

Be Ye Holy

The Third Book of

Moses:

Leviticus

Michael R Mobley

1st edition/2010

2nd edition/3015

A Holy People – An Overview

Another title: A Sanctified People

I. Introduction

It seems that every religion has at least 5 components vital to its entire structure, function, practice, and teaching:

- someone or something to worship
- a method of atonement or redemption
- a code of doctrine and conduct
- a hope that there is a better life, eternal or not
- and a body of believers to embody the religion and convert the rest.

The book of Leviticus sets forth the sacredness of each of these as they establish, experience and allow us to experience a redeeming relationship with God.

II. Study outline

Introduction

1. A Holy Calling
2. A Holy Work
3. Holy Offerings (1-7)
4. Holy Priesthood (8-10)
5. Holy Environment (11-15)
6. Holy Atonement (16)
7. Holy Law (17-22)
8. Holy Assemblies (23-25)
9. Holy Obedience (26-27)

Introduction

Introductory readings from among the congregation:

- 1) Abraham's covenant (Gen. 12:1-9)
- 2) Moses' exodus (Exodus 14:26-31)
- 3) Joshua leads them into the promised land (Joshua 1:1-9)
- 4) Joshua's farewell (Joshua 24:14-28)
- 5) David seeks God's blessing (1 Chronicles 29:10-18,20-22)

What is God doing?

God has always wanted a people of his own in the earth to fill it with his righteousness:

- 1) Adam and Eve failed him and his creation could not be left to themselves because they became so wicked and evil that he would destroyed it all, except for Noah.
- 2) So he sought out and called Abraham to begin his work to build a nation of his own among the nations of men. It was temporary phase of his plan because it would not work.
- 3) He finally sent his Son to establish his spiritual kingdom on earth.
- 4) The work will not be finished until God brings all of His people home

Cannon location:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 1) Genesis – beginnings | chosen people |
| 2) Exodus – redemption | redeemed people |
| 3) Leviticus – worship | sanctified people |
| 4) Numbers – journey | pilgrim people |
| 5) Deuteronomy – law | covenant people |

56x the book claims to be God's book written by the hand of Moses

Historical background:

- 1) Man was not an uncivilized and undeveloped caveman type creature in those ancient days of Isreal. "Massive numbers of people lived in massive cities and sizable towns highly organized under sophisticated social, political, legal, and economic systems expressed through diverse, evolving, and sophisticated cultures." The Hebrew nation was beginning to establish and form itself in this environment.
- 2) Israel was to be the nation of people that God called out from among all of these other nations, for one reason, because they did not worship and acknowledge Him. Then, God

organized a nation at Sinai and Leviticus is a part of God's law for that nation. It is a law that would lift His nation to a higher standard, measure, code of conduct, prosperity, and quality of life if the people would obey it, even though they began as a group nomads, wandering pilgrims (since the days of Abraham) and were smaller than the other nations.

- 3) Leviticus is a piece of the divine code designed to define and identify them as God's holy people.
- 4) God gave his moral law to Israel at Sinai but he gave them his tabernacle law – or his law of atonement and worship – out of (in the midst of) the tabernacle when it was first completed and God made his presence known in the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-38). What are some characteristic distinctions between these two codes of law from God?

Name:

- 1) "The book of the Levites" – a book for the priests and the people (to whom they minister in their service to God)
- 2) Given because Jehovah now dwelled among a people on earth – his people – in holiness to provide guides for his people to remain in relationship with him, to keep fellowship with him.

Who were the Levites (Numbers 3, 8, 18; Deuteronomy 7; and 1 Peter 2):

- 1) Descendants of the tribe Levi
- 2) That portion of the tribe set apart and dedicated to be ministers and servants of the sanctuary
- 3) Primary duties – care and administration of the holy things of God so they were consecrated to God as his "peculiar property".

Function of their duties:

- 1) Preserve the law of Jehovah in all its purity and integrity
- 2) Ensure all its requirements duly compiled with
- 3) Hand it down to and pass it on to posterity
- 4) Keep the sanctuary – guard it, open and close it, look after its cleansing, prepare the bread, lead the music in worship, assist in killing and preparing sacrifices of the people for the altar, examine the lepers, and maintain the tabernacle supplies

Levites care:

- 1) By God's instruction – were not given any of the promised land
- 2) Their portion was Jehovah himself (Numbers 18:20)

- 3) Each tribe gave for them from their portion 4 cities with adequate pasture

Message and characteristics of the book:

- 1) Book of the cleansing, worship, and service of God's redeemed people
- 2) Primary emphasis – distinction between holiness and unholiness in every arena of one's life
- 3) Approaching God thru sacrifice (1-7), consecration (8-10)
- 4) Living with God thru established separation (11-17), established morality and ritual in life (18-27)
- 5) Three basic divisions:
 - Priestly Holiness (1-15)
 - Day of Atonement (16) (as if this is the center-piece)
 - Practical Holiness (17-27)

Encouragement and insight into who we are:

Deuteronomy 7:6-13

- 1) Are a holy people to God – holy because God chose them and called them out of the world: chosen to be his treasured possession – consider what he has invested in his people.
- 2) The idea of a sanctified people is “a holy people”.

Reflections on Holiness

Message of the book:

God is holy and he requires holiness in his presence. The tabernacle is about relationship between God and his people. We are the people God has called out of the world to be his people, he chose us to be his treasured possession. We are God's people and that truth makes us pilgrims in this spiritual godless desert we call man's world, so this world is not our home. As God's people, we are to be holy for He is holy, and just what that is will be the focus of our study of Leviticus. So, embedded in being holy is that we are separate and apart from the world thus we live above the world.

Truths of Leviticus (How does each of these describe God's people today):

- 1) Tabernacle – God's people are not to see the earth as their home for we are on a journey home, pilgrims and strangers in/to the world of man. When the wanderings ended and they had dwelt in the promised land, that view of life was lost by God's people (Exodus 40:34-38). Their tabernacle is a temporary, not fixed dwelling.
- 2) Congregation -- a holy community held together by spiritual/religious bonds not political or social bonds as the other nations of the world; A covenant people – often used to describe why they assembled, an exclusive group
- 3) Covenant – God established a relationship exclusively with the people whom he had chosen and loved first. It is the idea that God chose a people to be his own and promised to move in providence for their well-being and only required their loyalty. (Deut 4:13 and Exo. 34:28, 24:3, 23:20-33)
- 4) Expiation – the act of freeing the sinner from the punishment of his sins by providing for substitutionary sacrifice or offering; OT – repeated animal and NT – Jesus self-sacrifice once (Lev 17:11, Hebrews 10, John 1:29, Matthew 20:28). It is the reason and basis for the covenant and congregation and the reason for and heart of the tabernacle and the means of purification and cleansing of sin.
- 5) Atonement – to cover transgression, to pacify wrath. God had to cover our sin to pacify his wrath or we could not live in His presence and that is why our sin separates us from Him. (Hebrew 9:13-14, Matthew 26:28, Ephesians 1:3-14, Colossians 1:1-14)
- 6) Forgiveness – Forgiveness is man's reconciliation with God; it is peace and relationship restored with God. God seeks to be reconciled with his creation and man seeks reconciliation with God. God provides it and man accepts it by removing the guilt

and punishment of man's sin through substitutionary sacrifice. Faith moves man to offer the sacrifice for substitution and grace moves God to accept it.

