

The Book: Leviticus

Prayer

Stuff

- Recordings on website along with PowerPoint slides plus study aids.
- Show **PPT** of digital Bible: Can be purchased for \$19 plus shipping (high resolution). I am going to order one. If you would like me to order one for you, let me know. If we order more than 5, we get a discount (doesn't say what kind of discount). You can print off a medium resolution for free.

Summary so far

Genesis is the story of a people that God chooses to make a covenant -God will bless them and they in turn will be a blessing to other nations. They do not exist for their own well-being. This is a high calling.

At the end of Genesis, the family of 70 end up in Egypt due to a famine.

Exodus opens with the family growing into large numbers – could be anywhere from thousands to millions. They have been reduced to slavery. God hears their cries for help and uses Moses to rescue the people from Egypt. During the wandering in the wilderness, God gives Moses the 10 Commandments on how people to live with a holy God. God also has them make of the Tabernacle, a portable temple, which was set up in the middle of the camp to show God was with them.

Leviticus

We now come to the third book in the Bible: Leviticus. How many of you read the whole thing? Or attempted? What was your first reaction?

This is the law in excruciating detail: grain offerings, burnt offerings, peace offerings, sin offerings, guilt offerings, and regulations. To us, it is boring, dry, dull, seems irrelevant to us today. The Jews don't follow the sacrifices anymore. Christians never did. Yet, here it is. Let's find out why.

Simple structure: PPT

Chapters 1-16 purity chapters.

- Sacrifices (chapters 1-7)
- Priests (chapters 8-10)
- Instructions and rituals for ceremonial cleansing (chapters 11-15)
- Day of Atonement (chapter 16)

Chapters 17-26 How you live the Law out (the Holiness Code)

The book begins with God calling to Moses. God continually called Moses.

It's presented as God spoke this to Moses all at once, but these laws were developed over time. I can imagine someone saying to Moses they don't have a goat, to make an offering to God, what about a dove. So the priests had to make a ceremony for the dove.

Then there were the sin offerings. Each situation had a ceremony: if the priest sins, if another leader sins, if my neighbor sins. What if the sin is intentional? Intentional? This is the first seven chapters of Leviticus.

The point of all these offerings and sacrifices and the great detail?

Let's read one of them: Read 1:1-5

PPT image of Tabernacle

- Point out the different parts:
 - Altar where the sacrifices happened
 - Water basin
 - Tent of the meeting
 - Smoke coming from tent of the meeting (presence of God)
 - Notice the tents of the people surrounding the Tabernacle

God often used visuals with the Israelites to teach something. The Tabernacle was a visual to show God was in their midst. The sacrificial system was a picture, an image, a drama of the seriousness of sin in the presence of a holy God. This holy God is not to be approached casually. An animal losing its life for your screw-up, showed how serious it was.

Blood was a big part of it. The blood was shocking – its shocking to us and was shocking to the Israelites. This is a picture, a dramatic presentation to show that a relationship with a holy God is a life and death matter. It reminded them of the presence of God.

Chapters 8-10 the priests are given their instructions. Aaron, the brother of Moses, and Aaron's sons are set aside to be the priests for the people. They go through an elaborate ordination service in chapter 8, including their own cleansing. If they needed to be part of the cleansing of the people, they needed to be clean first.

Here is their job description: read Lev 10:10-11

PPT Look at the name Leviticus. Later in the story of the Israelites, the Levites are the priests. They come from the tribe of Levi: Levi was one of the sons of Judah. Notice the word "Levi" in the word Leviticus. Their task was to instruct the new nation of Israel in proper worship and right living, so that they might reflect the character of their God to others.

Chapter 11 Then we get into the food laws (Jews today practice Kosher). Here is where you get the Jews cannot eat pork (pigs are declared unclean), no mixing of dairy and meat (no pepperoni pizza).

Have people look at headlines for the next chapters (11-15) (We are still on the purity chapters **PPT**)

- Purification after childbirth
- Regulations from infectious skin diseases
- Regulations about mildew
- Cleansing of infectious skin diseases
- Cleansing from mildew
- Bodily discharges

This is everyday life stuff. Why do you think this is here?

- To show they are different from other people
- Prevention of disease while wandering in the wilderness

PPT Interesting sentence in Ramsay's book, page 53 "It was no accident that when the plague swept Europe in the Middle Ages, often the cleanly Jews survived while their Christian neighbor perished."

