

leviticus

TYPES & SHADOWS



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Zack Flipse



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Bibliography

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Important Framework

Introduction

- Leviticus is often called strange or outdated. It contains rules and laws for the Israelites that are awkward and uncomfortable. At some points, it feels harsh or even unjust. Because of its supposed oddities, it serves as a lightning rod for scrutiny, doubt, and misapplication.
- Outside the church, Leviticus is often cited as a reason for unbelief.
 - It's strange (*How could you believe that book when the rules in Leviticus say...?*).
 - It's inconsistent (*How come you can pick and choose what laws to obey?*).
- Inside the church, it's misunderstood in all sorts of ways.
 - It's misrepresented by people who want to enforce certain laws as "hammer texts" and condemn certain sins beyond others.
 - It's misrepresented by people who want to throw all of it out as though none of it applied.
- How we understand Leviticus and the role of the law closely informs how we think about God, morality, justification, and sanctification. We need to get this right. Without a clear understanding of what God is doing for and through Israel here, we'll miss out on the beautiful story it tells about the Triune God, His holiness, and His grace.
- Our goal in this study guide is to take away the "weird" and "harsh" labels so often applied to Leviticus and replace them with "familiar" and "gracious."
- We'll try to understand what's at the heart of these rules and regulations, and determine how Jesus brought that out of the shadows.
 - Hebrews 10:1 – "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves."
 - Hebrews 8:5 – "[Priests] serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven."

- Colossians 2:16-17 – “[Because of the Cross] do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.”
- We’ll also routinely discover how Jesus is a better Priest and better Sacrifice.

Setting

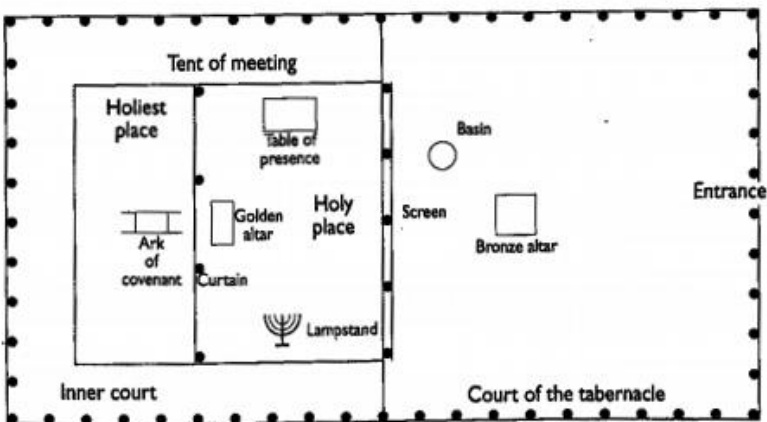
“The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting.”
(Leviticus 1:1)

- The Hebrew title for Leviticus means “and God called,” the first line of the book. It’s meant to be read as a continuation of Exodus. In Exodus, God rescued His people Israel from slavery in Egypt. The people follow God through the wilderness in search of their new Promised Land.

“Leviticus must, therefore, be read in conjunction with Exodus, both books forming part of the continuous and carefully composed narrative which comprises the Pentateuch.”

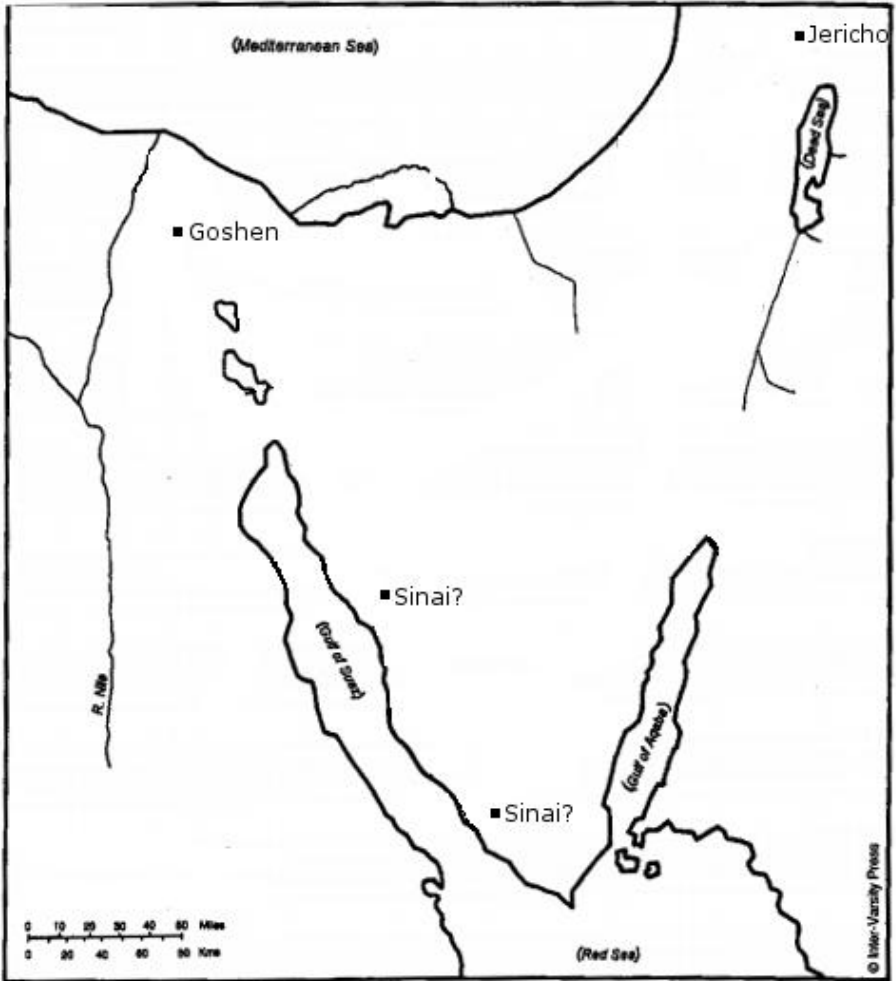
(Alexander, 110)

- By God’s instruction, the Israelites build a mobile temple called The Tabernacle. At the very end of Exodus, God’s glory comes down and rests in the Tent of Meeting—a room inside The Tabernacle.



(courtesy of Naylor, 173)

- The Tabernacle is an important piece to all of these rules. If the people want to stay near to this Holy God, they're required to stay holy themselves.
- Since Moses clearly authored Exodus, most agree he likely authored Leviticus as well. These rules come to the people at Mt. Sinai (Leviticus 7:38).
- It is unknown where exactly Mt. Sinai is located, but this law seems to have come to the people about one year in (Exodus 40:17) on their journey from Goshen (Egypt) to Jericho (Canaan).



(map adapted from Alexander, 104)

- Leviticus begins with “and” as a continuation of the story just finished in Exodus. These laws come to the people in a specific context:
 - God saved them;
 - God dwells among them;
 - and the people now live a certain way in light of those truths.
- In this place (Ancient Near East) and time, religious devotion was not a new thing. The surrounding nations had their own gods, priests, laws, and sacrifices.

“Almost a hundred years ago the cuneiform Code of Hammurapi was discovered in Persia in the ruins of the old Elamite capital of Susa. It dates from the eighteenth century B.C., hundreds of years before Moses was born. Since its discovery, three separate and still more ancient cuneiform law codes have come to light. All of these legal materials demonstrate conclusively that much of what we read in the stipulations of the law of Moses, in many cases with certain modifications to be sure, was already common currency in the ancient Near East by the time Moses and his compatriots arrived at Sinai”
(Youngblood, 71).

- This is important to rightly understand the place of Leviticus in history. It is not *strange*, as it’s often misunderstood by western readers today. Rather, the regulations and prescriptions found here were very *familiar*.

“Indeed, it is possible that what God does on Mount Sinai is not to give his people a wholly new law, but to take what they know already of law and reshape it, rejecting some parts of it and developing others. The law God gives to Moses for the Israelites bears all the marks of being genuine ancient Near Eastern law. God is not calling his people to live in an eccentric, unhistorical fashion: they are to be genuine people of their own historical time and place. And yet God recasts common law to reflect his own character and creational intentions, and so it has some quite distinctive elements. For example, while some law of that time valued property above people and made the punishment for stealing greater than that for murder, Israel’s law always places the value of people above that of mere property, for only people, of all God’s creations, have been fashioned in his own image”
(Goheen, 68)

- God’s law was *familiar*, but not *copied*. In it, we discover unique distinctions that would set apart His people from the surrounding nations.
- This is exactly what Moses was looking for when he asked “How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?” (Exodus 33:16). God answers those questions in Leviticus.
 - How you will know I’m pleased
 - How you will live if I am with you
 - How you will be distinguished from other people
- At its core, the law intends to physically protect and spiritually edify the people.
- God put in place serious punishment for disobedience because He’s serious about this nation’s health and success. Throughout their journey, we see how easily the people are influenced by the gods and customs of the Egyptians, Philistines and Canaanites. If they can’t submit to God’s law, they’ll end up serving other gods.
- But though these laws and punishments seem *harsh*, we might even find them to be less restrictive and less serious than their New Covenant versions. There is great simplicity and *grace* in Leviticus.
- It’s helpful to think of the levitical codes as how God’s people live distinctly, safely, and rightly in a world of brokenness.

“We must be willing to admit from the outset, as the Bible itself does, that when the Israelites arrived in Canaan the native inhabitants had already possessed for centuries a full-fledged and elaborate cult together with all the appurtenances necessary to maintain its proper observance. In revealing to Moses the details of the establishment of Israel’s sacrificial system, God made use of some of the unobjectionable features of Near Eastern ritual, condemned certain aspects that were obscene or blasphemous or hopelessly pagan, and added a number of unique and distinctive contributions of his own gracious provision. Only by recognizing the presence of such similarities and differences can we arrive at a full-orbed and proper understanding of sacrifice in Israel.

(Youngblood, 82).

THEOLOGY

- Leviticus is a big book, and in it we learn a lot about our theology. This is why it's so important to develop a solid framework before we dive in.
- We'll narrow in on four things in particular:
 - Humanness: What is the state of human beings?
 - Soteriology: How are we saved?
 - Sanctification: How do we increase in holiness?
 - Works: How does the law govern our lives today?

Humanness

- The law functions as a teacher or guide that shows us the extent of our sin. Without the law, we don't know what sin is—and without an understanding of our great sin, we don't know we need a Savior. So the law exists to lead us to Christ. This is Paul's idea of the law in Galatians 3:24.

“Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.”
(Galatians 3:24)

“The law itself was never given as a means of salvation or redemption. Instead, it was set forth, beginning in Exodus 20 (the Decalogue), in the context of redemption: ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.’ What, then, could have been the law's purpose? It was the means by which we came to know what sin is (Rom. 7:7) and that sin is prohibited (Rom. 4:15). Sin was in the world before the law came (Rom. 5:13), but when the law came, it not only forbade sin, but also showed us what is right and how we ought now to live.”
(Kaiser, 34-35)

- Not only did the law reveal our sins, but it also pinned on the people forms of uncleanness they had no control over; like mold, sickness, night emissions or periods. Here we're shown how great the problem of sin is in our original state. We are certainly separated from God.

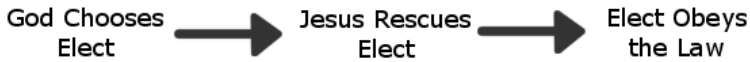
Soteriology

- God does not change, He’s the same today as He was yesterday (Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8). This is key to understanding what’s happening in Leviticus. God’s not more loving today than He was during the time of the Israelites journey to the Promised Land—and He’s not any less holy and just today.
- Salvation works the same in the Old Testament as it does in the New Testament. God chooses, rescues, and protects His people.

Old Testament Salvation



New Testament Salvation



- The law, then, is not good works that *earn* salvation for the people—they’ve already been saved (Exodus 20:1). Instead, the law shows them how to respond to that salvation with thanksgiving.

“The giving of the law followed the salvation of Israel, and hence such obedience signified Israel’s grateful response to the redemption accomplished by the Lord. There is no basis in the text for the idea that Israel’s obedience established a relationship with the Lord. The Lord took the initiative in rescuing his people, and they were called upon to respond with faithful obedience...The pattern established in the Mosaic covenant, which is redemption followed by obedience, functions as a type or pattern for New Testament believers. Believers have been redeemed through the work of Christ, and they respond to his saving mercy with grateful obedience. Such grateful obedience, under both the Mosaic covenant and the new covenant established by Jesus Christ, is not legalistic, for there is no idea that such obedience earns or merits salvation under either the old covenant or the new. The obedience of believers flows from faith and is a thankful response to God’s saving work in Christ.”

(Schreiner, 26-27)

Sanctification

- When the Israelites respond to their Rescuer with obedience and thanksgiving, they are beginning the process of sanctification—becoming more and more holy. This is the fruit the law produces.
- The repetitive refrain in Leviticus “Be holy, for I am holy” (11:45, 19:2, 20:26) is repeated in I Peter 1:16. Lawfulness is holiness in both the Old and New Testament.
- There are three states the Israelites could be in, according to the law: unclean, clean, or holy. It was impossible to be in more than one state at any given time.
- Compare this to God, often described as “Holy, holy, holy.” Since God now dwells among His people in the Tabernacle, the people must change from “unclean, clean, holy” to “holy, holy, holy.”
 - This necessarily happens because they are near God. Where God is, there is holiness.
 - God also puts the onus on the people: be holy so you can be near me. The law acts as a fence that guards them from uncleanness and sin.

Works

- The law is useful today in the same ways it was useful to the Old Testament Israelites.
 - It shows us our sin (Galatians 3:24)
 - It provides a way for us to express thankfulness and obedience to our Savior (II John 1:6)
 - It guides and guards as we increase in holiness (I Peter 1:16)
- The requirements of the law are not abolished in the New Covenant. Christ did not put an end to the law.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

(Matthew 5:17-19)

- Instead, the revealing of the Messiah Jesus Christ brings a fuller understanding of the severity of sin, grace of God, and call for obedience and thankfulness expressed in the law. The promise behind the law has moved out of the shadows and into plain view.
- Jesus “fulfilling” the law means we have a new and better (fuller) understanding of it.
- Jewish Rabbis recognized long before the Messiah would come that the law pointed to a greater atonement. They understood the law was showing them their need for a Savior. They even understood from the Old Testament that the Messiah would revolutionize their understanding of the law.