I believe the grace of God and faith of man is in more in the Substitutionary nature of the sacrifice (John 3:14-17). How can it be that Jehovah my God would die for me? Or How can I find the words to explain God's love? (Romans 11:33-36)

The greatest message the human heart can ever hear is this – ***God wants to forgive me. He is not watching for me to fall!***

7) Consecration – the act of setting apart any person or thing to the worship and service of God. The law required the best and cleanest to be given to God of man and offering (Lev.1).

8) Holiness – holy means pure, clean, sacred; holiness is separation, set apart, moral soundness; separation from all that is sinful, impure, and morally imperfect to be sanctified for God in his worship and service.

(Lev.19:1-2, 1 Peter 1:13-16, Galatians 5:16-26)

Holy God – one of the essential attributes of the nature of God; entire and complete freedom from sin and evil; absolute moral perfection; not that God is subject to the same law or standard of moral perfection but that holiness is defined by what God is.

(Lev.20:7) Holiness requires by its very nature full opposition to and complete rejection of all that defiles.

9) Unclean – contaminated, defiled, filthy, corrupted; rooted in the corruption that entered the world through sin (Isaiah 64:4-7).

Ceremonial uncleanness is designed to demonstrate the truth of the soul's defilement before God that separates us from God.

(Lev.11-17, Acts 10:1-16) ceremonial defilement

(Matthew 15, Mark 7) true defilement

10) Worship – act of paying religious homage and reverence, fear, to deity; not a token expression but the soul's genuine response to God. "It is as natural to worship as it is to live...It is a necessity to man." It is the feeling and expression of highest adoration, reverence, trust, loyalty, love, and dependence." It is the desire or natural inclination toward God to the depths of seeking God. Worship raises man above the brutish nature of the flesh or animal and protects and secures him from sinking into the state of a purely physical existence. Expresses one's surrender to the only True and Living God.

Holy Offerings (1-7)

Introduction

1. The offerings – whole burnt meat and grain offerings
2. The occasions – sin offering, trespass offering, guilt offering, peace offering
3. The offerer – the priests, the congregation, the individual

The law for sacrifice offerings

I. Types:

- All offerings were given voluntarily and personally
- All offerings were given unto the Lord
- All altar sacrifices are a demonstrative representation of what God will do for us in Christ at Calvary.

A. Whole burnt offerings (1, 6:8-13).

1. Life must be given for life, blood must be shed for cleansing of purification from sin; the sacrifice became a very personal act, the loss of life demonstrates to the sinner who is offering the bloody sacrifice what it requires of him and what it costs to be cleansed to become holy and be one with God; it should both lower him and lift him up.
2. “without blemish” – without any fault, defect, or imperfection; highest quality
 - *Question: Is there anything actually clean or unclean in the animal? Why this restriction? To teach us by demonstration the truth or principle that holiness requires our very best -- and that can come at a high cost to us?*
 - What is not pure and holy (by demonstration) cannot be used to make one pure and holy, that which is unholy and unclean or impure can not be accepted by the Holy and Pure God.
3. “cut into pieces” – exceedingly tragic character of sin; did not simply kill the animal but butchered it; this violence reminds of the destructive effects of sin and the suffering effects of its atonement.
 - *Question: What is the nature of sin and its effects on us? Self-destructive! If sin is at such a high cost, holiness is no less!*
 - This demonstrates the high cost to us to be holy; the offering was a bloody and costly ordeal that was repeated twice daily and at every feast day in addition to the twice daily and this lasted for approx 1500 years! (More when we look at Jesus’ sacrifice.)
4. “arrange the pieces” – demonstration of faith to obey (the true nature of obedience)

5. "a pleasing aroma to the Lord" – a pleasant sweet smelling delight to God that satisfies his need for the offering!
 - God feels: If he is rejected, God hurts because he is not given the honor and love that he desires and deserves; It hurts God because we do not seek him and offer sacrifice. How do you think it hurts God if we do not trust him to accept what he requires and obey him? God is joyful and loved when we do!
 - *Question: What is a pleasing aroma to God? Is it the sacrifice or what drove the worshipper to make the offering? (Hebrews 10:6)*
6. Is there any significance in God allowing the different animals?
 - Genesis 22 – first indication of sacrifice as a substitute

B. Grain offerings (2, 6:14-23)

1. Requirements:
 - "fine" flour (if flour)– highest quality, clean of chaff, etc.
 - "firstfruits" (if ears of grain directly from the field).
 - "put on frankincense" – a scented plant oil that lengthens the burning of the fire.
 - "no leaven" – leaven represents an unholy presence
 - "no honey" –
 - "salted" – purity and longevity
2. Grain not easily found in the wilderness, they were nomads in the desert!
 - Nor was it common in the promised land; it was precious commodity, not as accessible as livestock'
3. Grain is non-living and sheds no blood, hence could not be used for the sin offerings for it could not serve as substitute -- life for life
4. Distinction:
 - Meat – atonement from God
 - Grain – worship of God
5. Grain represents:
 - Sacrificial giving – Philippians 4:18, I Corinthians 9:13-14, 2 Corinthians 8:1-2
 - Trust in God for one's life needs that seeks and trusts dependence on God (Matthew 6, Deuteronomy 8:11-14, 6:10-12) and spiritual well-being (Deuteronomy 28:1-6)

II. Uses:

1. Peace offerings (3, 7:11-21)

- offered after the burnt offering for the day
- only sacrifice associated with a meal, only sacrifice in which the offerer actually partakes of the sacrifice as a festive feast
- “peace” – meaning or completeness or wholeness, as in one with God in worship, acceptance for the offerer from God, at peace with God based on the shedding of innocent blood
- the peace and joy or rejoicing that is given by knowing one is forgiven by God
- Matthew 27, Mark 15 – Christ is God’s peace offering for us because he took God’s anger and wrath against my sin away from me and now I have peace with God restored
- Ephesians 2:13-18 --- and as my love for God expresses itself in my love for my fellow man (Matthew 22:34-40) so my peace with expresses itself in my peace with my fellows and that is the nature, spirit, and effect of grace on and of the church
- 1 John 1 -- the result of my peace with God is my fellowship with God and so my fellowship with you
- Luke 14 – and will God make peace with and desire to have a feast with? and why were they invited to the feast?
- Acts 2:36-47 – what was the result of salvation but the practice of fellowship which requires peace between the partakers
- Luke 15 – the fatted calf was the sacrifice of a peace offering because the father had now accepted his and restored their fellowship they last when he left his father’s house
- 1 Corinthians 11 – now consider the significance of the Lord’s “Supper” partaken of in the fellowship of the assembly
- Galatians 2:11-21 --- so this identifies the heart of Paul’s rebuke of Peter who did not follow what the Lord had taught him (Acts 10-11)

2. Sin offerings (4, 6:24-30)

- “sins unintentionally” – by mistake or not aware it was sin or that he had done a sinful thing; we can sin when we don’t intend to or willfully (Numbers 15:27-31) This is in contrast to an intentional sin with a high hand for which the sinner must be cut off before he can make atonement, as with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3) – so such a sinner is to be cut off from the people because he sins to revile the word of God and blaspheme God and reject the command of God.