PPT Chapter 16 Day of Atonement

What do you know about the Day of Atonement?

- **PPT** Still practiced by Jews today. Also called Yom Kipper.
- **PPT** In the Fall, around October (this year begins evening of Oct 4 and ends evening of Oct 5)
- This is the most holy day in the Jewish faith. 16:31, 34. It is a day of fasting and attending synagogue.

Two goats and a bull are used. The bull is for the sin of the priest so the priest is clean. One goat is sacrificed and offered to God for the sins of the people; the other is the scapegoat (which means goat of removal). The sins of the people are "placed on the scapegoat, and then driven into the wilderness. This is a picture of the sins removed from the camp. (read 16:20-22)

Later in the OT is this passage about the Messiah:

PPT "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6 The Messiah is the scapegoat.

PPT As Christians, this is what we believe happened to Jesus while he was on the cross: "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." ²⁵ For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. I Peter 2:24-25

Jesus is our scapegoat and carries away our sins. Again, you see the connections in the Bible.

Questions?

PPT The next part of Leviticus is called the Holiness Code (chapters 17-26): how to live this out. The word “holy” is used more than any other word in Leviticus. It’s 80 times. Again, to show the Israelites were called to be different (holy means to set apart) and had a mission to be a blessing to others.

Walk with me through the headlines starting with chapter 17:

- Eating regulations (draining the blood from the animal before eating because the blood is the life of the creature)
- Sexual relationships
- Various laws (I am going to come back to chapter 19)
- Punishments for sin
- Rules for priests
- Unacceptable sacrifices

Chapter 23 are great festivals in the Jewish faith, most still observed today:

- Sabbath
- Passover
- First fruits (observed when they entered the promise land; not observed today)
- Feast of Weeks or Pentecost: 50 days after Passover. Originally, it was a harvest festival, later celebrated as an anniversary of the giving of the law.
- Feast of Trumpets – not observed today
- Day of Atonement
- Feast of Tabernacles or booths – some Jews construct booths on their lawn; it commemorates the time the Israelites wandered in the wilderness and did not have their own homes.

PPT Chapter 25 – year of Jubilee. This brings us to another reasons why Leviticus is relevant to us today.

Does anyone know what the year of Jubilee is?

PPT Every 50 years, land is to be returned back to the original family/owners. Slaves were to be set free. Debts were canceled. The poor cared for. And every 7 years, land is to be rested to avoid erosion and soil depletion.

Modern day terms: care for the land (goes back to the 3 way covenant of God and humans and land), liberation of the oppressed, economic justice. Who knew this book could be so modern? Isn't the year of jubilee a wonderful concept?

PPT Go back to chapter 19 – another reason why Leviticus is relevant.

Read verse 1-2

The chapter then goes on to explain how to treat your neighbor. Read verses 15-18

PPT This is holiness....loving your neighbor as yourself.

Most of the time, we think of holiness as not sinning, which is part of it, but holiness also includes an active love for one's neighbor and treating them fairly. Neighbor is defined in Lev. 19 as your fellow-countryman, the foreigner, those who are weak and vulnerable (look at verse 33)

“Love your neighbor as yourself.” You have heard this before, right?

When Jesus was asked about which commandment was the greatest, he answered by citing two: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind,” and, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” That second one — “Love your neighbor as yourself” — is a quote directly from Leviticus 19, and Jesus said that upon those two commandments hang all the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures (Matthew 22:40).

Even Jesus liked Leviticus!

Summary

Leviticus is the Law – how the people can live with a holy God. They are set apart as God's people and Leviticus shows them how they are to act.

Questions?

My favorite verse....

Lev 19:2 “Be holy because I, the Lord your God am holy.” Then God says in the next chapters: I am the one who makes you holy. I am the one who sets you apart. It is a gracious act of God. The Law sets you apart, so you will be a blessing to others for me. (20:7, 21:8, 15, 23; 22:9, 16)

Aren't we called to be a Holy Temple? We are set apart to sing the praises of God and be a blessing to others. We are called to live a certain way – which is much of the New Testament – so we can be a light for God to others. We are called to reflect the character of Christ just like the Israelites were called to reflect the character of God.

May you go out and be a light to all you meet this day.