“...Although the intertestamental writers believed in the continuing validity of the law, they anticipated that ‘there would be at least a better understanding of it in the future than in the present. More specifically, they expected that (1) the law would be interpreted more satisfactorily and gloriously, and that (2) Gentiles would be included under its sway...[Davies] calls attention to writings which suggest that in the messianic age certain festivals would no longer be celebrated, laws concerning clean and unclean might be changed, and some sacrifices discontinued. There is also the suggestion that Gentiles would come to share in the blessings of the law in the messianic age. Common was the anticipation of new interpretations and clarifications of the law. This includes the expectation that difficulties or incomprehensibilities would be adequately explained and understood.”

(Scott, 329; with quotations from Davies, 44)

- This is exactly what we find in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.
 - He is a better Sacrifice
 - He is a better High Priest
 - His Spirit puts the law in our hearts

Symbol of Sacrifice

Leviticus 1-6:7

- Remember the setting in which Leviticus takes place. God has rescued the people from slavery, and has just now made His dwelling among them. Leviticus opens and God immediately speaks to Moses.
- This is the very first thing God wants the people to do now that He dwells among them. The people will offer 5 different kinds of sacrifice:
 - The Burnt Offering: given voluntarily to God out of thanksgiving
 - The Grain Offering: given voluntarily to priests out of thanksgiving to God
 - The Fellowship Offering: given to the community for celebrations
 - The Sin Offering: given as penalty for breaking God's law
 - The Guilt Offering: given to repair broken relationships with God and neighbor

“The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting. He said, ‘Speak to the Israelites and say to them: “When any of you brings an offering to the Lord, bring as your offering an animal from either the herd or the flock. If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he is to offer a male without defect. He must present it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting so that it will be acceptable to the Lord. He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.””

(Leviticus 1:1-2)

- This sets a perfect tone for how the rest of the book will follow. We have severity and grace mixed together.
 - “When any of you” suggests the people *necessarily will* offer these sacrifices. It’s not “If any of you.”
 - Yet, God is gracious so as to make easy arrangements for these sacrifices to happen. “If the offering is...”

The Burnt Offering

THE BURNT OFFERING: LEVITICUS 1:3-17			
Animal	Blood Ritual	Consummation	Spiritual Result
If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd , he is to offer a male without defect.	He is to slaughter the young bull before the Lord, and then Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and sprinkle it against the altar on all sides at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. He is to skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces.	The sons of Aaron the priest are to put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. Then Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, including the head and the fat, on the burning wood that is on the altar. He is to wash the inner parts and the legs with water, and the priest is to burn all of it on the altar.	It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord .
If the offering is a burnt offering from the flock, from either the sheep or the goats , he is to offer a male without defect.	He is to slaughter it at the north side of the altar before the Lord, and Aaron's sons the priests shall sprinkle its blood against the altar on all sides.	He is to cut it into pieces, and the priest shall arrange them, including the head and the fat, on the burning wood that is on the altar. He is to wash the inner parts and the legs with water, and the priest is to bring all of it and burn it on the altar.	It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord .
If the offering to the Lord is a burnt offering of birds, he is to offer a dove or a young pigeon .	The priest shall bring it to the altar, wring off the head and burn it on the altar; its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar. He is to remove the crop with its contents and throw it to the east side of the altar, where the ashes are.	He shall tear it open by the wings, not severing it completely, and then the priest shall burn it on the wood that is on the fire on the altar.	It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord .

- Consider the table containing Leviticus 1:3-17, the burnt offering. Notice how the “Spiritual Result” is always a God who is pleased, no matter the size or expense of the offering.
- The sacrifices can come from *either* the herd or flock and the same sentiment is expressed. There are three different kinds of animals that could be sacrificed:
 - Offering from the herd – bulls
 - Offering from the flock – sheep or goats
 - Offering of birds – dove or pigeon
- These are in descending order of cost. A bull would have been of significantly larger value than a dove or pigeon. But no matter the size of the offering, the result is the same in each category: “If the offering to the Lord is a burnt offering...it is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord.”
- If it is genuinely made “to the Lord,” it is *always* pleasing to Him. This reminds us of Jesus teaching in Mark 12.

“Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, ‘I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.’”

(Mark 12:41-44)

- Jesus reminds us that the size or value of the offering matters not to God, but the heart of the giver. God doesn’t require money and gifts to keep up His ministry, He requires sincerity.
- Although God specifically made allowances for the poor to be able to give, these were still *offerings*.
 - These were the only offerings entirely burnt up. The people and the Levites were willing to take a total loss on the offering so as to please God. Too often, we give only when some benefit exists for us. We’re willing to give only if it benefits us in return somehow.

- The animal they chose had to be without blemish, indicating it had value. This disallowed the people from offering lame animals that had no value to begin with.

“No animal was allowed to be offered that had any deformity or defect. Among the Egyptians, a minute inspection was made by the priest, and the bullock having been declared perfect, a certificate to that effect being fastened to its horns with wax, was sealed with his ring, and no other might be substituted.”

(Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, 74)

The Grain Offering

THE GRAIN OFFERING: LEVITICUS 2:1-10			
Type	God’s Portion	Spiritual Result	Priests Portion
<p>Raw When someone brings a grain offering to the Lord, his offering is to be of fine flour. He is to pour oil on it, put incense on it and take it to Aaron’s sons the priests.</p>	<p>The priest shall take a handful of the fine flour and oil, together with all the incense, and burn this as a memorial portion on the altar,...</p>	<p>...an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord.</p>	<p>The rest of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the offerings made to the Lord by fire.</p>
<p>Cooked If you bring a grain offering baked in an oven, it is to consist of fine flour: cakes made without yeast and mixed with oil, or wafers made without yeast and spread with oil. If your grain offering is prepared on a griddle, it is to be made of fine flour mixed with oil, and without yeast. Crumble it and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering. If your grain offering is cooked in a pan, it is to be made of fine flour and oil.</p>	<p>Bring the grain offering made of these things to the Lord; present it to the priest, who shall take it to the altar. He shall take out the memorial portion from the grain offering and burn it on the altar as...</p>	<p>...an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord.</p>	<p>The rest of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the offerings made to the Lord by fire.</p>

- While the Burnt Offerings were entirely burnt up and lost their material value, the Grain Offerings are gifted in part to the priests. Notice here that even when we seek to serve one another, it's done out of obedience to first please God and satisfy His law. It's impossible to do good works without God, because there is no "good" when God is excluded.
- The Grain Offerings are, in a way, God's cookbook. The ways in which these cakes are served are spelled out in specifics. This is for a few reasons:
 - Like with the Burnt Offerings, God requires effort and value from the giver
 - God wants a healthy and high quality product for His priests
 - God is making His sacrificial system unique from surrounding nations

"Every grain offering you bring to the Lord must be made without yeast, for you are not to burn any yeast or honey in an offering made to the Lord by fire. You may bring them to the Lord as an offering of the firstfruits, but they are not to be offered on the altar as a pleasing aroma. Season all your grain offerings with salt. Do not leave the salt of the covenant of your God out of your grain offerings; add salt to all your offerings. If you bring a grain offering of firstfruits to the Lord, offer crushed heads of new grain roasted in the fire. Put oil and incense on it; it is a grain offering. The priest shall burn the memorial portion of the crushed grain and the oil, together with all the incense, as an offering made to the Lord by fire."
(Leviticus 2:11-16)

- God includes some distinctions to set apart His people from the surrounding nations.
- Salt is required, but yeast and honey are expressly prohibited.
 - The use of salt may have a few different purposes, or all of them could be meant in one symbol.
 - Salt was a common preservation agent. Salt could symbolize the lasting covenant with God, or practically used so the offering would keep long.
 - Ezekial 16:4 says newborns ought to be washed with water, cleaned with salt, and wrapped in cloths. Salt could symbolize cleaning like a child.
 - Mark 9:50 and Colossians 4:6 use salt seasoning as a metaphor for peace between brothers. Salt could symbolize peace between the giver and the priest.
 - The prohibition against yeast is almost certainly a reminder of the exodus from Egypt, where the Israelites were commanded to make bread hastily

without yeast when there was no time for the bread to rise. Not using yeast would remind the people of God's rescuing them from slavery.

- The prohibition against honey might be a practical one, as both yeast and honey ferment over time (the opposite of salt). Or it may be a way of distinguishing the God of Israel from the god of the Canaanites.

"Finally, the recent archeological revelation that the sacrifice of honey was a Canaanite ritual custom yields a sufficient explanation for the prohibition described in Leviticus 2:11."

(Youngblood, 83)

- Incense (Proverbs 27:9) and oil (Psalm 45:7, Ecclesiastes 9:7, Psalm 14:15) are both used in Scripture to represent joy. The inclusion of these elements may symbolize the sentiment in II Corinthians 9:7. It's the heart of the giver that matters to God.

"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

(II Corinthians 9:7)

The Fellowship Offering

- The Fellowship Offering was for special celebratory occasions. An individual or family would present the animal for a feast. Still, a portion would be given first to God, then to the priests.
- God's portion was the fat, the richest and best tasting of the meat. We are reminded that God deserves our best, for it is Him who gave us reason to celebrate (James 1:17, Luke 12:21).
- Once again, the family was only required to bring what they could afford. This time, however, the birds are missing. This is because givers were expected to share the fellowship offering with others, and no bird would have been big enough for the community to share.

"The reason is probably that since this rite was a sacred meal which the offerer was expected to share with his family and friends, especially the poor and needy, a bird would not be adequate for the purpose; and the poor man, who

could not afford a sheep or goat, might and should be invited to partake of the peace offerings presented by his well-to-do friends and neighbours.”

(Allis, 139)

THE FELLOWSHIP OFFERING: LEVITICUS 3:1-16		
Animal	God's Portion	Spiritual Result
If someone's offering is a fellowship offering, and he offers an animal from the herd , whether male or female, he is to present before the Lord an animal without defect. He is to lay his hand on the head of his offering and slaughter it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.	Then Aaron's sons the priests shall sprinkle the blood against the altar on all sides. From the fellowship offering he is to bring a sacrifice made to the Lord by fire: all the fat that covers the inner parts or is connected to them, both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the covering of the liver, which he will remove with the kidneys.	Then Aaron's sons are to burn it on the altar on top of the burnt offering that is on the burning wood, as an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord .
If he offers an animal from the flock as a fellowship offering to the Lord, he is to offer a male or female without defect. If he offers a lamb , he is to present it before the Lord. He is to lay his hand on the head of his offering and slaughter it in front of the Tent of Meeting.	Then Aaron's sons shall sprinkle its blood against the altar on all sides. From the fellowship offering he is to bring a sacrifice made to the Lord by fire: its fat, the entire fat tail cut off close to the backbone, all the fat that covers the inner parts or is connected to them, both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the covering of the liver, which he will remove with the kidneys.	The priest shall burn them on the altar as food, an offering made to the Lord by fire.
If his offering is a goat , he is to present it before the Lord. He is to lay his hand on its head and slaughter it in front of the Tent of Meeting.	Then Aaron's sons shall sprinkle its blood against the altar on all sides. From what he offers he is to make this offering to the Lord by fire: all the fat that covers the inner parts or is connected to them, both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the covering of the liver, which he will remove with the kidneys.	The priest shall burn them on the altar as food, an offering made by fire, a pleasing aroma . All the fat is the Lord's.

“This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live: You must not eat any fat or any blood.”
(Leviticus 3:17)

- We have a major inclusion at the end of the Fellowship Offerings that requires some discussion. God announces a “lasting ordinance for the generations to come” no matter where they are living. No eating any fat or any blood.
- The placement of this “lasting ordinance” immediately before the Sin Offering is absolutely intentional and meaningful. Blood, as we’ll see, is important to God.

“For example, as far as we’re able to tell, the elaborate manipulation of sacrificial blood by the priests of Israel had no counterpart in the ritual of her pagan neighbors, who did little more than allow the blood to run into a catch basin. Blood did not receive the same attention or assume the same importance in other nations that it did in Israel.”
(Youngblood, 83)

- In Scripture, blood typically symbolizes life. The command not to ingest blood might symbolically represent God’s command in the garden, “He must not be allowed to reach out his hand take also from the tree of life and eat” (Genesis 3:22). The restriction on eating blood, then, is a reminder that these people will not have eternal life without an act of God.
- The Old Testament sacrifices could be understood as the precursors to The Lord’s Supper. Flesh was required as payment for sin, and lifeblood was not available to them. By becoming our Sacrificial Lamb, Jesus allows us to partake in the blood now—the only blood that gives us life. We celebrate this with the Bread and Cup of Communion. Thinking of the Sin and Guilt offerings as the Old Testament version of Communion is helpful for understanding their purpose.

“A Hebrew sacrifice, like a Christian Sacrament, possessed the inward and spiritual grace, as well as the outward and visible sign; and may have born to each man a very different amount of meaning, according to the religious conditions of the mind.”
(Cook, 107)

The Sin Offering

“The Lord said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites: ‘When anyone sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord’s commands—’”
(Leviticus 4:1-2)

- So far, these offerings have been a consistent speech of God with no breaks since the introduction. We get a re-introduction here—“The Lord said to Moses.”
 - This is to separate the next two sacrifices from the previous ones. The previous sacrifices have been done in thanksgiving, while these next ones are done to restore the people from sin.
 - This is also to give these next sacrifices authority, reminding the people that it is God who calls for them. Moses repeats this like a child might say “mom said!” to add weight to their words.
- It begins with rules for the priests themselves. We’re reminded that even God’s priests are fallen human beings and need rescuing from sin. Until Christ comes, we are without a perfect mediator.

If the **anointed priest** sins, bringing guilt on the people, he must bring to the Lord a young bull without defect as a sin offering for the sin he has committed.