- *Question: Is Christ on the cross solely a sacrifice by God for us, for does Jesus become our sacrifice when we accept and obey him ?*
- God has already provided the sacrifice but it is not going to be my sacrifice -- it can not do anything for me -- until I accept "it" and obey Him. As in the old system, God made the provisions but it did each one no good until they had the faith to make the offering for the sacrifice. I have made that point in class a time or two but maybe not in that question form so I will add it for chapters 4 and 5.
- "sprinkles the blood of the whole burnt sacrifice before God in the sanctuary at the front of the veil"
- *Question: What is the significance of the veil between the Most Holy Place and the rest?*
- The veil of the sanctuary was in place to separate God from the world, to deny man direct access to God (Isaiah 59:1-2, 64:4-6). The sprinkled blood symbolized that shed blood for atonement/redemption – forgiveness – is the only way to have access to God, to be made clean so Adam's helpless race would have access to God. But the old covenant system could not do it. The veil was torn asunder at the death of Jesus to open the way to God (Matthew 27:51, John 14:1-6). Now we can enter into the presence of God and without fear, distrust, shame and boldly make our petitions (Hebrews 4:14-16, Matthew 7:7-11)
- "and the priest shall make atonement for him and the Lord shall forgive him" -- After the priest first had to offer sacrifice for himself and the whole congregation.
- *Question: How could God accept what could not atone?*
- (Hebrews 10:1-4) Even though the animal system could not take away sin, they were ordained by God because man's sin is exceedingly sinful and God's wrath against it is exceedingly angry. Something is needed and man has nothing to offer in his place. God's grace moved to make atonement for his creation and redeem Adam's helpless race.
- "turtledoves" – occasions when the birds were to be used with the animal from the herd to be offered
- sin offering sacrificed for the state of sin while the guilt offering sacrificed for specific sin
- "the thing that God had commanded not to be done" – evil or sin is what God's law calls it to be and not man; culture and man's law does not make it so, only God determines right or wrong
- sin is costly because it defiles; there is a high cost to get clean, we must pay a high cost to become holy

3. Trespass (Guilt) offerings (5:1-6:7, 7:1-10)

- “shall sin in the holy things of God” – what are the holy things of God?
- Matthew 5:24-26 ---- offerings when there is not peace between you and another
- “he shall make restitution” – sacrifice for specific sin restores our peace and fellowship with God because it forgives and removes from us the guilt and filth of our sin, not because it absolves us of any moral or legal requirement (responsibility): God cleanses and restitution is our responsibility: Consider the requirements of restitution as stated in God's law in Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Question: Is the function of restitution to restore us to one another?

- NOTE: Ten times in chapters 4-5, as he dealt with the sacrifice to be offered for sin, God said “and the priest shall make atonement for him and he shall be forgiven! (see the discussion from Hebrews 9-10)

III. Fundamental elements (character, quality) of sacrificial offerings:

- Idea – began as spontaneous expressions of the patriarchs of the gratitude and reverence they felt toward God woven together with the desire to secure God’s favor and mercy; it was an expression of man’s faith in God’s grace.
- Legal element – appeasing God’s wrath by substitution
- Moral element – blood is life so shedding of blood is self-sacrifice for another to live
- Relationship element – reconciliation; covenant oneness between God and the one who presented the offering for sacrifice
- Symbolic element – (Abraham and Issac) sacrifice demonstrates that God requires our lives; substitution demonstrates that He does not require our death but the surrender of our hearts and ourselves (hence the meaning of Romans 12:1-2, Mark 8:34-38, with Matthew 22:34-40)
- Sacrificial element – God accepted only the animal offering for sin sacrifice; substitute life for life; blood has come to represent a visual expression of oneness of God and the one offering the sacrifice.

IV. Principles of sacrificial offerings:

- The nature of faith – If they wanted to approach God, if they were seeking his fellowship, this was the only way. It was what God required. He is the Holy One. They had to believe that and accept it to obey; they had no other way but to trust that, trust God.

- The nature of sacrificial offering --The exceeding sinfulness of sin, exceeding suffering of Christ, the exceeding grace of God.
- The nature of reconciliation -- God wants to make peace with me and he wants us to be reconciled.
- The nature of sin -- Man's depravity; not sacrifice for specific sin but for the condition of sin, condition of every man is a sinner (Genesis 8:21).
- The nature of forgiveness -- The sacrifice demonstrates God's love for me and my faith to trust him. I can not atone for my sinful condition and it is must be done for me, that my acceptance with God and I cannot approach God until I accept the atonement he made. Thru shedding blood man knows his worth and dignity is not by self or others but in being accepted by God (John 3:14-17)
- The nature of obedience -- The meticulous nature of God's rules regarding the offerings is required and necessary because of man's rebellious tendency to do things his own way (John 14:6, 8:12).
- The nature of redemption -- Atonement was not in the animal blood, but the grace of God; animal has no consciousness of sin and guilt but God imputed to the sacrifice what he knows he would do with His own Lamb.
- The nature of grace – First, that there is no way that the animal's blood could make one clean and holy, no matter how much blood was shed; but God accepted it and allowed their fellowship. Second, why would God invest so much in us if he did not believe that we could be holy? Remember how God stayed with them in the wanderings, even though they did not always follow rightly (Titus 2:11-14).

V. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God for eternal redemption:

- (Isaiah 53) God did not intend to keep the old system but it was necessary to make the world ready for His suffering servant. God has always intended for His Son to be the sin offering for Adam's helpless race.
- (Colossians 2:11-22) Because Christ is what God intended from the beginning, and it was now time, Christ removed that code of regulations with its animal sacrifice system.
- (John 3:16-17) Christ brought eternal redemption for us all because God has always loved us all in the midst of his wrath for our unbelief and unrighteousness.

VI. Christ brought eternal redemption for us all (Hebrews 9-10):

- Way to the Most Holy Place is closed to all of us as long as the earthly tabernacle stood, as long as the Holy Place stood (9:6-10). The Holy Place was symbolic of the Church, the Most Holy place was symbolic of God's place (Heaven) and outside the tabernacle was

the world. The church stands between the world and God and the access or way from the world to God. But sacrifices in the tabernacle court did not and could not open access to God

- Animal sacrifices could not clear the conscience of the offerer (9:11-14) The system was a constant reminder of the sinner's guilt. Animal sacrifices did not have the power to effect moral change/perfection. Yet, Christ only needed to offer himself but one time.
- Christ's death redeems those who offered the animal sacrifices for their sins to be atoned for and forgiven (9:15-22). No forgiveness can be given, no atonement made without bloodshed. But Christ torn down their animal system and shed his blood to make atonement for them.
- Christ did not enter the earthly tabernacle (9:24-26). Christ shed his blood on the altar of Calvary then entered Heaven himself to be in God's presence on our behalf and there he is now still pleading on our behalf. Then he is going to return to take all the redeemed to Heaven to be with him forever. No high priest of the old system could do this.
- Christ sacrificed himself once and for all (10:1-18). There is only the need for any further sacrifice because Christ has already done that. The old system could not do that and that is why it was a system of repetition and reminding. So, their forgiveness was imputed to them by grace for their faith to trust God. Therefore, there is no more need for sacrifices by anybody for anyone for any because Christ forgives everyone's sin from any point in time. Once the sin is forgiven, once the sinner is purged of his sin guilt, sin is no more a burden to carry, no more guilt to be remembered or forgiven (Malachi 7:18-19). The old system could not do this!
- So the old system was never what God intended (10:5-10). It was not what God intended to be but was necessary in its time. Christ and his church are what God always intended to be but needed time to prepare the world and to prepare the way for Christ. All now have free, full, and absolute forgiveness.

Holy Priesthood (8-10)

Introduction

(2 Chronicles 5:11-14) Significance of the priesthood ministry: when Israel worshipped God, he responded and it was the priests who led and served the assembly.

