrifices and offerings. People understood what was meant by atonement, purification, or consecration because the people of God has been living out these rituals for centuries. People were fully aware of the differences between clean and unclean or between holy and unholy because those categories had been applied to every detail of life for as long as folks could remember. By the time of Jesus, sacrifices, rituals, festivals and all of the Levitical procedures were at the center of Israel’s way of life.”¹⁶
- “Because Jesus fulfilled the law, the Apostle Paul can then point to a new law for the church – the law of Christ (Gal 6:2). To be ‘under the law’ is used nine times in Paul’s writings, seems to be antithetical to Christianity. Christians are not living under the law of Moses as the binding constitution of the church. That law was provided for a time of preparation for the fulfillment. Now that Christ has fulfilled the law, followers of Jesus are not to go back under the regulations of the law as if Jesus accomplished nothing. They are not under the law of Christ. This language certainly means they have laws to keep (1 Cor 7:19); and these laws cover what the law of Moses intended. Some of the Mosaic laws have been integrated fully into the New Testament (1 Cor. 9:20-21, Gal 6:2), but as always the spirit of the law has been heightened as these laws are interpreted through Christ. To be free from the law of Moses does not mean being free from all commandments or restraints. It means that for those who are ‘in Christ’ the law has no power to condemn, because Christ has fulfilled it; but it also means that those who are ‘in Christ’ died to sin and now must live in the righteousness of Christ. . . To accomplish this they have the new covenant provision of the Holy Spirit dwelling in

¹⁶ Ross, 17.

them and leading them into righteousness. If Christians fail to live righteously, they may confess their sins and find forgiveness based on the blood of Christ. This will enable them to continue in fellowship with the Lord and enjoy a life of service and blessing."¹⁷

- "The *basis* of salvation in every age is the death of Christ. The *requirement* of salvation in every age is faith; the *object* of faith in every age is God; the *content* of faith changes in the various dispensations."¹⁸

Now that we have taken diligence to understand and appreciate the acorn from which the Gospel has sprouted, we are now ready to more fully understand and apply this Gospel that is so rich with the grace of God! Hopefully this study has helped you understand the components of the Gospel and you are now able to explain it in a variety of detail. In fact, an in-depth study of the Book of Hebrews would be an appropriate extension of this study.

It is my hope that as you have been studying Leviticus it has made you more fully understand and appreciate our LORD's *offering* to us in his Son, Jesus Christ. As a result, I pray that it motivates you to *offer* your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. . .with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.

"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."

Romans 11:33-36

¹⁷ Ross, 64-65.

¹⁸ Ryrie, Charles. *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 123.