He is to present the bull at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the Lord. He is to lay his hand on its head and slaughter it before the Lord. Then the anointed priest shall take some of the bull’s blood and **carry it into the Tent of Meeting**. He is to dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle some of it seven times **before the Lord**, in front of the curtain of the sanctuary. The priest shall then put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense that is **before the Lord in the Tent of Meeting**. The rest of the bull’s blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. He shall remove all the fat from the bull of the sin offering—the fat that covers the inner parts or is connected to them, both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the covering of the liver, which he will remove with the kidneys—just as the fat is removed from the ox sacrificed as a fellowship offering. But the hide of the bull and all its flesh, as well as the head and legs, the inner parts and offal—that is, all the rest of the bull—he must take outside the camp to a place ceremonially clean, where the ashes are thrown, and burn it in a wood fire on the ash heap.
(Leviticus 4:3-12)

- There are three distinctions in the priests’ sin offering that we do not see in the other groups.
 - The priests’ holiness is projected corporately. If they sin, they are “bringing guilt on the people.”
 - The priests are the only group that is not pronounced “forgiven” after the sacrifice.
 - The priests, having no mediator, must take the blood of the sin offering directly to God in the Tent of Meeting.
- Each of these distinctions foreshadows Christ, the Great High Priest.
 - Jesus’ holiness is projected corporately. Since He never sinned, He brought not guilt but redemption for the people.
 - Jesus bore the punishment for sin on the Cross, forsaken by God.
 - Jesus’ blood did not go “in front of the curtain,” but tore through the curtain and satisfied the wrath of God on sin.

High Priest (Levite)	Great High Priest (Jesus)
Sin is projected on the people (Leviticus 4:3)	Righteousness is projected on the people (Romans 3:21-22, I Corinthians 1:30, II Corinthians 3:9, Philippians 1:11, Philippians 3:9,)
Sin is not stated as “forgiven”	“Forsaken,” bore the penalty of sin (1 Peter 2:24, Matthew 8:17, Mark 15:34)
Having no mediator, brought their blood to the curtain before God (Leviticus 4:6)	Needing no mediator, brought His blood through the curtain to God (Luke 23:45, Hebrews 6:19-20, Hebrews 10:20, Revelation 5:6-7)

- The priests serve as mediators for the people in the rest of the sin offerings, carrying the blood to the Tent of Meeting on the offerers’ behalf.
- Notice again that no matter the animal, the spiritual result is always the same: “and he will be forgiven.”
- “Unintentionally” in this next section should more broadly be applied to any time the people fell short of God’s law, not just when His law was unknown.

“[Unintentionally] comes from a root which means ‘to wander off’, like sheep. So it is used throughout this chapter to cover sins which do not come from a willful act of rebellion and defiance of God but rather from the weakness and failures of our daily lives.”

(Wright, 127)

The Sin Offering: Leviticus 4:13-31

Person/Animal	Sacrifice	Spiritual Result
<p>If the whole Israelite community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord's commands, even though the community is unaware of the matter, they are guilty. When they become aware of the sin they committed, the assembly must bring a young bull as a sin offering and present it before the Tent of Meeting.</p>	<p>The elders of the community are to lay their hands on the bull's head before the Lord, and the bull shall be slaughtered before the Lord. The anointed priest is to take some of the bull's blood into the Tent of Meeting. He shall dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle it before the Lord seven times in front of the curtain. He is to put some of the blood on the horns of the altar that is before the Lord in the Tent of Meeting. The rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. He shall remove all the fat from it and burn it on the altar, and do with this bull just as he did with the bull for the sin offering.</p>	<p>In this way, the priest will make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven. Then he shall take the bull outside the camp and burn it as he burned the first bull. This is the sin offering for the community.</p>
<p>When a leader sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the commands of the Lord his God, he is guilty. When he is made aware of the sin he committed, he must bring as his offering a male goat without defect.</p>	<p>He is to lay his hand on the goat's head and slaughter it at the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered before the Lord. It is a sin offering. Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. He shall burn all the fat on the altar as he burned the fat of the fellowship offering.</p>	<p>In this way the priest will make atonement for the man's sin, and he will be forgiven.</p>
<p>If a member of the community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord's commands, he is guilty. When he is made aware of the sin he committed, he must bring as his offering for the sin he committed a female goat without defect.</p>	<p>He is to lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and slaughter it at the place of the burnt offering. Then the priest is to take some of the blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. He shall remove all the fat, just as the fat is removed from the fellowship offering, and the priest shall burn it on the altar as an aroma pleasing to the Lord.</p>	<p>In this way the priest will make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven.</p>

- As we've seen before, God makes allowances for those who can't afford certain animals. It's not the animal that matters, but the heart of the people.

“If he brings a lamb as his sin offering, he is to bring a female without defect. He is to lay his hand on its head and slaughter it for a sin offering at the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered. Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. He shall remove all the fat, just as the fat is removed from the lamb of the fellowship offering, and the priest shall burn it on the altar on top of the offerings made to the Lord by fire. In this way the priest will make atonement for him for the sin he has committed, and he will be forgiven.”
(Leviticus 4:32-35)

- Next, God offers a few areas of sin the people might not otherwise consider. He doesn't need to remind them that an active transgression needs a sin offering, but they do need to be reminded of these other areas if they're going to increase in holiness.

“If a person sins because he does not speak up when he hears a public charge to testify regarding something he has seen or learned about, he will be held responsible.”
(Leviticus 5:1)

- We often call this a “sin of omission.” What are things you should have said or done that you avoided? You are held responsible for sin you don't use your voice to address.

“Or if a person touches anything ceremonially unclean—whether the carcasses of unclean wild animals or of unclean livestock or of unclean creatures that move along the ground—even though he is unaware of it, he has become unclean and is guilty. Or if he touches human uncleanness—anything that would make him unclean—even though he is unaware of it, when he learns of it he will be guilty.”
(Leviticus 5:2-3)

- We exist in a broken world, and we inherit the sin of Adam. Even natural occurrences like dead animals, bugs, or cuts—although not sinful—remind us that we’ve mucked things up and need reconciling to God.
- We’ll have a longer discussion on what “unclean” means, but don’t think of it as sin. Rather, think of it as the natural state of the fallen world. God wants to lift us up out of that pit, and laws pertaining to cleanliness remind us of that. One of the goals of this new nation is redeeming God’s creation.

“Or if a person thoughtlessly takes an oath to do anything, whether good or evil—in any matter one might carelessly swear about—even though he is unaware of it, in any case when he learns of it he will be guilty.”
(Leviticus 5:4)

- Oaths matter an awful lot to God. This is likely because, as image bearers of God, we ought to reflect His character of truth and faithfulness. When God makes a promise, He comes through. That’s the standard.
 - Numbers 30 – Do everything you vowed to do.
 - Judges 11 – Jephthah makes a rash vow and has to kill his daughter.
 - Matthew 5:33-37 – Jesus commands us to not make oaths at all.

“When anyone is guilty in any of these ways, he must confess in what way he has sinned and, as a penalty for the sin he has committed, he must bring to the Lord a female lamb or goat from the flock as a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin. If he cannot afford a lamb, he is to bring two doves or two young pigeons to the Lord as a penalty for his sin—one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. He is to bring them to the priest, who shall first offer the one for the sin offering. He is to wring its head from its neck, not severing it completely, and is to sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering against the side of the altar; the rest of the blood must be drained out at the base of the altar. It is a sin offering. The priest shall then offer the other as a burnt offering in the prescribed way and make atonement for him for the sin he has committed, and he will be forgiven. If, however, he cannot afford two doves or two young pigeons, he is to bring as an offering for his sin a tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering. He must not put oil or incense on it, because it is a sin offering. He is to bring it to the priest, who shall take a handful of it as a memorial portion and burn it on the altar on top of the offerings made to the Lord by fire. It is a sin offering. In this way the priest will

make atonement for him for any of these sins he has committed, and he will be forgiven. The rest of the offering will belong to the priest, as in the case of the grain offering.”
(Leviticus 5:5-13)

- Once again, God makes arrangements for those who can't afford the typical offering from the herd or flock. Notice that for the Sin Offering, He goes even lower than a dove and pigeon. In this instance, you could simply bring flour and oil. God wants His people to be reconciled, and removes any barrier from them doing so. God *desires* that no one will perish; that character is on display here.

The Guilt Offering

- The Guilt Offering is very similar to the Sin Offering. It deals with issues that break apart relationships between the people.

“The Lord said to Moses: “When a person commits a violation and sins unintentionally in regard to any of the Lord’s holy things, he is to bring to the Lord as a penalty a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value in silver, according to the sanctuary shekel. It is a guilt offering. He must make restitution for what he has failed to do in regard to the holy things, add a fifth of the value to that and give it all to the priest, who will make atonement for him with the ram as a guilt offering, and he will be forgiven.”
(Leviticus 5:14-16)

- God first outlines the formula for this offering: 1.2x what you took. For example, if you took something worth \$100, you owe back \$120.
- A sin against your neighbor is a sin against the Lord. Just as the Grain Offering was primarily for the priests, yet offered before God; so the Guilt Offering is primarily about neighbors, yet offered before God.

“Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in darkness.”
(1 John 2:9)

The Guilt Offering: Leviticus 5:17-6:7

Sin Against	Penalty	Spiritual Result
<p>If a person sins and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord’s commands, even though he does not know it, he is guilty and will be held responsible.</p>	<p>He is to bring to the priest as a guilt offering a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value.</p>	<p>In this way the priest will make atonement for him for the wrong he has committed unintentionally, and he will be forgiven. It is a guilt offering; he has been guilty of wrongdoing against the Lord.</p>
<p>The Lord said to Moses: “If anyone sins and is unfaithful to the Lord by deceiving his neighbor about something entrusted to him or left in his care or stolen, or if he cheats him, or if he finds lost property and lies about it, or if he swears falsely, or if he commits any such sin that people may do—</p>	<p>...when he thus sins and becomes guilty, he must return what he has stolen or taken by extortion, or what was entrusted to him, or the lost property he found, or whatever it was he swore falsely about. He must make restitution in full, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all to the owner on the day he presents his guilt offering. And as a penalty he must bring to the priest, that is, to the Lord, his guilt offering, a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value.</p>	<p>In this way the priest will make atonement for him before the Lord, and he will be forgiven for any of these things he did that made him guilty.</p>

- God makes the rules and the outcome of His sacrificial system very clear. This is not strict, it’s gracious. Consider the surrounding nations as they sacrifice to false gods. They may sacrifice a pigeon to the gods asking for rain. But what if it doesn’t rain? Do the gods want two pigeons? And if it doesn’t rain again, should we sacrifice something bigger? This guessing game in service of false gods led the surrounding nations to a dark version of sacrifice.

“They turned their backs to me and not their faces; though I taught them again and again, they would not listen or respond to discipline. They set up their

abominable idols in the house that bears my Name and defiled it. They built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech, though I never commanded, nor did it enter my mind, that they should do such a detestable thing and so make Judah sin.”

(Jeremiah 32:33-35)

- God makes His sacrificial system easy. He communicates the details with repetition that for us today seems boring or unnecessary. But God did this purposefully, making clear to the people how they could express their thankfulness and their sorrow for sin. He made clear to them that He was pleased and they were forgiven. This is a sacrificial system built on grace; distinctly different from the nations around them.

“Having come to the end of the manual on sacrifices for worshippers and priests, it may seem terribly complicated and ritualistic. However, that would be a false impression, probably owing mainly to the strangeness of the whole thing to us. In fact, in comparison with the known sacrificial rituals of other ancient cultures, the Israelite system was relatively simple and straightforward.

The laws we have studied were concerned to preserve some dignity and meaningful symbolism in what could easily have degenerated into noisy chaos, by giving both laity and priests clear and simple rules about what to do...The distinctiveness of Israel’s sacrificial system can also be noticed negatively. There was no place for augury, the attempt to derive omens, good or bad, from the entrails of sacrificial animals. God provided better ways to know his will. There was no place for human sacrifice, or even self-mutilation and the use of human blood. Sexual and fertility rituals are entirely absent, as are sacrifices for the dead or any other occult manipulation.”

(Wright, 131)

Kingdom of Priests

Leviticus 6:8-9:24

- God now turns His attention on the priests, giving them specific instructions on how to serve.
- While the role of a priest was not unique to Israel, God's intent for them was.
- In Ancient Near East tradition, firstborn sons served as priests for their family. God was happy to use this tradition, but was quick to abandon it when the heart of the firstborn was corrupted.
 - Cain and Abel
 - Ishmael and Isaac
 - Esau and Jacob
 - Reuben and Judah/Levi
- Throughout the Old Testament, we find an abundance of examples of God rejecting the firstborn and redeeming the family through another son.
- God chose Israel and called them His firstborn son. He considered Israel as a whole to have the blessing, kingship, and priesthood that accompanied firstborns.

“Then say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, ‘Let my son go, so he may worship me.’”

(Exodus 4:22)

“Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

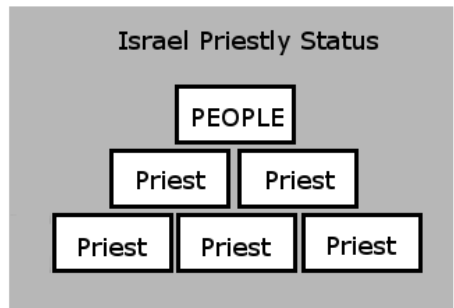
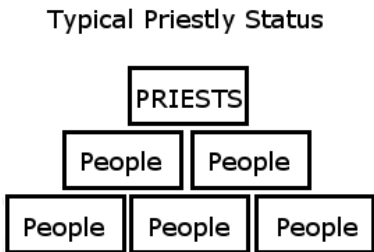
(Exodus 19:5-6)

- The intent was for Israel as a whole to be a nation set apart. They would live better and love better than any of the surrounding nations. Every member of the nation was blessed; every member of the nation was a king, every member of the nation was a priest to God.
- But the sin of the nation in Exodus 32 was great. They acted as priests to false gods and worshiped an idol—a golden calf.

“Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, ‘Whoever is for the Lord, come to me.’ And all the Levites rallied to him. Then he said to them, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: “Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.”’ The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died. Then Moses said, ‘You have been set apart to the Lord today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day.’”