Review

God has chosen a people to be his treasured possession – his children

God has made atonement for us to be his people

God has given us the priesthood to serve him

Overview

God established his priesthood:

1. Aaron and his sons are anointed and consecrated (8)

All priests are from the tribe of Levi; the High Priests must come from the line of Aaron

(1-6) washed to be cleansed and purified by water to be anointed by God, consecrated to God, charged with the ministry of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

(7-9) anoint and put on the garments of devotion to master, duty, and life that are from God and cover the entire person (Colossians 3) the garments of Christ's priests are the spirit, heart, and mind of Christ (Ephesians 6) and protected from the unclean and unholy evil by the spiritual armor of God

(10-13) anoint and dedicate the vessels of their ministry that are given by God for the tabernacle and the sacrificial altar (2 Timothy 2)

(14-32) sacrifices for consecration: 1) purify the altar, 2) sin sacrifice to purify the priest for a sweet aroma to God then they were anointed with oil and blood from the altar sin sacrifice (v.30), 3) sin sacrifice to sprinkle the blood on the sons of Aaron, 4) wave offering of grain and the ram's breast after anointed to be feasted on at the door of the tabernacle (v31)

(Titus 3:1-8) the cleansing by the blood of Christ's sacrifice is not only for the washing away of sin but for regeneration of life.

What is regenerated?

(33-35) set apart from the people for 7 days at the door of the tabernacle to make atonement and keep the charge of the Lord -- else they will die

2. Aaron and his sons begin their ministry (9)

(1-21) prepared and offered the atonement, sins, and peace offerings for the priests and the people with this promise – if they obey and do as God commanded them in this matter, he would send them his glory, he would come to be with them.

(22-24) Aaron, the first High Priest, and Moses bless the people and God consumed the burnt offerings himself (Numbers 6:22-27)

3. Aaron and his sons priestly conduct (10)

(1-7) Two of Aaron's son disobey God by taking unauthorized fire into the tabernacle – they put fire in their censor that did not come “eternal flame” that was to burn in the Holy Place and which represents the presence of God. They dishonored and disobeyed God and he sent a fire to consume them in the wrath of his judgment. Why fire? Why did Aaron “hold his peace”?

(Acts 5:1-11)

(Hebrews 12:18-29)

(8-11) no alcohol or drunkenness when serving in the tabernacle so they can discern holy and unholy things and have a pure and clean mind to teach God's statutes and laws to the people; God's priests are to be holy and pure – not spiritually dulled by the unclean and unholy – to keep sharp sense of discernment and teaching

(Colossians 3:16-17)

(2 Timothy 3:10-17) to be an example of sound teaching, Christlike behaviors and habits, living above all to honor God and do His will, devoted faithfulness to God's Word and obedience to His commands, patient forbearance, showing true love of Christ, humble endurance in hard times or persecutions or afflictions; the holy scriptures teach, train, and establish us in the holy life.

(2 Timothy 4:1-5)

(Ephesians 4:11-16)

(12-15) what they can eat of the sacrifices, partake of the purified meat and eat it in a place that is not contaminated by the unclean things

(16-20) because of the events of the day Aaron and his two remaining sons were afraid to eat of the meat because they believed they were unclean or somehow not in a position to partake of the feast in a holy manner (Acts 5:1-11)

4. God's people have the High Priest, Jesus Christ, Son of God and our Lord:

- The church is God's chosen people
- (Acts 2:41-47, Ephesians 5:2-27)
- God's people need a High Priest (Ephesians 1:7-10, 1 John 1:5-10) -- To make atonement for our sin when we accept them (Romans 8:26-39) -- To mediate with God for us (John 8:31-32 and 14:6, Titus 2:11-14) To instruct us in the holy way of God

5. Principles of the priesthood:

- Israel was painfully aware of their imperfect priesthood (Exodus 28:40-43, Leviticus 10:1-5)

- Christ's priesthood fulfilled and rendered the old system useless (Hebrews 7:1-28) better priesthood; perfect and superior priesthood not because of his ancestry but by virtue of his sinless eternal life will never need to offer a sacrifice for himself so he can make the intercession for us that we can't make for ourselves and so save us. Remember – under the old law the sinner had to bring a sacrifice to the priest for him to sacrifice and he could not do this if he had not offered a sin sacrifice for himself; and they had to repeat this everyday! Christ offered himself for us and only had to do it one time because his is eternal and God accepted it forever because he is absolutely pure – holy in righteousness, innocent of sin, unstained by all that is unholy and unclean (w/o blemish), not confined by the world or the hands of man, and enthroned in with God.
- (Hebrews 7:11-28) better covenant; a change in the priesthood requires a change in law and superior or perfect priesthood requires a superior and perfect covenant – the former law was too weak and useless to draw us near to God while the new is the covenant of the priest who lives forever and is absolutely sinless
- (Hebrews 8:1-13) better ministry; the old priestly ministry was confined by human weakness so it required a flawless obedience to a strict code/law from God because it was merely a patterned shadow of the perfect that was planned by God to follow in His time; so, all the promises of the new covenant are better and faultless. The old law became obsolete with Christ because the new ministry brought forgiveness of sin and a spiritual law
- (Hebrews 9:1-28) better sacrifices/tabernacle; the old way could not draw them near to God the old was loaded with physical representations of what was not yet there and so could not give us redemption; the congregation only had access to the courtyard and they could not enter the two rooms of holiness in the tabernacle, only the priests could enter and then only under restrictions; Christ opened up the way to God for all persons by replacing the tabernacle with the church through his death on the altar of the cross (see Lev 1-7)

(Hebrews 10:1-18) better sanctification; the old way could not draw them near to God because the sacrifices they brought to God for their sin could not make them perfect or holy, they could not remove the sin from their conscience; the sacrifices were a constant reminder of their sin and guilt and could not take their sin away from them; only Christ could do all of that, only Christ's sacrifice of himself on the altar at Calvary could take away our sin and separate us from it.

Therefore, we have a loyal and better faith, a more holy faith, because of Christ's priesthood -- our faith is in Christ and not Moses:

(Hebrews 2:14-18,3:1) Our faith is in Christ who has the complete and absolute power to forgive of sin and redeem us from sin and empower us to resist sin and live the holy

(Hebrews 4:14-5:3) Our faith is in Christ who gives us the confidence or boldness to draw near to God and plead for his mercy and grace to live holy lives because he knows our weakness.

(Hebrews 5:7-10) Our faith is in Christ who feeds and trains our spirit in the habit to discern good from evil to live holy.

(Hebrews 10:19-39) Our faith is in Christ who gives us the spiritual strength remain loyal to Christ and turn away to anything else for it will fail (it cannot give any hope of redemption); even under pressure, Christ will strengthen and establish us to stand our ground.

3. Christ established a new spiritual priestly order; He is High Priest, and we are his priests (unlike many religions and church orders)

(Hebrews 9:13-14, 10:21-25, 1 Peter 2:5-9) no hierarchy in our priesthood save the Lordship of Christ our High Priest; no hierarchy among us within the church – no matter how important any preacher, elder, teacher, deacon, contributor, or any other member may think that he is; there is no one on a higher position than any other (Matthew 23:8-12, Philippians 2:1-4, James 4:7-10)

Consider the sacrificial nature of the new testament priesthood (Romans 12:1-8 and 15, Philippians 1:18-23, Hebrews 13:9-17)

4. What did the blood of Jesus do when He became the Lamb of God sacrificed by crucifixion?

(Isaiah 53:5) He was thrust through (as with the spikes) for our sinfulness and crushed to death for our wickedness -- and he was beaten when we should have been (beaten for us in our place) to "wipe" away (satisfy) God's wrath against us so that we are healed and have peace from our lethal sin-sickened state.