(Exodus 32:25-29)

- That day, God rejected the “firstborn” and chose to redeem Israel through another son: Levi.
- The Levites showed the kind of commitment and sincerity of heart that God was looking for. Now it would be their job to serve as priests and mediators for these fallen people.
- The Levites were to set an example of genuine priesthood. In this way, the function of priests in Israel was the opposite of the function of priests in most other Ancient Near Eastern cultures.



- Priests in Israel certainly had status and power (it was the priests, for example, who installed the kings). But while priests in other nations were elevated by the people with wealth and unchecked authority, these priests would serve to elevate the people. Their primary purpose was not to glorify themselves, but to glorify God by reconciling Him to His people.

Instructions for the Offerings

- The priests now get special instructions for how to perform their parts of the sacrifices. There is a lot of repetition here, but we get a few new details:
 - The fire must burn continuously
 - The priests' clothes must stay clean
 - Holiness is transferable
 - The food must be eaten in the courtyard

Thanksgiving Offerings: Leviticus 6:8-18	
The Burnt Offering	The Lord said to Moses: "Give Aaron and his sons this command: 'These are the regulations for the burnt offering: The burnt offering is to remain on the altar hearth throughout the night, till morning, and the fire must be kept burning on the altar. The priest shall then put on his linen clothes, with linen undergarments next to his body, and shall remove the ashes of the burnt offering that the fire has consumed on the altar and place them beside the altar. Then he is to take off these clothes and put on others , and carry the ashes outside the camp to a place that is ceremonially clean. The fire on the altar must be kept burning; it must not go out. Every morning the priest is to add firewood and arrange the burnt offering on the fire and burn the fat of the fellowship offerings on it. The fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out. "
The Grain Offering	These are the regulations for the grain offering: Aaron's sons are to bring it before the Lord, in front of the altar. The priest is to take a handful of fine flour and oil, together with all the incense on the grain offering, and burn the memorial portion on the altar as an aroma pleasing to the Lord. Aaron and his sons shall eat the rest of it, but it is to be eaten without yeast in a holy place; they are to eat it in the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting. It must not be baked with yeast; I have given it as their share of the offerings made to me by fire. Like the sin offering and the guilt offering, it is most holy. Any male descendant of Aaron may eat it. It is his regular share of the offerings made to the Lord by fire for the generations to come. Whatever touches them will become holy.

- The first must burn continuously. Prior to the Tabernacle’s completion, God revealed Himself to the people in a pillar of fire that hovered above the camp. Now that His presence resided in the Tent of Meeting, this fire may be a symbol of God’s presence in the sacrifices.

“The fire that consumed these sacrifices had been kindled from heaven at the consecration of the tabernacle, and to keep it from being extinguished, and the sacrifices from being burned with common fire, strict injunctions are here given respecting not only the removal of ashes, but the approaching near to the fire-place in garments that were not officially ‘holy.’”

(Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, 130)

- Careful instruction is also given regarding the priests’ clothes. He must wear linen priestly garments when performing the sacrifice, but change into common clothes to carry ashes outside the camp. If any blood splatters onto his garments, he needs to wash and change.
- All throughout Scripture, dirty garments are used to represent sinfulness and humanness, and clean or white garments are used to represent purity and righteousness. The priests’ maintaining clean, white garments are symbolizing both their holiness in proximity to God (in the Tent of Meeting) and their holiness in living.

“The Lord also said to Moses, ‘This is the offering Aaron and his sons are to bring to the Lord on the day he is anointed: a tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a regular grain offering, half of it in the morning and half in the evening.

Prepare it with oil on a griddle; bring it well-mixed and present the grain offering broken in pieces as an aroma pleasing to the Lord. The son who is to succeed him as anointed priest shall prepare it. It is the Lord’s regular share and is to be burned completely; it must not be eaten.”

(Leviticus 6:19-23)

- Since the priesthood passed down to sons, fathers needed to train their sons for the delicate and particular work of priests. Here, the children are seen working with their parents to learn the trade.

Reconciliation Offerings: Leviticus 6:24-7:6

The Sin Offering	The Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron and his sons: ‘These are the regulations for the sin offering: The sin offering is to be slaughtered before the Lord in the place the burnt offering is slaughtered; it is most holy. The priest who offers it shall eat it; it is to be eaten in a holy place, in the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting. Whatever touches any of the flesh will become holy, and if any of the blood is spattered on a garment, you must wash it in a holy place. The clay pot the meat is cooked in must be broken; but if it is cooked in a bronze pot, the pot is to be scoured and rinsed with water. Any male in a priest’s family may eat it; it is most holy. But any sin offering whose blood is brought into the Tent of Meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place must not be eaten; it must be burned.
The Guilt Offering	‘These are the regulations for the guilt offering, which is most holy: The guilt offering is to be slaughtered in the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered, and its blood is to be sprinkled against the altar on all sides. All its fat shall be offered: the fat tail and the fat that covers the inner parts, both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the covering of the liver, which is to be removed with the kidneys. The priest shall burn them on the altar as an offering made to the Lord by fire. It is a guilt offering. Any male in a priest’s family may eat it, but it must be eaten in a holy place ; it is most holy.

- Holiness is to be transferrable.

“First, holiness and uncleanness are totally incompatible. Not only was it impossible for anyone or anything to be holy and unclean at the same time, but, more importantly, no holy object or person was normally permitted to come into contact with anything unclean...Second, both holiness and uncleanness were perceived by the ancient Israelites as being dynamic in nature; that is, they had the ability to transmit their nature to other people or objects.”

(Alexander, 118)

- We need to proceed with caution so we don’t descend into mysticism. We’ll find in Leviticus that holiness is to be protected, not weaponized. It’s never commanded that we take holy things around and touch them to common items in an attempt to transfer holiness. On the contrary, it’s often commanded that we *protect* holy things from what might defile them.

- Any sprinkling or soaking of holy *things* in an attempt to increase in holiness is mysticism and foolishness. Holiness is of God in Christ, and can be transferred only by God's intention.

“Holiness emanates from God; he is the sole source of holiness. He alone endows other objects, places or people with holiness. Everything that is given to God or belongs to him is holy...Sanctification, the process by which someone or something becomes holy, is the result of divine activity. It is God who sanctifies.”
(Alexander, 117)

- The Holy Spirit's work is not to provide talismans, mantles, or objects through which creation is sanctified, but to be Himself the One who sanctifies. If we look for holiness in anything but the Holy Spirit of God, we're looking in the wrong place.

“The same law applies to both the sin offering and the guilt offering: They belong to the priest who makes atonement with them. The priest who offers a burnt offering for anyone may keep its hide for himself. Every grain offering baked in an oven or cooked in a pan or on a griddle belongs to the priest who offers it, and every grain offering, whether mixed with oil or dry, belongs equally to all the sons of Aaron.”
(Leviticus 7:7-10)

- All throughout we're reminded of the portion that belongs to the priests, and specifically told where that portion ought to be consumed.
- All of the food offerings for the priests are to be consumed in the courtyard. There are a few potential reasons for this:
 - These offerings were given reverently, and ought to be consumed in reverence.
 - Eating in the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting provided transparency for the people. The priests couldn't claim to be going hungry if it weren't true, because the people could see what was being eaten.
 - Consuming the food in the courtyard meant the priests couldn't profit from the offerings. They weren't permitted to take it home and stockpile or sell the goods for their own personal gain.
 - By requiring food to be consumed the same day, this ensured new sacrifices had to be offered every day. There were no sacrifice storehouses.

The Fellowship Offerings: Leviticus 7:11-15

Fellowship to Give Thanks	‘These are the regulations for the fellowship offering a person may present to the Lord: If he offers it as an expression of thankfulness, then along with this thank offering he is to offer cakes of bread made without yeast and mixed with oil, wafers made without yeast and spread with oil, and cakes of fine flour well-kneaded and mixed with oil. Along with his fellowship offering of thanksgiving he is to present an offering with cakes of bread made with yeast. He is to bring one of each kind as an offering, a contribution to the Lord; it belongs to the priest who sprinkles the blood of the fellowship offerings. The meat of his fellowship offerings of thanksgiving must be eaten on the day it is offered ; he must leave none of it till morning.
Fellowship to Celebrate	‘If, however, his offering is the result of a vow or is a freewill offering, the sacrifice shall be eaten on the day he offers it, but anything left over may be eaten on the next day. Any meat of the sacrifice left over till the third day must be burned up. If any meat of the fellowship offering is eaten on the third day, it will not be accepted. It will not be credited to the one who offered it, for it is impure; the person who eats any of it will be held responsible.

- Only in the case of Fellowship Offerings done in celebration are the priests permitted to store food—and this only for a day.
- It’s worth noting that our pure and perfect sacrifice didn’t lie for three days, but was raised to life on the third! Christ gave himself up for us, a freewill offering like none seen before. When we celebrate the Lord’s death with the Lord’s Supper, we eat of a sacrifice that *certainly is* “credited to the one who offered it.” Thanks be to God!

“‘Meat that touches anything ceremonially unclean must not be eaten; it must be burned up. As for other meat, anyone ceremonially clean may eat it. But if anyone who is unclean eats any meat of the fellowship offering belonging to the Lord, that person must be cut off from his people. If anyone touches something unclean—whether human uncleanness or an unclean animal or any unclean, detestable thing—and then eats any of the meat of the fellowship offering belonging to the Lord, that person must be cut off from his people.’

The Lord said to Moses, ‘Say to the Israelites: ‘Do not eat any of the fat of cattle, sheep or goats. The fat of an animal found dead or torn by wild animals may be used for any other purpose, but you must not eat it. Anyone who eats

the fat of an animal from which an offering by fire may be made to the Lord must be cut off from his people. And wherever you live, you must not eat the blood of any bird or animal. If anyone eats blood, that person must be cut off from his people.'”
(Leviticus 7:19-27)

- Uncleaness is not permitted at the Lord’s table. God cautions the people to examine themselves before they eat of this offering to ensure they are not unclean. We are reminded of Paul’s caution surrounding the Lord’s Supper.

“Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.”
(I Corinthians 11:27-32)

- We are pointed ahead to the wedding feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9) where the elect in Christ don their white robes (Revelation 3:5) and celebrate the freewill offering of the perfect Lamb of God (Revelation 5:12) reconciled to God and void of all sickness and death (Revelation 21:3-4). The Old Testament law is a shadow of those good things that are to come!

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Say to the Israelites: ‘Anyone who brings a fellowship offering to the Lord is to bring part of it as his sacrifice to the Lord. With his own hands he is to bring the offering made to the Lord by fire; he is to bring the fat, together with the breast, and wave the breast before the Lord as a wave offering. The priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast belongs to Aaron and his sons. You are to give the right thigh of your fellowship offerings to the priest as a contribution. The son of Aaron who offers the blood and the fat of the fellowship offerings shall have the right thigh as his share. From the fellowship offerings of the Israelites, I have taken the breast that is waved and the thigh that is presented and have given them to Aaron the priest and his sons as their regular share from the Israelites.’” This is the portion of the

offerings made to the Lord by fire that were allotted to Aaron and his sons on the day they were presented to serve the Lord as priests. On the day they were anointed, the Lord commanded that the Israelites give this to them as their regular share for the generations to come. These, then, are the regulations for the burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the ordination offering and the fellowship offering, which the Lord gave Moses on Mount Sinai on the day he commanded the Israelites to bring their offerings to the Lord, in the Desert of Sinai.”
(Leviticus 7:28-38)

The Ordination Service

- Aaron and his sons are ordained for the work of ministry in a moving and symbolic ceremony that took place in front of all the people of Israel.

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Bring Aaron and his sons, their garments, the anointing oil, the bull for the sin offering, the two rams and the basket containing bread made without yeast, and gather the entire assembly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.’ Moses did as the Lord commanded him, and the assembly gathered at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Moses said to the assembly, ‘This is what the Lord has commanded to be done.’”
(Leviticus 8:1-5)

- As further evidence that Leviticus is a continuation of the Exodus story, the ordination service recorded follows exactly the planned ordination service found in Exodus 29.
- Of particular interest is the Urim and Thummim, stones used in the Ancient Near East for casting lots. Exodus 28 tells us they were “the means of making decisions for the Israelites.” The words mean “light and perfection,” or “revelation and truth.” Some argue the priests rolled the stones to discern God’s will, a common practice among surrounding nations. Others argue they remained in the breastplate simply to symbolize “revelation and truth” coming from God.

“I will now treat of what I before omitted, the garment of the high priest: for [Moses] left no room for the evil practices of [false] prophets; but if some of that sort should attempt to abuse the divine authority... as to those stones, which few told you before, the high priest bare on his shoulders, which were sardonyxes (and I think it needless to describe their nature, they being known to everybody), the one of them shined out when God was present at their sacrifices; I mean that which was in the nature of a button on his right shoulder, bright rays darting out thence, and being seen even by those that were most remote; which splendor yet was not before natural to the stone.”
(Josephus, The Antiquities of the Jews, 3.8.9 214-215)

- Josephus, a first century Jewish historian, recounts the purpose of these stones. He notes that the stones reflected light and reminded the people of the presence of God with the priest. The stones would shine more brightly when God was present.
- This expresses more control of God in “the means of making decisions,” rather than simply casting lots and rolling die.

“Now the vestment of the high priest being made of linen, signified the earth; the blue denoted the sky, being like lightning in its pomegranates, and in the noise of the bells resembling thunder. And for the ephod, it showed that God had made the universe of four [elements]; and as for the gold interwoven, I suppose it related to the splendor by which all things are enlightened. He also appointed the breastplate to be placed in the middle of the ephod, to resemble the earth, for that has the very middle place of the world. And the girdle which encompassed the high priest round, signified the ocean, for that goes round about and includes the universe. Each of the sardonyxes declare to us the sun and the moon; those, I mean, that were in the nature of buttons on the high priest’s shoulders.”
(Josephus, The Antiquities of the Jews, 3.7.7 184-185)

- According to Josephus, the Israelites found the detail in this garb to be proof of God. How else could garments so beautiful and rich in meaning come about?

“For if anyone do but consider the fabric of the tabernacle, and take a view of the garments of the high priest, and of those vessels which we make use of in our sacred ministration, he will find that our legislator was a divine man, and that we are unjustly reproached by others: for if anyone do without prejudice, and with judgment, look upon these things, he will find they were every one made in way of imitation and representation of the universe.”

(Josephus, The Antiquities of the Jews, 3.7.7 180)

The Ordination Garments: Leviticus 8:6-13	
Garment	Description (Exodus 28)
<i>Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward and washed them with water.</i>	Symbol of cleansing from uncleanness
<i>He put the tunic on Aaron, tied the sash around him, clothed him with the robe and put the ephod on him. He also tied the ephod to him by its skillfully woven waistband; so it was fastened on him.</i>	A tunic is a coat, tied with a belt. An ephod is a cape attached with gems to the shoulders. All of these items were gold, blue, purple and scarlet. The shoulder fasteners were onyx and had the names of the 12 tribes engraved on them.
<i>He placed the breastpiece on him and put the Urim and Thummim in the breastpiece.</i>	The breastpiece was for “making decisions” (Ex 28:15) and was the same color as the other garments. It had 3 rows of 4 gems set in gold. Gold rings connected it to the ephod at the shoulder and to the waistband.
<i>Then he placed the turban on Aaron’s head and set the gold plate, the sacred diadem, on the front of it, as the Lord commanded Moses.</i>	The gold plate had inscribed “HOLY TO THE LORD.”
<i>Then Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and everything in it, and so consecrated them. He sprinkled some of the oil on the altar seven times, anointing the altar and all its utensils and the basin with its stand, to consecrate them. He poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron’s head and anointed him to consecrate him.</i>	Anointing oil symbolized the work of the Holy Spirit (Wolf, 173). Apparently enough oil was used that it ran down Aaron’s beard and down his robe (Psalm 133:2).
<i>Then he brought Aaron’s sons forward, put tunics on them, tied sashes around them and put headbands on them, as the Lord commanded Moses.</i>	Aaron’s sons were not the High Priests, so their garments were different, but still distinguishable.

- After the priests are properly dressed for their work, they provide special sacrifices to complete their ordination. Notice the order of the sacrifices and what it communicates about our relationship with God:
 - First: Sin Offering; in our humanness we are sinful and apart from God.
 - Second: Burnt Offering; we ought to be thankful for the grace of God in forgiving us.
 - Third: Ordination Offering; having been reconciled to God, we can begin our work in Him.
- The Ordination Offering is the only offering not previously described in Leviticus. It could be more literally translated “The Filling Offering.”
 - It could be that with the completion of these offerings, the Holy Spirit filled them with the gifts and abilities to serve in their role as priests; and in this way they were ordained for ministry.
 - Or, it could mean that with the beginning of their ministry they would “have their hands full”—as we’ll see more literally depicted in a few verses—in the sense that offerings would need to be constant for such sinful people.
- This Ordination Offering finishes with blood placed on Aaron’s ear lobe, thumb and big toe.

“The meaning may have been that the priests, being as sinful as any other person, needed complete cleansing, from head to toe, as it were...Or, if the blood was here primarily for consecration, then it would symbolize the complete consecration of the priests to hear God’s word and obey it, to do the tasks assigned, and to walk in his ways (ears, hands and feet).”

(Wright, 134)

“This, being performed with the blood of the [Ordination Offering], has been supposed to figure the readiness of the priest who is at peace with Jehovah to hear with the ear and obey the divine word, to perform with the hand the sacred duties of his office, and to walk with the feet in the way of holiness.”

(Cook, 129)

The Ordination Sacrifices: Leviticus 8:14-23

Animal/Sacrifice Type	Ritual
He then presented the bull for the sin offering , and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head.	Moses slaughtered the bull and took some of the blood, and with his finger he put it on all the horns of the altar to purify the altar. He poured out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. So he consecrated it to make atonement for it. Moses also took all the fat around the inner parts, the covering of the liver, and both kidneys and their fat, and burned it on the altar. But the bull with its hide and its flesh and its offal he burned up outside the camp, as the Lord commanded Moses.
He then presented the ram for the burnt offering , and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head.	Then Moses slaughtered the ram and sprinkled the blood against the altar on all sides. He cut the ram into pieces and burned the head, the pieces and the fat. He washed the inner parts and the legs with water and burned the whole ram on the altar as a burnt offering, a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the Lord by fire, as the Lord commanded Moses.
He then presented the other ram, the ram for the ordination , and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head.	Moses slaughtered the ram and took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot.

“Moses also brought Aaron’s sons forward and put some of the blood on the lobes of their right ears, on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet. Then he sprinkled blood against the altar on all sides. He took the fat, the fat tail, all the fat around the inner parts, the covering of the liver, both kidneys and their fat and the right thigh. Then from the basket of bread made without yeast, which was before the Lord, he took a cake of bread, and one made with oil, and a wafer; he put these on the fat portions and on the right thigh. He put all these in the hands of Aaron and his sons and waved them before the Lord as a wave offering. Then Moses took them from their

hands and burned them on the altar on top of the burnt offering as an ordination offering, a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the Lord by fire. He also took the breast—Moses’ share of the ordination ram—and waved it before the Lord as a wave offering, as the Lord commanded Moses.”
(Leviticus 8:24-29)

- The blood is placed on Aaron’s sons ear lobes, thumbs, and big toes in the same manner.

“Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood from the altar and sprinkled them on Aaron and his garments and on his sons and their garments. So he consecrated Aaron and his garments and his sons and their garments.”
(Leviticus 8:30)

- Once more, Aaron and his sons are anointed with oil. This time the oil and blood are mixed together. We’ve seen already that oil often represents joy, or that it can denote royalty (the kings were anointed with oil). In either respect, “joy in the blood” or, “royal blood” is a clear foreshadowing of Christ’s shed blood. As Priest and King, Christ’s sacrifice was perfect and sufficient for all sin.

“How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.”
(Psalm 133)

- The picture of this in Psalm 133 is a joyous occasion, celebrating unity, blessing, and eternal life.

“Moses then said to Aaron and his sons, ‘Cook the meat at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and eat it there with the bread from the basket of ordination offerings, as I commanded, saying, ‘Aaron and his sons are to eat it.’ Then burn up the rest of the meat and the bread. Do not leave the entrance to the Tent of Meeting for seven days, until the days of your ordination are completed, for

your ordination will last seven days. What has been done today was commanded by the Lord to make atonement for you. You must stay at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting day and night for seven days and do what the Lord requires, so you will not die; for that is what I have been commanded.’ So Aaron and his sons did everything the Lord commanded through Moses.”
(Leviticus 8:33-36)

- Aaron and his sons complete the rituals for atonement by remaining at the Tent of Meeting for seven days. Here they get a serious charge: do what the Lord requires, or you will die. The high priests have a high calling; they are to demonstrate the holiness of God to the people. If they are to remain near God at the Tent of Meeting, they ought to remain clean and holy. The punishment for disobedience is death.

“On the eighth day Moses summoned Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel. He said to Aaron, ‘Take a bull calf for your sin offering and a ram for your burnt offering, both without defect, and present them before the Lord. Then say to the Israelites: ‘Take a male goat for a sin offering, a calf and a lamb—both a year old and without defect—for a burnt offering, and an ox and a ram for a fellowship offering to sacrifice before the Lord, together with a grain offering mixed with oil. For today the Lord will appear to you.’” They took the things Moses commanded to the front of the Tent of Meeting, and the entire assembly came near and stood before the Lord. Then Moses said, ‘This is what the Lord has commanded you to do, so that the glory of the Lord may appear to you.’”
(Leviticus 9:1-6)

- After receiving the grave warning “obey or die,” Aaron and his sons are quick to do everything the Lord commands. Here they are told to bring...
 - A bull for the sin offering
 - A ram for the burnt offering
 - A male goat for the peoples’ sin offering
 - A calf and a lamb for the peoples’ burnt offering
 - An ox and a ram for the fellowship offering with a grain offering
- They follow these rules exactly as God commanded.

“Moses said to Aaron, ‘Come to the altar and sacrifice your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and the people; sacrifice the offering that is for the people and make atonement for them as the Lord has commanded.’
(Leviticus 9:7)

- As in all other parts of the ordination, sin is the first thing to be dealt with.

The First Sacrifices: Leviticus 9:8-21	
Animal/Sacrifice Type	Ritual
So Aaron came to the altar and slaughtered the calf as a sin offering for himself.	His sons brought the blood to him, and he dipped his finger into the blood and put it on the horns of the altar; the rest of the blood he poured out at the base of the altar. On the altar he burned the fat, the kidneys and the covering of the liver from the sin offering, as the Lord commanded Moses; the flesh and the hide he burned up outside the camp.
Then he slaughtered the burnt offering (ram).	His sons handed him the blood, and he sprinkled it against the altar on all sides. They handed him the burnt offering piece by piece, including the head, and he burned them on the altar. He washed the inner parts and the legs and burned them on top of the burnt offering on the altar.
Aaron then brought the offering that was for the people. He took the goat for the people’s sin offering...	...and slaughtered it and offered it for a sin offering as he did with the first one.
He brought the burnt offering (calf and lamb)...	...and offered it in the prescribed way.
He also brought the grain offering...	...took a handful of it and burned it on the altar in addition to the morning’s burnt offering.
He slaughtered the ox and the ram as the fellowship offering for the people.	His sons handed him the blood, and he sprinkled it against the altar on all sides. But the fat portions of the ox and the ram—the fat tail, the layer of fat, the kidneys and the covering of the liver—these they laid on the breasts, and then Aaron burned the fat on the altar. Aaron waved the breasts and the right thigh before the Lord as a wave offering, as Moses commanded.

- Aaron offers a bull calf for his sin offering, the largest possible of the prescribed offerings for sin. This is likely to demonstrate the importance of having a holy mediator, but might also be a nod to Aaron's great offense with the golden calf in Exodus 32.

"There may be some intentional irony in the fact that Aaron was commanded to bring a bull calf for his very first sin offering as high priest, since the last time Aaron played any significant part in the story was when he went along with the people's apostasy, while Moses was up on the mountain, and fashioned the golden bull calf. Indeed, it was only because of God's mercy that Aaron was even alive on this day, let alone entering on the privilege of high priesthood."
(Wright, 134)

- Now Aaron begins his ministry.

"Then Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them. And having sacrificed the sin offering, the burnt offering and the fellowship offering, he stepped down."
(Leviticus 9:22)

- The first official act of the priests of Israel ends with this humble stepping down. This is a radical moment.
- As we've noted, priests in the surrounding nations at this time in history were very glorified people. People put a lot of stock in what the priest said. People gave a lot of money to the priests. People prostituted themselves with the priests. The priests had private revelation from the gods that the people didn't have, so the people served the priest in order to gain favor with the god.
- But God's system is exactly backward. There is no private revelation. God's power is on display for all to see. His rules, regulations, and commandments are written for all to read. And priests of God Most High exist to serve the people. The goal of the Levitical priest was always to show this entire kingdom of priests how they were to live.

"Moses and Aaron then went into the Tent of Meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people.

Fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed the burnt offering
and the fat portions on the altar.”
(Leviticus 9:23-24)

- The glory of the Lord comes to people when we're invited to come and see the bloody sacrifice on the altar. And as the fire on the altar consumes this sacrifice, the people see the glory of the Lord. And when the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell facedown.

“And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell facedown.”
(Leviticus 9:24)

- The people demonstrate the right response to seeing the bloody sacrifice for sin and the glory of the Lord. A similar instance is repeated in Revelation 4, where John sees a “Lamb, looking as if it had been slain” standing with the glory of the Lord.

“And when [the Lamb] had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.’
(Revelation 5:8-10)

- God choose Israel in the Old Covenant, but in the New Covenant makes a Kingdom of Priests out of tribe and language and people and nation. We are part of that royal priesthood. Like Aaron and his sons, we live to serve others that they might be reconciled to God and God might be glorified.
- As we've seen in this chapter, this is a role that requires reverence, preparation, holy living, and a close relationship to our Holy God. Let us commit to being priests in this way, wholly dedicated to the God who rescued us.

Strange Fire

Leviticus 10

- Leviticus 10 is one of only two stories told in the entire book, breaking from the list of rites and regulations prescribed by God. Both stories seem harsh and ungracious.
- So far, we've referred to "Aaron and his sons," but here the sons are named. Nadab and Abihu were introduced in Exodus 24, where God invited a handful of people up Mt. Sinai to worship him. Nadab and Abihu had seen God, and God had called them to a high, holy calling.
- Remember that in the last chapter, they had been warned "do what the Lord requires, so you will not die" (Leviticus 8:35).

"Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to his command."

(Leviticus 10:1)

- "Unauthorized fire" has left a lot of commentators guessing.
 - The fire may have been brought from outside the camp.
 - The fire may have been the duty of the High Priest *only*.
 - They may have lit the fire drunk from alcohol.
 - The fire may have been an attempt to attract attention to themselves.
 - The fire included ingredients not prescribed by God.

"Unauthorized fire is unexplained. The Hebrew (*zārâ*) means 'strange', 'from outside'. Perhaps they took fire from outside the sanctuary instead of from the altar, as if to say, 'Any fire will do'. Such fire would be unholy, unclean, 'illicit',

and therefore, in the context of all that had gone on meticulously up to this point, wantonly offensive.

(Wright, 135)

“The offering of incense on the golden altar was the duty of the High Priest, or of one of the priests. For them to take precedence over their father in the first performance of this solemn function was an act of presumption. For the two of them to undertake it at the same time suggests rivalry and jealousy. Their act may also have been presumptuous because the time for offering incense (morning and evening) had not arrived.”

(Allis, 143)

“And we may reasonably unite with this the supposition that they were intoxicated, as well as another conjecture, that they made their offering of incense an accompaniment to the exultation of the people on the manifestation of the glory of the Lord. As they perished not within the Tabernacle, but in front of it, it seems likely that they may have been making an ostentatious and irreverent display of their ministrations to accompany the shouts of the people on their way towards the Tabernacle.”

(Cook, 132)

“But for some reason, Aaron’s two oldest sons, Nadab and Abihu, presented to the Lord incense that did not contain the ingredients specified in Exodus 30:30-34.”