Some thoughts about our human failures as God's priests:

1. The entire Pentateuch is a record of failures; yet, God stayed with them and responded to them with judgment, redemption, and teaching for their learning, growth, discipline, and faithfulness (1 Corinthians 10:11-13, Romans 15:1-4)
2. When we come to the point we see that we can not trust ourselves, we must turn to God alone for our deliverance:

Human weakness is a basis for biblical strength

Human hopelessness is a basis for biblical hope

Hope is not hype; hype is human pride while hope is trust in God because of our failure

(2 Corinthians 4:16-5:4)

Holy Living (11-17)

Overview

Holiness requires:

Pure cleansing (1-7)

Pure service (8-10)

Pure living (11-16)

Introduction

Clean/Unclean carries a degree of meaning to us:

operating room – strict and rigid with no tolerance for less

public eating-places – lesser degrees of compliance are tolerated

private homes – defined by what the one living in the house is willing to tolerate

child's bedroom – everything shoved under the bed, into the closet, or any hiding place they may find

3rd world – free of “large clumps of contamination” which accepts a tolerance for lesser amounts

culturally – the “defined” barrier that separates groups of people in a community or entire society; such as a racial barrier as defined by the Jewish and Gentile cultures of ancient Israel

Biblically – the spiritual designation of the state of being and living of one's life before God

Clean/Unclean Foods

1. Categories:

clean land animals – must be both split hooved and cud chewing

clean sea animals – must have both fins and scales

clean winged animals – must be essentially non-vulture like birds that do not feed off the dead carcass of other animals or winged insects that jump (nothing is specifically said of the crawling insects, unless they are included in the next category)

animals that swarm the ground as identified are unclean
the dead carcass of any animal

2. Why these animals declared clean and all else unclean?

God gives no answer to the question but these suggestions are given:

those God declared unclean were used in pagan ritual/worship
(1 Corinthians 8) in Christ this is of no consideration except for one's own faith and conscience

those God separated as unclean were thought to be unsanitary or unhealthy to eat

(Romans 14) in Christ this is matter of one's own choice and not a matter of obedience

symbolic – “Thus said the Lord”

(Acts 10-11) in Christ this designation serves no purpose and so God who gives the law has changed it

Note: In the beginning, clean/unclean was an external designation. Yet, as the prophets began to preach about the future kingdom of God, it became an internal designation and David understood this (Ezekiel 36:24-27, Psalms 51: 10, Isaiah 6:5 and 64:6)

Clean/Unclean physical conditions (12-15):

1. Categories:

childbirth (12)

infectious skin diseases (13-14) – swelling with/without eruptions, boils, burns, in the hair or beard, hair loss, anywhere on the skin surface or anywhere under the skin surface

bodily discharge (15) – semen, menstrual fluids, blood for a woman any other time than menstrual

2. Declared unclean by the priest for childbirth and bodily discharge:

maintains purification period at home once completes the purification period, the priest declares them clean and offers the sin sacrifice for atonement; anyone who touched them or the discharge during the purification period must wash each time makes contact and was still unclean until evening

3. Declared unclean by the priest for infectious skin diseases:

Priest must separate from the congregation for several days the one suspected of being unclean

If priest declares him clean, he goes home; if he declares him unclean, he must remain separated from the congregation until the priest declares him clean; he then must offer sin sacrifice for atonement and cleansing (13)

Read 14:1-9 and note – the bird sprinkled with blood of the sacrifice would carry the blood from the altar away from the camp and the offender while the blood was washed from the offender; offender then allowed in camp but must sleep outside his tent for 7 days; on day 8 make the burnt offering and peace offering, then the cleansing is complete; finally must cleanse the house if priest declares it unclean; life and environment must be clean of contamination.

4. Question – Did God actually hold a husband/wife guilty of sin for their sexual relationship, a woman guilty of sin for her body’s natural cycles or childbirth, or anyone guilty of sin for contracting an infectious skin disease, or anyone guilty of sin for bodily discharges?

5. Answer – did not know about infections and community contamination

General principles:

1. Deals meat and not plants
2. Matter of category and not condition

3. Defined by God and declared by his priests
4. Regards the state of access to God:
 - unclean is separated
 - unclean is washed
 - unclean is atoned
5. So, ritual physical cleanliness is symbolic (teaching) of spiritual cleanliness – or holiness: God asks holiness of his people because he is holy; cleanliness is a condition or element of being holy. Only what is clean can become holy, separated for God. Therefore, we embrace what can be set apart for God and detest what cannot be set apart for God because it is unclean (Romans 12:9, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20)

Spiritual uncleanness:
(1 Peter 1:13-17)

(2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1)

(Philippians 2:12-18)

Our spiritual condition:

(Genesis 1:26-27, 2:7-8) God created man in His image, he imprinted man with His spiritual nature. So, man was imprinted with the sense and capacity of morality, to discern right and wrong, to make a choice, and the volition to follow that decision. Sin does not take that imprint of God away from us; it struggles against it.

(Galatians 5:16-26) That struggle is fought between our flesh and our spirit, between what is holy and clean (Christ) and what is unholy and unclean (sin)

Truth in our holiness: We are never good enough; but in Christ that is not the issue! Christ will make us clean! (Romans 8)

Final thought: In ancient Israel, the Jewish culture used the idea of clean/unclean to exalt themselves above the Gentiles and kept themselves from any contact with them – and it became a conviction of their faith and a tenet of their doctrine and practice of their religion. It became a struggle of the apostolic church. It must not or it will fracture the church! Has social or cultural clean/unclean fractured the church today?

(Acts 10-11, Galatians 2, Ephesians 2) – the classification of clean and unclean forces one to make judgments and separate himself from what he declares unclean. God has not made such judgment based on a person.

Holy Law (17-22)

Overview:

- Holiness begins with God's grace – he called us to be his own people, his “precious treasure” (introduction)
- Holiness is established through atonement for man's sinful state because it has separated all of us from God (1-7)
- Holiness requires pure service to God for the atonement of man and the ministry to God's people (8-10)
- Holiness is the living expression of God's purity and man's cleansing from defilement (11-16)
- Holiness is the living expression of obedient way of life to God's holy law (17-22)

Introduction:

17- Sanctity of blood

18- Sexual Purity

19-20 God's Law is Holy

21-22 God's Priesthood is Holy

Chapter 17

(1-9) Sanctity of the sacrificial altar:

God will accept only those sacrifices offered on the sacrificial altar at the entrance to the tabernacle. God will only that which is brought to Him and that can only be at the entrance of the tent of meeting. If it is offered anywhere else, God will not accept it – as though he were not there to accept.

(10-16) Sanctity of the blood:

No one who is living is to eat any blood absolutely – no one of God's chosen people and no sojourner who is among them. If one does:

God will set his face against you!

God will cut you off from where he is – he will cut you off from among

His people

If you contact blood of animal that does not die “by your own hand”, wash and be unclean until evening

Why?

The blood (not the flesh) is the life

The blood (not the flesh) is accepted for atonement

Life is of greater value than the flesh. So how we live is of

Flesh is the earthen vessel that carries the life, blood is the life, soul is the

My life and how I live it is of greatest value and significance

Chapter 18

(1-5) Life Principle of a holy relationship with holy God to live holy life:

“I am the Lord your God” – No one else, no other God in Israel! Do not follow the world because their law has no authority over you. No other God! Only Jehovah has authority over you. You obey only his law!

Principle of obedience – way to live a holy life is to obey God – is the way we live our lives so it becomes what we are (verse 5)

(6-18, w/20:10-21) Death penalty for all who commit incest or sexual intercourse with family relatives – as they did who once inhabited the land and God judged and drove out from them.

(19-23, w/20:10-21) Death penalty for all who has a sexual intercourse with a woman during her menstrual cycle or commits adultery, molests a child, homosexuality, or sodomy – as they did who once inhabited the land and God judged and drove out from them

(24-30) Such will be cut off from the people and cannot stand in the presence of God. How did the land vomit out the nation?

Chapter 19-20

(1-9) God’s law is holy because God is holy himself so we are to be holy.

How do we become holy? By keeping God’s law, by obeying God

(c.f. 18:1-5,20:22-27). Live holy by honoring parents, keeping all Sabbaths, abstain from (do not turn away from God to) idols, offer all peace offerings as instructed by Moses, love neighbors as yourself (Matthew 22:34-40)

(10-18) How we love our neighbor

(19:19-20:37) Holiness is a defiled land to purify it for God’s holy people.

This will distinguish them from the nations around them.

Philippians 1:19-26

James 4:1-17

Colossians 3:1-11

Colossians 3:12-17

Ephesians 5:1-33

Chapter 21-22

(21:1-15) Marriage restrictions – basically only a woman who is untouched sexually

(21:16-24) Restricted physical defects who of the Levites can be priest

(22:1-9) Priest cannot serve while in an unclean state; cut off from the tabernacle (the place of service) until declared clean and made atonement

(22:10-16) Lay person denied access to the benefits of the priests service

(22:17-30) Acceptable/Unacceptable offerings (c.f. 21:16-24, priests not to serve)

(22:31-33) Why all of this?

Purity of God

Purity of God's people

So, keep God's priest and people clean

Holiness Principle – obey God's instruction and command

1 Peter 1:13-17

Romans 6:1-14

Romans 6:15-23

Holy Days (23-25)

“Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘The LORD’s appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations—My appointed times are these:’” (Leviticus 23:2).

The LORD’s appointed times are festivals and holy days that commemorate significant times and events in Israel’s history.

The celebrations are fun, mostly, but they also teach us about eternal things. From a New Testament perspective, these holidays take on a meaning much richer than the Old Testament saints could have dreamed of. As Paul wrote to the Colossian church:

Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ (Colossians 2:16-17).

These holidays look back, in time, to miracles that God performed for the world and for the Israelites. They also look forward, in time, to the work of Jesus Christ. Occurring during the spring and fall harvests, they speak of God’s continuous provisions. Together they promise God’s eternal care for His people. These are congregation events/activities only.

The festivals as types (Col: 2:16-17)

Passover (John 1:29) crucifixion of Christ for the redemption of man

Unleavened bread (1 Corinthians 11:23-33) purity and holy life, the journey that follows redemption

First fruits (Romans 6, 1 Corinthians 15) resurrection, new life

Pentecost (Acts 2) the church -- community, family, fellowship

Trumpets (2 Corinthians 6:14-18) calling all God’s people out of the world and to Himself

Booths (John 10) providence, grace, love

1. The Sabbath (23:3, Genesis 2:1-3)

Sabbath means “rest.” The Sabbath celebration, spoken of in Leviticus 23, has its roots in the very creation of the world. God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. That is, he separated it from the others in kind and character. He made it holy. Because He rested after six days of labor, He enjoins His people to do likewise. Thus, the Sabbath becomes a weekly reminder that God is the creator of all things. Whenever I read of God resting on the seventh day, I imagine Him reflecting on and enjoying the work that He had done. Obviously, this is an anthropomorphic sentiment, but it helps me understand the intended purpose of this day. As it was for God, so it can be for our children and for us. It is a day of rest from the fast pace of the week. It is a day to reflect on God and His creation. It is a day to reflect on the week’s activities. It is a day to worship and express thanks. It is a day to do good to our neighbors.

(Isaiah 66:22-23, Hebrews 4:9-11) In Christ, the Sabbath rest of heaven that is represented in the day of rest for Israel (the nation and the church), the time when God is finished with his work of redemption, when all of God’s people will go home forever!

What continues to wreck the concept of Sabbath is legalism. Time and again it infiltrates the practice of a weekly rest and turns it into dull affair. God set aside a day for us to rest, to enjoy Him and His creation, and to do good deeds to others. Without such an appointed time, we would work seven days a week 365 days a year. If we did not set aside the time, we could let our relationship with God slip away. Unfortunately, the legalists cannot be comfortable until “work” is defined in detail. By the time they are done, the blessing and joy are gone. The day starts to speak of the sternness of God, rather than His loving-kindness. It loses sight of its roots in creation, rest, and fellowship with God. This same attitude was present in Jesus’ day. A distorted view of the Sabbath, held firmly by the Jewish leadership, inhibited them from recognizing Him as the Messiah. Sabbath controversies occupy all four of the gospels. In each, the controversy hinges on Jesus’ practice of healing on the Sabbath. To the Jewish leadership, healing was work and should not take place on the Sabbath. Besides, the joy expressed by those Jesus healed “disrupted” the sanctity of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-12, Mark 2:23-28, Luke 13:14-16)

“So, it is okay to show compassion on the Sabbath rather than rest. It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Even those who accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath attended to the comfort of their own animals on that day. They just could not extend the concept to people. At creation, God rested and enjoyed the work of His hands. He gave mankind a day for rest and fellowship. He gave mankind a day when it was possible to do good deeds, because during the rest of the week finding the time to do such things is harder. It should reflect love and joy. It should take on the characteristics of a holiday.”

2. Passover and the Unleavened Bread (23:4-8, Exodus 12:1-14, 2 Chronicles 30)

Passover is the Hebrew for “leap over to spare or show mercy by sacrifice”. The Unleavened Bread Feast was the 7 days of celebration that followed the day of the Passover sacrifice and meal.

Passover significance – the defining moment of God’s deliverance of his chosen people, that separated them from all other people and to himself and finally set them on the journey that would deliver them into the land that he promised for them to their forefathers, the land where they could live as his people. God preserved them, God delivered them, and God adopted them!

So, in effect it is a celebration:

- which restores their consecration, love, and devotion and faith to God to be his people;

- which reminds them of their severance from heathen nation and their heathen way;

- which renews their new life of grace and fellowship with God.

(Matthew 26:17-29, Romans 6) And so it is to the church, as well, a representation of reconciliation to God and gladness for his fellowship – all by the substitutionary sacrifice of His own Lamb (John 1:29)

Feast of Unleavened Bread significance (Exodus 12:15-20)

Given that leaven also symbolizes sin, this feast is an object lesson in righteousness. As the family cleans the house and searches for all leaven, they play out the process of sanctification. It is a reminder of God's righteousness. For those of us who are Christians, this Feast of Unleavened Bread reminds us of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit as He searches out and frees us from the sin that inhabits our house.

3. Firstfruits (23:9-14)

One of the days during the Feast of Unleavened Bread will be a Sabbath. The day following this Sabbath is the celebration of First Fruits¹. On this day, the first sheaf of harvested barley is brought to the Lord and waved before Him. The grain is then left for the priest and for the poor. This is an act of thanksgiving for the Lord's provision and bounty. No one is to eat from the new harvest until the wave offering is made.