(Wolf, 174)

“It were as if a Christian minister in the middle of celebrating the Holy Communion were to inject rites or objects associated with the occult.”

(Wright, 135)

- Regardless of the meaning, the fire was not brought in the way commanded by God. According to the rules we’ve noted from Leviticus 8:35, that meant death for Nadab and Abihu.

“So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.”

(Leviticus 10:2)

- With the same words used to express God’s favor in Leviticus 9:24, an all consuming fire once again proceeds from God; this time not consuming the offerings, but consuming the priests.
- It seems to be commonplace throughout Scripture that at “thin places,” where God’s glory is especially near, great miracles or great disasters happen. Once again, Leviticus is not *strange* but *familiar*.
 - Exodus 33:21-23 describes the care Moses needs to see even God’s back; if he had seen God’s face Moses would have died.
 - I Samuel 5 describes the havoc God’s presence created when the Philistines stole the Ark of the Covenant—where God’s glory rested.
 - The Gospels describe the incredible miracles Jesus did while on earth.
 - Acts 5 describes the tragedy of Ananias and Sapphira, who lied to the Holy Spirit and were struck dead.

“The shocking death of Nadab and Abihu can be compared with the fate that befalls Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. Just after ‘tongues of fire’ came upon the believers and the Holy Spirit filled them, an apparently devout couple was struck down for lying to Peter about a gift. There it was the beginning of the church; in Leviticus, it was the inauguration of the priesthood. At these two crucial periods God let it be known that He demanded holiness and that sin brought judgment and death.”

(Wolf, 174)

“Moses then said to Aaron, ‘This is what the Lord spoke of when he said: “Among those who approach me I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored.”’ Aaron remained silent.”

(Leviticus 10:3)

- Aaron understandably takes the death of his sons hard. While Moses runs around managing the scene and taking care of business, Aaron sits quietly.
- Aaron seems to be a thoughtful, introspective man. A tragedy like this one hits him particularly hard.

“Hereupon an affliction befell Aaron, considered as a man and a father, but was undergone by him with true fortitude; for he had indeed a firmness of soul in such accidents, and he thought this calamity came upon him according to God’s will.”

(Josephus, The Antiquities of the Jews 3.8.7 208)

- Like Job, Aaron doesn’t curse or reject God because of the tragedy that just occurred. Instead, he recognizes God’s hand at work.
- Like Isaiah the prophet, Aaron doesn’t feel worthy to speak in front of a God so holy. Instead, he holds his tongue.

“Moses summoned Mishael and Elzapha, sons of Aaron’s uncle Uzziel, and said to them, ‘Come here; carry your cousins outside the camp, away from the front of the sanctuary.’ So they came and carried them, still in their tunics, outside the camp, as Moses ordered.”

(Leviticus 10:4-5)

- Moses springs into action. Aaron’s cousins carry his sons outside the camp, careful not to touch the dead bodies or the blood. Being Aaron’s family, they themselves are priests and are still in their priestly garb. Because of this, they aren’t able to tear their clothes—a common demonstration of mourning—because their clothes have been ordained as holy to the Lord.

“Then Moses said to Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, ‘Do not let your hair become unkempt, and do not tear your clothes, or you will die and the Lord will be angry with the whole community. But your relatives, all the house of Israel, may mourn for those the Lord has destroyed by fire. Do not leave the entrance to the Tent of Meeting or you will die, because the Lord’s anointing oil is on you.’ So they did as Moses said.”

(Leviticus 10:6)

- Aaron and his remaining sons are commanded not to mourn for their dead sons and brothers. Here is another instance that seems *harsh*; but when we find its New Testament fulfillment out of the shadows, we find *grace*. We’re reminded of Jesus’ call to His disciples on two occasions.

“Another disciple said to him, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ But Jesus told him, ‘Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.’”

(Matthew 8:21-22)

“Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.’”

(Luke 14:25-26)

- The consistent call of God in the Bible is to *remain with Him*. There is nothing worth leaving Him for. It’s as if God is saying to Aaron, “There’s no better place for you to be, stay with me.”

“Then the Lord said to Aaron, ‘You and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the Tent of Meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean, and you must teach the Israelites all the decrees the Lord has given them through Moses.”

(Leviticus 10:8-11)

- We are finally introduced to an idea that will be central to the rest of the book: unclean and clean (or holy and common).

“The importance of these three categories is underlined by the very frequent occurrence of these and associated words throughout Leviticus. Terms based on the Hebrew root *qādaš* (e.g. ‘holy’, ‘holiness’, ‘sanctify’) come 152 times in Leviticus, representing about one-fifth of all occurrences in the OT. *Tahôr* ‘clean’ and associated words occur 74 times, representing more than one-third of all OT occurrences. *Ṭāmé* ‘unclean’ and cognate terms come 132 times, representing more than half of the total occurrences in the OT. These statistics highlight the significance of the categories holy, clean/pure and unclean/impure in Leviticus.”

(Alexander, 112)

- People, animals, objects, places, and even times all fall into one of three categories: holy, common, or unclean. God is holy, and we've seen He demands holiness. The people are called to move toward holiness, and avoid what's unclean.
- We often wrongly connect "unclean" to "sin." This is not necessarily the case. Sin does make one unclean, but general brokenness in the world also causes uncleanness. For example, we'll see how mold or skin diseases causes uncleanness. These things aren't the result of individual sin, but of *original sin* that permeates and distorts all of creation.
- The disciples made this false equivalency in John 9 when they asked about a blind man: "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus told them it wasn't about a sin at all, but a brokenness in the world that He had come to correct.
- By connecting these aspects of fallen creation to ritual uncleanness, God is reminding the people two things:
 - First, we exist in a broken creation that results from our original sin.
 - Second, the holy intent of Creator God is a world without sin and the brokenness caused by it. To be holy is to be void of mold and skin disease.
- So, like the Israelites, we long for a holiness without death, crying, or pain. God's dwelling with Israel in the Tabernacle is a shadow of what's to come: God dwelling with His People in the New Creation.

"Now the dwelling place of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

(Revelation 21:3-4)

- To best understand the distinctions between clean and unclean that will follow, remember that "unclean" is not necessarily a synonym for "sin."

"There was no disgrace, sin, or guilt associated with becoming unclean; the difficulty came when someone could not or would not seek cleansing through the prescribed ceremonies."

(Scott, 71)

- As we find these distinctions in upcoming chapters, we will clarify what exactly God is communicating to the people, and how the New Testament removes the shadow of the law.

“Moses said to Aaron and his remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, ‘Take the grain offering left over from the offerings made to the Lord by fire and eat it prepared without yeast beside the altar, for it is most holy. Eat it in a holy place, because it is your share and your sons’ share of the offerings made to the Lord by fire; for so I have been commanded. But you and your sons and your daughters may eat the breast that was waved and the thigh that was presented. Eat them in a ceremonially clean place; they have been given to you and your children as your share of the Israelites’ fellowship offerings. The thigh that was presented and the breast that was waved must be brought with the fat portions of the offerings made by fire, to be waved before the Lord as a wave offering. This will be the regular share for you and your children, as the Lord has commanded.’ When Moses inquired about the goat of the sin offering and found that it had been burned up, he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s remaining sons, and asked, ‘Why didn’t you eat the sin offering in the sanctuary area? It is most holy; it was given to you to take away the guilt of the community by making atonement for them before the Lord. Since its blood was not taken into the Holy Place, you should have eaten the goat in the sanctuary area, as I commanded.’”
 (Leviticus 10:12-18)

- Imagine Moses’ frustration. His nephews just died for failing to obey the commands of God. But in the commotion, his other nephews forgot to eat their portion of the sin offering and let it burn up on the altar.

“Aaron replied to Moses, ‘Today they sacrificed their sin offering and their burnt offering before the Lord, but such things as this have happened to me. Would the Lord have been pleased if I had eaten the sin offering today?’ When Moses heard this, he was satisfied.”
 (Leviticus 10:19-20)

- Once again, it’s not about the rituals but about the heart.

- Aaron, in his sorrow, could not complete his duties as High Priest. He had suffered too much. Christ, a better High Priest, suffered greater and completed his duties.

Distinctly Kosher

Leviticus 11

- We noted in the introduction that Leviticus is in part an answer to Moses' question, "How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" (Exodus 33:16).
 - In the sacrifices, we find out God is *pleased* with thankful hearts.
 - In the regulations that follow, we'll find out how these people will be *distinct* from the nations around them.
- Like sacrifices and priesthood, food laws are also not unusual in this time and place. But like sacrifices and priesthood, the laws of God here are *distinct* from those of the surrounding nations.
- These rules are not *harsh*, but sensible and intentional. By the food they eat, God is teaching His people something about life and health.
- Some have tried to make sense of these laws with entirely natural explanations. This is possible because of the goodness of God—he wouldn't prescribe something to be eaten that wasn't good or life-giving. But to reduce these laws to only natural explanations is not sufficient in explaining them, nor is it sufficient in understanding God's intent.
- Others have made sense of these laws with entirely supernatural (spiritual) explanations; in other words, this is solely about separating God's people from the pagan and occult worship practices of the surrounding nations. This, too, is possible—God is jealous in His righteousness and would never permit the Israelites to participate in pagan or occult worship. But to reduce these laws to only supernatural explanations is not sufficient in explaining them, nor is it sufficient in understanding God's intent.

- We'll interpret these food laws and the many distinctive laws that follow using *both* the natural and the supernatural. This lens brings a fullness to the law that is otherwise absent.
 - Natural
 - God is involved and in control of His creation.
 - God cares that His creation is maintained, and that His image bearers thrive and multiply.
 - God cares about what's physical, and through His law desires that we see it restored to its "good" created state.
 - Supernatural (Spiritual)
 - God is holy, and demands holiness from His people.
 - God is angry with sin and unrighteousness and will destroy it.
 - God delights in righteousness, and desires that we strive for it through obedience to His law.

"Perhaps a combination of factors determined what was clean and unclean as God chose what was best for His people. By obeying these regulations and all of the other laws laid down in the Pentateuch, Israel could be a holy nation, enjoying the presence of a holy God."

(Wolf, 177)

- These laws will both distinguish God's people from the unrighteous and promote health and life for His creation.

"The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Say to the Israelites: "Of all the animals that live on land, these are the ones you may eat: You may eat any animal that has a split hoof completely divided and that chews the cud. There are some that only chew the cud or only have a split hoof, but you must not eat them.

The camel, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is ceremonially unclean for you. The coney, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is unclean for you. The rabbit, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is unclean for you. And the pig, though it has a split hoof completely divided, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you. You must not eat their meat or touch their carcasses; they are unclean for you.'"

(Leviticus 11:1-8)

- For a land animal to be considered clean to eat, it had to meet two criteria:
 - Split hoof completely divided
 - Chew cud
- This basically restricted their list to the same animals used in sacrifices: bulls, sheep, and goats. In Deuteronomy 14:4, we're told that several wild animals also meet these criteria: deer, gazelle, ibex, and antelope.
- Limiting the diet in this way does a few things:
 - Natural: Pigs—a commonly available domestic animal—could carry diseases like trichinosis if not cooked properly.
 - Supernatural: The vast majority of their meat diet overlapped with their sacrifices. This made their offerings more valuable, as they'd be giving up the choicest of their food to God.
- The fact that the text here specifically lists animals that meet only one of the criteria might be a way of emphasizing to the Israelites that there is no cheating or allowances made in the law of God. There's no going half way.

“Of all the creatures living in the water of the seas and the streams, you may eat any that have fins and scales. But all creatures in the seas or streams that do not have fins and scales—whether among all the swarming things or among all the other living creatures in the water—you are to detest. And since you are to detest them, you must not eat their meat and you must detest their carcasses. Anything living in the water that does not have fins and scales is to be detestable to you.”
 (Leviticus 11:9-12)

- The laws concerning fish seem to be the most open. It only omits bottom feeders—like lobsters, oysters, and crabs—that might carry disease.
- Why so light on regulations? Serious explanation wouldn't be necessary because the people were in the wilderness, not near enough water for this to be of concern.
- The availability of fish in the Promised Land combined with the loose laws here explains the Israelites proclivity for fishing throughout the Gospels.

“These are the birds you are to detest and not eat because they are detestable: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, the red kite, any kind of black kite, any kind of raven, the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat.”
(Leviticus 11:13-19)

- Once again, the animals most likely to carry disease are excluded. In this instance, it's the birds of prey that feed on dead and rotting carcasses.
- Critics of Christianity use Leviticus 11:19 as a way to disprove the Bible: a bat is not a bird, so God was wrong. This is easily explained, since the word for “birds” in Leviticus 11:13 is ‘ōp̄; better translated as “winged things that fly” and could even be used to describe flying insects. This is a problem of etymology, not theology. “Birds” was the closest word we have in English.

“All flying insects that walk on all fours are to be detestable to you. There are, however, some winged creatures that walk on all fours that you may eat: those that have jointed legs for hopping on the ground. Of these you may eat any kind of locust, katydid, cricket or grasshopper. But all other winged creatures that have four legs you are to detest.”
(Leviticus 11:20-23)

- Notice that while the Israelites may not eat these unclean animals and that they are to detest them, no ritual purification has been prescribed. We'll find that the seriousness with which God views uncleanness is easily identifiable by the ritual purification He requires. Eating unclean animals seems to *not* be so serious, since no purification has been prescribed. Sins of immorality, we'll see require death—obviously a significantly more serious penalty.

“You will make yourselves unclean by these; whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean till evening. Whoever picks up one of their carcasses must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening. Every animal that has a split hoof not completely divided or that does not chew the cud is unclean for you; whoever touches the carcass of any of them will be unclean. Of all the animals that walk on all fours, those that walk on their paws are unclean for you; whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean till evening. Anyone who picks up their carcasses must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening.