In terms of Christianity, it is worth noting that the resurrection of Jesus Christ occurred the day following the Sabbath. His resurrection corresponds to this wave offering. He is, Himself, a first fruits offering. As Paul says,

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death (1 Corinthians 15:20-26).

Jesus' resurrection is the assurance of our resurrection. It is the promise that we will not see eternal death, but share in eternal life. When He rose from the dead, we became able to share in the new harvest, which I believe is the Holy Spirit.

First Fruits is such a simple holiday, and, yet, it has such significant meaning to us in the Church.

Passover is our redemption, Unleavened Bread is our sanctification, First Fruits is our promise of eternal life and resurrection, and Pentecost brings them all together!!!!

4. Pentecost (23:15-22, Exodus 19:1-2)

Pentecost gets its name from the counting of fifty days from the Sabbath following Passover. This places the holiday in the third month (Sivan) of the Jewish Calendar. It coincides with the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, which is what the holiday celebrates. The most unique aspect of this celebration in the temple was the waving of two **leavened** loaves of bread before the Lord. This was the only leavened offering made in the temple! These loaves, like the earlier wave offering, are also declared to be a First Fruits offering. Perhaps the loaves were to look like the two tablets of the Law.

The Jewish celebration of Pentecost often begins by staying up all night to read Torah. They emphasize the Ten Commandments. In this way they remember the events that took place at

Mount Sinai. Also, because of its association with the spring harvest, the Jews will read the Book of Ruth. And because Mount Sinai also looks forward to the time when Israel would enter the "land flowing with milk and honey," the foods of Pentecost are rich with milk, cream, and honey. This is the season for the cheese blintzes and apples dipped in honey. I should add that the honey also speaks of the sweetness of God's word.

Pentecost completes the Exodus story. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread tell of the escape from Egypt. The First Fruits speaks of manna and God's provision in the desert. Pentecost speaks of the giving of the Law, which in some respects became the Constitution for Israel, the nation. It suggests that the law at Mt. Sinai was given 50 days after they left Egypt.

For ancient Israel the nation and the new Israel the church, a day of recognition, celebration, gratitude, thanksgiving to for his bounty of spiritual blessings of calling and redemption. (Acts 2) It is the day that God fulfilled his promise of giving his Holy Spirit to Christ apostles and all believers.

Why to the apostles?

Why to all believers?

5. Feast of Trumpets (23:23-25)

The holy day is designated as "a rest, a reminder by blowing of trumpets." The phrase "blowing of trumpets" translates the Hebrew word "teruah." The word is loosely like the English word "fanfare." Like "fanfare," "teruah" has an association with the sound of a trumpet, but really means those things for which we might sound a trumpet: to alert, to call to battle, to announce the arrival of a king, etc. In the case of this holiday, the trumpets announce the coming of the holidays to follow. The holidays that follow, therefore, are incredibly important. Perhaps, it is better to say that you did not want to be found unprepared when their day arrived.

The Jews begin blowing ram's horns (shofars) in their synagogues in the sixth month and continue up to the Day of Atonement. The trumpets remind the people that the Day of Atonement is approaching. It is a time to reflect on the year and the state of your character and your relationship to God. Then, on the first day of the seventh month, there is a special service that features an elaborate ceremony of trumpet blowing.

The trumpets remind the Jews of at least eight things:

- To prepare for the coming Day of Atonement by examining the life you have lived this past year.
- To celebrate the creation with God as its King. This is because, according to Jewish tradition, creation began on the first day of the seventh month.
- To remember that the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai with the loud blast of a shofar (Exodus 19:16-19).
- To imagine the sound of the heavenly shepherd recalling those who have strayed from Israel's fold.
- To rejoice in freedom from slavery. In the past, slaves were freed at the blast of a shofar.
- To rejoice in restoration. Property was returned at the blast of the shofar at the Jubilee Year (Leviticus 25:9).

- To remember Abraham's obedience when he offered his son Isaac. When Abraham sacrificed Isaac, a ram was caught in the thicket by its horns.
- To look forward to the coming of Messiah's kingdom, which the blast of the shofar will bring in.

As the spring holy days spoke of the first coming of Messiah, so we can begin to see that the fall holidays speak of His return. This is seen by the consistent imagery of trumpets in the New Testament.

And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other (Matthew 24:31).

... in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed (1 Corinthians 15:52).

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them (Revelation 8:6).

The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts (Revelation 9:20, 21).

6. Day of Atonement (23:26-32)

(See notes on Leviticus 16)

7. Feast of Tabernacles or Booths (23:33-43)

It is a celebration of the manifest presence of God that carried them through the wilderness into the promised land, that God did not turn away and leave them even when they disappointed Him and that he was still with them.

(c.f. Numbers 14:11-21)

What an incredible sight to see everyday. "They have heard that You, O LORD, are in the midst of this people, for You, O LORD, are seen eye to eye, while Your cloud stands over them; and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night." When the LORD wanted them to move, the pillars moved. When the LORD wanted them to stay, the pillars stayed. This is the tale parents can tell their children during the dinner meal in the hut. When the sky gets dark and you can gaze at the stars, the parents can tell their children how the universe manifests the presence of God. It is a good time to read Psalm 19.

The Feast of Tabernacles also looks ahead to the Messianic Kingdom. It looks ahead to the time when the presence of God, through the reign of His son, is as manifest on the earth as it was in the days of the wilderness travels. In fact, according to Zechariah, the Feast of Tabernacles will be an international celebration during the Kingdom.

And it is a celebration of the Messiah's kingdom to come (Zechariah 14:9, 16-19).

8. Sabbatic Year (25:1-7, Deuteronomy 15:1-10 and 31:10-11)

Every 7th year, as the Lord rested on the 7th day from his creation work.

“Year of release and remission” – all debts were to be released, remitted, cancelled.

Spirit of the festival – rest from labors to provide a focused and concentrated undistracted period of renewal and redirection and of the soul to God; to renew and enliven their trust in God and dependence on God, not themselves, for life and all spiritual blessings with no thought of the material things. A year of great faith and trust in God was required to follow God's instructions and commands here.

According to the instructions God gave in Leviticus 25 the observance of the Sabbath year involved several things. First, the land must lie fallow and given its rest (v. 2). The seventh year, crops could not be planted, and those crops which were permanent (e.g. grapes, olive trees) were not to be pruned or cared for as they were the other six years (v. 3). The annual crops would re-seed themselves and thus there would be grain, and the perennial plants would continue to bear fruit. No harvests were allowed during the sabbath year (v. 5). By this, the crops were not to be harvested for sale. This did not prohibit the people from eating the crops, however. In fact, all the people, especially the poor (and even the animals) could eat in the fields (vv. 6-7). Rather than having the corners of the fields in which to glean, the poor could eat from any portion of the field.

Elsewhere the Israelites were instructed to forgive debts which were owed them and unpaid by their Israelite brethren, although they could pay them voluntarily (Deut. 15:1ff.). Also in Deuteronomy 31 we learn that the sabbath year was to begin at the Feast of Booths (31:10) and that the law was read at this time as well (31:13).

Consider the life trust in Christ – Philippians 4:10-13 and chapter 6, Matthew 6

9. Year of Jubilee (25:8-55)

“Year of freedom”

Every 50th year following a sabbatic year

A declaration and celebration of the gracious presence of God in the land; celebrates conquest and distribution of the promised land.

How did God command Israel to keep the Year of Jubilee?

- Rest the soil from planting and harvest (c.f. Romans 8:18-25, Genesis 3:17-19)
God rules the land – trust him and not your labors
- Reversion of landed property – poverty would cause the loss of land from one person and the acquisition of that land to another; all land lost by poverty during the previous 49 years was to be restored to the one who lost it without payment for a new beginning
God owns the land – serve him and your fellows with it
- Any Israelite who through poverty sold himself to his countryman was to be released and set free; he could be hired by his former owner to continue those labors

Israel belongs to God

So Year of Jubilee is about freedom and rest, redemption and restoration (Matthew 11:28-30, Philemon) Year of hope and peace (Romans 8:31-39, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

Several purposes are evident in the commandments given here regarding the observance of the Sabbath year and the year of Jubilee:

(1) They were a reminder of the fact that God owned the land. There is a folk song that goes something like this, "This land is my land, this land is your land ..." This is a song which the Israelite could not sing. God clearly stated that the land was His, and that the Israelites were His tenants (v. 23). The Israelites would need a very practical and pointed demonstration of this from time to time, and the sabbath regulations did this beautifully. Let's face it, the things we own we attempt to maintain, and we attempt to restrict their use. If the Israelite really owned the land, he would feel obliged to maintain his fields, and he would be inclined to post "No Trespassing" signs, keeping out others, especially strangers. God's regulations forcefully underscored the fact that the Israelites did not own the land because they were prohibited from maintaining the land for one year out of every seven, and they were also instructed to allow their neighbors to come onto their land and to partake of their crops. The poor and the aliens were included here (cf. vv. 5-6). Those who own something feel free to use it when and how they like. The land could not be used other than in the ways God prescribed. Thus, the sabbath and Jubilee regulations proved the land was God's.

(2) It made it possible for the people of Israel to become the recipients of divine blessing. Remember that a large part of the blessings which God promised His people consisted of the rain and the crops which God would give His people. To be a recipient of God's blessing, one must have his own land by which means he will be benefited.

(3) The commands related to the observance of the sabbath and Jubilee years were tests of the Israelite's faith and obedience, and the basis for God's blessings or discipline.

(4) The regulations regarding the use of the land were a provision for the poor, providing them with food in times of need and with the possibility of a new beginning.

(5) The "laws of the land" were designed to hinder materialism and to keep in check those who would try to accumulate vast land holdings, at the expense of others. If these land laws were followed, there would be little incentive for one to lease the land of another, since the land would ultimately be returned to its owner, and since the price of the lease was directly tied to the value of its crops. There were no speculation land deals in that day, not if God's laws were obeyed.

10. Bread, Light, and Blasphemers (24)

Holy Obedience (26-27)

INTRODUCTION:

“Leviticus 26 is one of the clearest words of warning in the Pentateuch. It is reiterated more emphatically later on in the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy. The Israelites did not heed this warning and they paid a severe penalty for doing so.

We may think that the warning found here is one that we can easily ignore. After all, we are not Israel; we do not live in the land of Canaan; and we don't live under the Mosaic Covenant, but under the New Covenant. So then, why not simply pass by this passage, tipping our mental hats, if need be, but not getting too serious about it?

The warnings of the 26th chapter of Leviticus are vital to the New Testament Christian, just as they were to the Israelite of Moses' day. Consider the following reasons for the importance and relevance of our text.”

1. the key to understanding the history of Israel. The warnings of Leviticus are an outline of Israel's history. The consequences for sin of which our text warns are precisely those which the nation Israel experienced for her disregard of the covenant which she made with God on Mt. Sinai.
2. the key to understanding the message of the prophets of Israel. The outline of the prophets of Israel seems to be taken from our text. Also, the promises of Israel's future deliverance and restoration are rooted in the blessings and cursings of the Pentateuch.
3. The principle underlying the promises of blessing and cursing is just as valid in our dispensation as it was in the days of Moses. God has always blessed or rewarded obedience and warned against and held accountable for disobedience. Heaven and Hell are true and real. Goodness and troubles are true and real. God is just and merciful.
4. contains a great deal of instruction for parents, and for all who are required to discipline others. The principles underlying this passage, which have to do with divine discipline and human obedience, are both relevant and practical.
5. does not just contain words of warning, but also some of the greatest words of hope found in the Bible. Thus, this is a text which positively encourages and motivates obedience. The more I read this chapter, the more I fall in love with it, and the deeper my sense of the hope and love which permeate it.

There are a number of passages which are parallel to our text, in form and substance. Exodus 23:22-33 is the first instance of the promise of blessings and cursings, based upon Israel's obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. Later, in Deuteronomy chapter 28, the blessings and cursings are repeated, in even greater detail, for that second generation of Israelites, who were about to possess the land of Canaan. Joshua 24:20 is a very brief summation of the warnings of our chapter, and the writings of the prophets reveal some direct dependence on our text (cf. Isa. 49:1ff.; Ezek. 34:25-30; 37:21-28).

Consider Romans 9-11 (note 11:25-36)

Structure of the Text:

- Moses warns Israel to stay away from the idolatry of the land they left and the land they about to take (26:1-2). Paul warns the church to beware of the idolatry and philosophies of the world of its generations (Colossians 2).
- The Lord promises that obedience to him – they are his people, to be his nation among man's nations – will fill their land with prosperity and goodness, peace and strength; that they can live in trust of the Lord for their obedience will bring their separation from the world and bring God into their presence and life (26:3-13). Christ teaches us that this is a premise of the life of the church, his people, their world (2 Corinthians 6:14-18, cf Isaiah 11). This is a victorious relationship (Romans 8:31-39)
- The Lord warns Israel that if they will not listen to him, if they hate his law, if they break His covenant with him, he will set his face against them and they will face economic crisis, disease, life of fear, subjection; if they continue to ignore God, then he will break the pride that rules them and turned them from God, make them weak, and give them starvation. As they continue to disobey he will continue to discipline them until they reach the point of no return and God's fury rages. He will drive them out of the land and the land will rest in peace from God's discipline against their disobedience – and they will die and disappear from the earth in the dirt of the land of their enemies (26:14-39). Christ warns his church to beware of the evil destruction they will follow if they listen to the world because they are not listening to Him (2 Peter 2).
- But, the Lord promised to be merciful to those who will repent and he will not be ashamed of them or break his covenant with them (26:40-46). God is always faithful in justice and in mercy, always longsuffering in loving kindness and judgment. Christ teaches his church to always seek salvation and redemption and remember that He will forgive (2 Peter 3).
- And the Lord provided a way for release from vows they were unable to keep (27) The entire chapter deals with those gifts which men have voluntarily purposed and promised to dedicate to God. The concern of the chapter is not to instruct the Israelites that they should make such vows, or how they should make them. The thrust of the chapter is regarding if and how the Israelites can break their vows. The regulations of this chapter taught the Israelite that it is a costly matter to break one's vow. The underlying assumption is that man is a fallen creature, whose commitments will cool and whose religious zeal will wane. Also note, that the book began with offerings required and ends with vows that voluntary. Christ teaches his followers to honest and truthful in all context and situations (Matthew 7 and 23, Mark 7, Luke 9 and 14, James 4)

Heart --- Remember that grace does not set aside God's judgment. Grace saves the believer who humbles himself to listen to God and follow Christ. Salvation is redemption by the grace of God, redemption from the life of disobedience to God to live the obedient life (Ephesians 2, Romans 6).

Christ disciplines those who follow him (Hebrews 12).

Questions:

1. What is the purpose of judgment?

2. What is the purpose of discipline?
3. What is the distinction between them?
4. Where is the judgment in the life of the redeemed?
5. How should we use the practice of making vows?