They are unclean for you. Of the animals that move about on the ground, these are unclean for you: the weasel, the rat, any kind of great lizard, the gecko, the monitor lizard, the wall lizard, the skink and the chameleon. Of all those that move along the ground, these are unclean for you. Whoever touches them when they are dead will be unclean till evening. When one of them dies and falls on something, that article, whatever its use, will be unclean, whether it is made of wood, cloth, hide or sackcloth. Put it in water; it will be unclean till evening, and then it will be clean. If one of them falls into a clay pot, everything in it will be unclean, and you must break the pot. Any food that could be eaten but has water on it from such a pot is unclean, and any liquid that could be drunk from it is unclean. Anything that one of their carcasses falls on becomes unclean; an oven or cooking pot must be broken up. They are unclean and you are to regard them as unclean. A spring, however, or cistern for collecting remains clean, but anyone who touches one of these carcasses is unclean. If a carcass falls on any seeds that are to be planted, they remain clean. But if water has been put on the seed and a carcass falls on it, it is unclean for you.”
(Leviticus 11:24-38)

- If you come in to contact with a dead animal, you are unclean for a few hours. The ritual for purification is a simple washing with water. Compared to the offenses we will see as we keep reading, this is not a significant issue.
- Remember, “unclean” is *not* synonymous with “sin.” There’s nothing inherently evil in touching a dead animal. But by making this law, God is both reminding the people of the broken state of the world and distinguishing His people from the dead (a distinction Christ certainly fulfills)!

“If an animal that you are allowed to eat dies, anyone who touches the carcass will be unclean till evening. Anyone who eats some of the carcass must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening. Anyone who picks up the carcass must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening. Every creature that moves about on the ground is detestable; it is not to be eaten. You are not to eat any creature that moves about on the ground, whether it moves on its belly or walks on all fours or on many feet; it is detestable. Do not defile yourselves by any of these creatures. Do not make yourselves unclean by means of them or be made unclean by them. I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any

creature that moves about on the ground. I am the Lord who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.”
(Leviticus 11:41-45)

- At the heart of the matter is holiness. We are called to be like God: holy.

“These are the regulations concerning animals, birds, every living thing that moves in the water and every creature that moves about on the ground. You must distinguish between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten.”
(Leviticus 11:46-47)

- The laws about food are unique because they are explicitly repealed and replaced in the New Testament.
- Jesus is the first to make this case. When His disciples are confronted for eating food with “unclean hands,” Jesus explains that it’s not the food we eat that transfers some kind of brokenness to us, but the purpose and focus of our eating.

“Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, ‘Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a man can make him ‘unclean’ by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him ‘unclean.’” After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. ‘Are you so dull?’ he asked. ‘Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean’? For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.’ (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods ‘clean.’) He went on: ‘What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’ For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’”
(Mark 7:14-20)

- In other words, our diets are still under the lordship of Jesus Christ but we view it in a fuller sense. Are we dieting and eating in a way that pleases God? Are we taking care of our bodies? Are we taking care of creation? Are we participating in activities, meals, or parties that grieve God? Are we tempting

our brothers and sisters with what we put in our bodies? Are we in control of our fleshly desires?

- The matter isn't about clean and unclean animals, it's about submitting our bodies to the Lord.
- Both Peter and Paul reinforce Jesus' teaching in the New Testament.

“[Peter] became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air.

Then a voice told him, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’ ‘Surely not, Lord!’ Peter replied. ‘I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.’ The voice spoke to him a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’”

(Acts 10:10-15)

- Peter sees a vision where God declares all animals clean for eating.
- Paul also states all food is clean, and asks his readers to consider the matter in which they eat and drink.

“As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself...For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.”

(Romans 14:14, 17-18)

- Food is clean in and of itself; it's the intent with which we eat and drink that is 'unclean.'
 - Don't eat if it tempts or excludes your neighbor
 - Peter's vision in Acts 10 was meant to include Gentiles in the Church of Christ. The distinguishing part of the dietary laws was no longer necessary.
 - Romans 14 suggests we go out of our way to accommodate our brothers and sisters who have different struggles with food and drink.
 - In Galatians 2, Paul confronts Peter for only eating with Jewish believers and excluding the Gentile believers.

- Don't eat if it offends God
 - Several places list drunkenness as sin (Romans 13:13, I Corinthians 6:10, Galatians 5:21, I Peter 4:3) and go so far as to say “do not even eat with such people” (I Corinthians 5:11) but “instead be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). Other places note drunkenness as a disqualifier for serving in the church (I Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7).
 - I Corinthians 11 notes that over indulging in the bread and wine of Communion would bring judgment on the offenders. This was because they were not eating and drinking unto God, but for their fleshly desires.
 - Romans 14 says our eating should be of faith, and any eating not done in faith is sin. In other words, if we're not eating and drinking in a way that pleases God, we're sinning.
 - I Corinthians 8 and 10 tell of believers who eat meat sacrificed to false idols. Paul suggests that the food itself is fine to eat, but the association with paganism and idol worship is sinful. This same practice is also condemned in Acts 15:20 and Revelation 2:20.
- Control your eating so you are not ruled by your desires
 - I Corinthians 9:27 Paul says he keeps his body in control so it's desires don't disqualify him from the prize of Heaven.
 - Galatians 5:23 tells that “self-control” is a mark of spiritual life.
 - Jesus' fasts in Matthew 4, and commands His disciples to fast after He's gone in Matthew 9:15. The disciples do just that all throughout Acts (Acts 13, Acts 14). This discipline demonstrates a commitment to God above the desires of the flesh.

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—even as I try to please everybody in every way.”

(I Corinthians 10:31)

- The laws in Leviticus are not *strange* or *harsh*, but *familiar* and *gracious*. The dietary laws distinguished God's people and provided boundaries for them to obey God and love their neighbor. The New Testament amendments bring the Old Testament law out of the shadows, finding their fullness in Christ.

“The abolition of the law about food does not abolish the need for love, acceptance and sensitivity. While a Christian may eat anything, there are

circumstances where he should not eat some things. Is a Christian bound by the law of Leviticus about food? Yes! Not by the law of ch. 11, but rather by 19:18,

‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’”

(Wright, 138)

Birthing & Cursing

Leviticus 12

- Leviticus 12 contains a short list of restrictions for women post-childbirth. Like God's other laws concerning holiness, we'll find both natural and supernatural (spiritual) explanations.
- To understand the heart of the matter, we'll need to understand what God has been teaching people about blood and what happened to women at the fall.
- First, the issue of blood has been clearly communicated in the Old Testament and several times here in Leviticus. God commanded Noah not to "eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it" (Genesis 9:4). The same concept is reiterated in Leviticus 3:17, 17:10-14 and Acts 15:20. Blood symbolizes life, and life is only found in Jesus Christ. Christ's blood is life-giving; unlike any other. Other blood is life-draining or even life-taking. That kind of blood is antithetical to everything God is and loves; so we take careful notice of blood as a reminder of how God cares for and gives life to His creation.
- Second, at the fall Eve was cursed with pain and hardship in childbearing. The blood occurring during childbirth or periods are reminders of the curse of the fall—not how God intended things to be. So when we experience such flows of blood, we pause to reflect on the brokenness in the world.

"To the woman he said, 'I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children.'"

(Genesis 3:16)

"The only adequate explanation of the seeming anomaly presented by the command to be fruitful, the joy attending the realization of parenthood, and the uncleanness which is associated with it and which finds its most

pronounced expression in the prolonged purification required of the mother after she has performed the high function of womanhood, must be found in the fact of the fall and the curse pronounced on a woman immediately after it.

Pain and suffering were to be the accompaniment of motherhood.”

(Allis, 145)

- Yet another reminder: “unclean” is not synonymous with “sin.” Sex and childbearing are not sinful behaviors. On the contrary, sex and childbearing are designed, commanded, and blessed by God. They are good things; but to the extent that they are tarnished by the fall, we find uncleanness.

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Say to the Israelites: “A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over. If she gives birth to a daughter, for two weeks the woman will be unclean, as during her period. Then she must wait sixty-six days to be purified from her bleeding.”’”

(Leviticus 12:1-5)

- If a woman gives birth to a son, she is excused from communal duties for 7 + 33 days. An exception is made on the eighth day so she can participate in the circumcision rite of her son. Circumcision was an important ritual for the Israelites that symbolized a child’s participation in the covenant with God.
- If a woman gives birth to a daughter, she is excused from her communal duties for 14 + 66 days. For 80 days the woman is able to rest at home with no pressure to perform duties in the community. These unclean days also restricted sex during periods and post-childbirth, a gracious provision for a woman healing and in pain.
- Unsurprisingly, this law seems to have an obvious natural explanation. Health professionals today note the first two weeks (14 days) after childbirth present the highest risk of health complications for the mother. Couples are recommended to wait to resume sexual activity for up to six weeks (40 days). There is obvious correlation here. God’s law protects women from the risks post-childbirth and deservedly grants them time to rest and heal.

“The law, though framed in a category unfamiliar to us, namely ritual cleanness, had a socially beneficial effect in giving to the mother a period of postnatal seclusion and privacy.”

(Wright, 139)

- Why the rest periods are different for male or female children isn't made explicitly clear. It may be due to an ancient idea that mothers suffered longer after the birth of a daughter (Baker, 137), or to allow for greater connection between a mother and the daughter she will disciple. This is, however, clear evidence that God views male and female as both naturally and spiritually unique.

“When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. He shall offer them before the Lord to make atonement for her, and then she will be ceremonially clean from her flow of blood.”

(Leviticus 12:6-7)

- When the woman can continue her public worship, she offers an offering of thanksgiving and an offering for sin.
- This sin offering is *not* for the act of childbirth. Childbirth is a gift of God and ought to be celebrated. Rather, it is for the sins committed over the past days that the woman has not had opportunity to repent of.
- Some have rightly noted that this sin offering may be on behalf of the child, an acknowledgment of original sin.

“For the Christian of today this ancient law has special significance. Christians should realize that marriage ought not to be contracted lightly, that they should marry ‘in the Lord’ in order that they may claim the promises and blessings of the covenant for their children. They may not like to be told that their children are sinful and unclean. But they need to remember that this is so. The view is widely held today that children are born good, that they should be allowed to develop naturally, that self-expression should be encouraged, and discipline and restraint reduced to a minimum. Christian parents who realize the truth set forth here will pray earnestly that the children who have been born in sin may be ‘born again’, may be regenerated by the Holy Spirit.”

(Allis, 146)

“These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl. If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean.”

(Leviticus 12:7-8)

- Again, concessions are made for those who can’t afford the larger sacrifice. Mary and Joseph offered “a pair of doves or two young pigeons” (Luke 2:24), meaning they were not wealthy.
- We find in the New Testament similar protections for women’s health and well-being. Jesus teaches and acts in radical support of women.
- For one, Jesus’ teaching relating to divorce transforms those cultures ideas of value for women. First-century Judaism condoned divorce for just about any reason a husband could come up with.

“Thus women could be divorced for failing to measure up to the beauty of a rival ([Rabbi] Akiba), for failures in the kitchen ([Rabbi] Hillel) or for any reason whatsoever.”

(Gushee, 279)

- Jesus calls out this sin that so discards women inhumanely and provides protection for her physical, spiritual, and financial well-being.
- Similarly, in regards to questions about adultery Jesus’ accuses the men in His company of viewing women as objects. Looking at them, even, as fulfillment of their fleshly appetite was sinful.

“In his teaching [concerning adultery], Jesus placed responsibility for lust and adultery on the man...This was revolutionary. Jesus instructed men about vicious cycles related to sexuality and placed the responsibility on them to remove the attitudes, actions and practices that deepen the descent into sin in this area of life. Likewise Jesus did not permit men to divorce their wives cavalierly. These kinds of teachings reflected a respect for the dignity of women that, rightly understood, would transform the attitudes and actions of the Christian disciple and the church as a whole. Men were not to regard women as disposable sex objects.”

(Gushee, 318)

- Jesus’ actions with the woman caught in adultery (John 8), the woman at the well (John 4), and Mary anointing His feet (John 12) provide ample evidence of the same principle of physical and spiritual care for women’s sexuality in the New Testament as in the Old.

Disease, 'Dew, & Discharge

Leviticus 13-15

- This section of Leviticus contains perhaps the most natural of the rules and regulations. Here we get an exhaustive list about diseases and mildew. The natural explanations for these rules are simple to understand and widely accepted.
 - The people lived in close proximity, and disease could spread easily.
 - Medicine was often ineffective, so disease could easily become deadly.
 - The principles of quarantining and burning offered here were effective ways of stopping the spread of the disease.
- But there are not *only* natural explanations for these regulations. There are spiritual ones, too.
 - This is consistent with what we've been saying about original sin: God does not like disease, and wants to promote good health.
 - The priest is given authority like a physician to diagnose and pronounce clean/unclean.
 - God is not good because He made good rules, the rules are good because God made them. This kind of good health and hygiene naturally follow holiness; God's creation was good, and He wants to redeem it so.

"Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'When anyone has a swelling or a rash or a bright spot on his skin that may become an infectious skin disease, he must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons who is a priest. The priest is to examine the sore on his skin, and if the hair in the sore has turned white and the sore appears to be more than skin deep, it is an infectious skin disease. When the priest examines him, he shall pronounce him ceremonially unclean. If the spot on his skin is white but does not appear to be more than skin deep and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest is to put the infected person in isolation for seven days. On the seventh day the priest is to examine him, and if

he sees that the sore is unchanged and has not spread in the skin, he is to keep him in isolation another seven days. On the seventh day the priest is to examine him again, and if the sore has faded and has not spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only a rash. The man must wash his clothes, and he will be clean. But if the rash does spread in his skin after he has shown himself to the priest to be pronounced clean, he must appear before the priest again. The priest is to examine him, and if the rash has spread in the skin, he shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infectious disease. ”
(Leviticus 13:1-8)

- While the diseases and mildews described here were once translated as “leprosy,” it’s unlikely that specific disease is being described. It’s more likely that “leprosy” is meant as a catch-all term for any really destructive infection.

“Some have supposed that the name of leprosy was analogically applied to it by the Hebrews, as we speak of cancer in trees, when they exhibit corrosive effects similar to what the disease so named produces on the human body...”
(Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, 83)

- It was not uncommon in the Ancient Near East for the priests to perform the work of physicians. Sickness was thought to come as condemnation from the gods, so priests would intercede for the people and provide some type of mysticism for healing. However, God does not prescribe any mystic healing rituals but natural, *common* practices of quarantining and removal of tainted things.

“The priests in Israel were not ‘medicine men’ with secret powers. The instructions, actions and rituals all through these chapters were open to the lay person who, in a sense, could verify the diagnosis of the priest. They were not the possession of a religious elite, incomprehensible to anyone else. It is notable that in all these regulations there is no attempt to manipulate a cure by magical or occult means, nor is there any mention of demonic causes.”
(Wright, 141)

- God instructs His people to use observable, rational, natural science in diagnosing and treating disease. This Old Testament principal is still true today. God, the Great Physician, grants healing through doctors using observable, rational, natural science. Since our Creator is unchanging, we can trust the laws and logic of our world to be predictable and diagnosable.

“When anyone has an infectious skin disease, he must be brought to the priest. The priest is to examine him, and if there is a white swelling in the skin that has turned the hair white and if there is raw flesh in the swelling, it is a chronic skin disease and the priest shall pronounce him unclean. He is not to put him in isolation, because he is already unclean. If the disease breaks out all over his skin and, so far as the priest can see, it covers all the skin of the infected person from head to foot, the priest is to examine him, and if the disease has covered his whole body, he shall pronounce that person clean. Since it has all turned white, he is clean. But whenever raw flesh appears on him, he will be unclean. When the priest sees the raw flesh, he shall pronounce him unclean. The raw flesh is unclean; he has an infectious disease. Should the raw flesh change and turn white, he must go to the priest. The priest is to examine him, and if the sores have turned white, the priest shall pronounce the infected person clean; then he will be clean.”
(Leviticus 13:9-17)

- The skin disease described thus far might be psoriasis, a build up of skin cells causing a scaly rash. It can be chronic, coming and going throughout a person’s lifetime. It is not very contagious, but could be passed to people living in the same household or in close proximity.
- Psoriasis can flare up because of other infections (i.e. a cold) or stress, so quarantining the patient would be a suitable treatment causing the rash to subside.

“When someone has a boil on his skin and it heals, and in the place where the boil was, a white swelling or reddish-white spot appears, he must present himself to the priest. The priest is to examine it, and if it appears to be more than skin deep and the hair in it has turned white, the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is an infectious skin disease that has broken out where the boil was. But if, when the priest examines it, there is no white hair in it and it is not more than skin deep and has faded, then the priest is to put him in isolation for

seven days. If it is spreading in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is infectious. But if the spot is unchanged and has not spread, it is only a scar from the boil, and the priest shall pronounce him clean. When someone has a burn on his skin and a reddish-white or white spot appears in the raw flesh of the burn, the priest is to examine the spot, and if the hair in it has turned white, and it appears to be more than skin deep, it is an infectious disease that has broken out in the burn. The priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infectious skin disease. But if the priest examines it and there is no white hair in the spot and if it is not more than skin deep and has faded, then the priest is to put him in isolation for seven days. On the seventh day the priest is to examine him, and if it is spreading in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infectious skin disease. If, however, the spot is unchanged and has not spread in the skin but has faded, it is a swelling from the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only a scar from the burn.”

(Leviticus 13:18-28)

- Notice that white skin, scars, or burns are *not* sufficient to merit uncleanness. Disease that is destructive or contagious is unclean, but harmless blemishes to skin are not. God certainly cares about our physical health, but He does not share our worldly standards of beauty.
- Christ Himself, in His resurrected body, had scars on His hands and side (John 20:27). While the world might call these blemishes “unclean”, God sees them of no consequence.

“If a man or woman has a sore on the head or on the chin, the priest is to examine the sore, and if it appears to be more than skin deep and the hair in it is yellow and thin, the priest shall pronounce that person unclean; it is an itch, an infectious disease of the head or chin. But if, when the priest examines this kind of sore, it does not seem to be more than skin deep and there is no black hair in it, then the priest is to put the infected person in isolation for seven days. On the seventh day the priest is to examine the sore, and if the itch has not spread and there is no yellow hair in it and it does not appear to be more than skin deep, he must be shaved except for the diseased area, and the priest is to keep him in isolation another seven days. On the seventh day the priest is to examine the itch, and if it has not spread in the skin and appears to be no more than skin deep, the priest shall pronounce him clean. He must wash his clothes, and he will be clean. But if the itch does spread in the skin after he is

pronounced clean, the priest is to examine him, and if the itch has spread in the skin, the priest does not need to look for yellow hair; the person is unclean. If, however, in his judgment it is unchanged and black hair has grown in it, the itch is healed. He is clean, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.”
(Leviticus 13:29-37)

- This disease might be favus, a form of ringworm. Favus usually presents on the scalp in the form of yellow fungus, with a hair in the middle. In its severe stages, it causes hair loss. It can be shared by members of the same household, living in close proximity.
- The following disease with white spots on the skin might be leucoderma, a disease that causes skin to discolor. It is not contagious.

“When a man or woman has white spots on the skin, the priest is to examine them, and if the spots are dull white, it is a harmless rash that has broken out on the skin; that person is clean. When a man has lost his hair and is bald, he is clean. If he has lost his hair from the front of his scalp and has a bald forehead, he is clean. But if he has a reddish-white sore on his bald head or forehead, it is an infectious disease breaking out on his head or forehead. The priest is to examine him, and if the swollen sore on his head or forehead is reddish-white like an infectious skin disease, the man is diseased and is unclean. The priest shall pronounce him unclean because of the sore on his head. The person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp.”
(Leviticus 13:38-46)

- The last description we have may be a more proper form of leprosy. Leprosy causes red splotchy rashes on the skin, nerve damage, muscle atrophy, and deformations. In this time period, it was incurable.
- Interestingly, leprosy was long thought to be transmitted only by touch. More recently, health professionals have discovered it is also transferred respiratorily. God’s prescription to “cover the lower part of his face,” might be a form of masking that protects against respiratory transmission. God knows more than any health professional.

- Because of the deterioration accompanying leprosy, people of the time considered these patients “walking dead.” This is why they are instructed to mourn by wearing torn clothes, unkempt hair, and covering the face.

“And for the lepers, he suffered them not to come into the city at all, nor to live with any others, as if they were in effect dead persons...”
(Josephus, The Antiquities of the Jews, 3.11.3 264)

“In a sense he or she was virtually counted ‘dead’, since the disease had allowed death to invade a still living body, and was condemned to a life of separation from both the community and the place of worship...It was a tragic condition.”
(Wright, 141)

“We do not read of any who died of the leprosy, but it rather buried them alive, by rendering them unfit for conversation with any but such as were infected like themselves.”
(Henry, 131)

- We’ll include Leviticus 14:1-32 here to see the purification process for infected people, and then we’ll return to chapter 13.

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘These are the regulations for the diseased person at the time of his ceremonial cleansing, when he is brought to the priest: The priest is to go outside the camp and examine him. If the person has been healed of his infectious skin disease, the priest shall order that two live clean birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop be brought for the one to be cleansed. Then the priest shall order that one of the birds be killed over fresh water in a clay pot. He is then to take the live bird and dip it, together with the cedar wood, the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, into the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water. Seven times he shall sprinkle the one to be cleansed of the infectious disease and pronounce him clean. Then he is to release the live bird in the open fields. The person to be cleansed must wash his clothes, shave off all his hair and bathe with water; then he will be ceremonially clean. After this he may come into the camp, but he must stay outside his tent for seven days. On the seventh day he must shave off all his

hair; he must shave his head, his beard, his eyebrows and the rest of his hair. He must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water, and he will be clean.”

(Leviticus 14:1-9)

- This “ceremonial cleansing” does not provide healing; rather it occurs “if the person has been healed.” We’ve already stated that the priests of Israel do not employ mysticism for healing. Rather, after quarantining has naturally caused the infection to subside a “ceremonial cleansing” takes place so the person can resume life and worship with the community.

“On the eighth day he must bring two male lambs and one ewe lamb a year old, each without defect, along with three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, and one log of oil. The priest who pronounces him clean shall present both the one to be cleansed and his offerings before the Lord at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Then the priest is to take one of the male lambs and offer it as a guilt offering, along with the log of oil; he shall wave them before the Lord as a wave offering. He is to slaughter the lamb in the holy place where the sin offering and the burnt offering are slaughtered. Like the sin offering, the guilt offering belongs to the priest; it is most holy. The priest is to take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. The priest shall then take some of the log of oil, pour it in the palm of his own left hand, dip his right forefinger into the oil in his palm, and with his finger sprinkle some of it before the Lord seven times. The priest is to put some of the oil remaining in his palm on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot, on top of the blood of the guilt offering. The rest of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed and make atonement for him before the Lord.”

(Leviticus 14:11-18)

- Pay attention to the order of the sacrifices. Remember, this individual has been kept outside the camp for a period of time—probably months, maybe years. Imagine the sacrifices as a “re-entry” ceremony.
 - First, there is a *Ceremonial Cleansing* for their personal cleansing.
 - Next, a *Guilt Offering* is offered for their sins against the people
 - Maybe their sickness was passed on to someone.
 - Maybe they let down their family or business partners over the months they were away.
 - Third, they approach the Tabernacle and offer a *Sin Offering* to God, who they’ve longed to worship for so many months.
 - Fourth, there is a *Burnt Offering*, thankful for God’s provision in healing.
 - Last, there is a *Grain Offering*, as they are restored to full fellowship in the community.

“Then the priest is to sacrifice the sin offering and make atonement for the one to be cleansed from his uncleanness. After that, the priest shall slaughter the burnt offering and offer it on the altar, together with the grain offering, and make atonement for him, and he will be clean.”

(Leviticus 14:19-20)

- Here are two reminders:
 - This Sin Offering does not imply that the person sinned by being sick. Instead, it is to acknowledge and atone for the sins committed while the person was away from regular worship.
 - God provides easy access, removing financial barriers from reconciliation.

“If, however, he is poor and cannot afford these, he must take one male lamb as a guilt offering to be waved to make atonement for him, together with a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, a log of oil, and two doves or two young pigeons, which he can afford, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. On the eighth day he must bring them for his cleansing to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, before the Lord. The priest is to take the lamb for the guilt offering, together with the log of oil, and wave them before the Lord as a wave offering. He shall slaughter the lamb for the guilt offering and take some of its blood and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand on the big toe of his right foot. The priest is to pour some of the oil into

the palm of his own left hand, and with his right forefinger sprinkle some of the oil from his palm seven times before the Lord. Some of the oil in his palm he is to put on the same places he put the blood of the guilt offering—on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. The rest of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one to be cleaned, to make atonement for him before the Lord.

Then he shall sacrifice the doves or the young pigeons, which the person can afford, one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, together with the grain offering. In this way the priest will make atonement before the Lord on behalf of the one to be cleansed.’ These are the regulations for anyone who has an infectious skin disease and who cannot afford the regular offerings for his cleansing.”

(Leviticus 14:21-32).

- We’ll return now to Leviticus 13:47-59 to get the regulations for mildew.
- The word *sāra’at* translated “mildew” is the same word earlier translated “disease.” While it literally translates to “leprosy,” it’s broadly applied here as a general term for destructive infections.

“If any clothing is contaminated with mildew—any woolen or linen clothing, any woven or knitted material of linen or wool, an leather or anything made of leather—and if the contamination in the clothing, or leather, or woven or knitted material, or any leather article, is greenish or reddish, it is a spreading mildew and must be shown to the priest. The priest is to examine the mildew and isolate the affected article for seven days. On the seventh day he is to examine it, and if the mildew has spread in the clothing, or the woven or knitted material, or the leather, whatever its use, it is a destructive mildew; the article is unclean. He must burn up the clothing, or the woven or knitted material of wool or linen, or any leather article that has the contamination in it, because the mildew is destructive; the article must be burned up. But if, when the priest examines it, the mildew has not spread in the clothing, or the woven or knitted material, or the leather article, he shall order that the contaminated article be washed. Then he is to isolate it for another seven days. After the affected article has been washed, the priest is to examine it, and if the mildew has not changed its appearance, even though it has not spread, it is unclean.

Burn it with fire, whether the mildew has affected one side or the other. If, when the priest examines it, the mildew has faded after the article has been

washed, he is to tear the contaminated part out of the clothing, or the leather, or the woven or knitted material. But if it reappears in the clothing, or in the woven or knitted material, or in the leather article, it is spreading, and whatever has the mildew must be burned with fire. The clothing, or the woven or knitted material, or any leather article that has been washed and is rid of the mildew, must be washed again, and it will be clean.’ These are the regulations concerning contamination by mildew in woolen or linen clothing, woven or knitted material, or any leather article, for pronouncing them clean or unclean.”
(Leviticus 13:47-59)

- Here is a spiritual understanding of this principle: to remain a part of the fabric of God’s people, you had to be clean and spotless; to be dirty or corrupted meant being cut off and cast away. We have language like this in Psalm 1, where the wicked are not part of the tree but like chaff blown away.
- The New Covenant affirms this same principle. In John 15, Christ invites His people to be part of the vine but cuts off those who are not found in Him.
- We’ll skip back to the end of Leviticus 14 for the purification laws concerning mildew.

“The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ‘When you enter the land of Canaan, which I am giving you as your possession, and I put a spreading mildew in a house in that land, the owner of the house must go and tell the priest, “I have seen something that looks like mildew in my house.”’”
(Leviticus 14:33-35)

- God says, “I put spreading mildew in a house.” This is a statement on the sovereignty of God. Nothing happens apart from His purpose and will. Consider Job, whose trials and tribulations came about for the glory of God.
- This would also have been a striking comment to the Israelites’ ears. When they enter the Promised Land, flowing with milk and honey, there will still be the taints of sin.
- Thanks be to God that the Promised Land of the New Covenant is far greater! Our promised home will have no sickness, sorrow, or pain!

“The priest is to order the house to be emptied before he goes in to examine the mildew, so that nothing in the house will be pronounced unclean. After this

the priest is to go in and inspect the house. He is to examine the mildew on the walls, and if it has greenish or reddish depressions that appear to be deeper than the surface of the wall, the priest shall go out the doorway of the house and close it up for seven days. On the seventh day the priest shall return to inspect the house. If the mildew has spread on the walls, he is to order that the contaminated stones be torn out and thrown into an unclean place outside the town. He must have all the inside walls of the house scraped and the material that is scraped off dumped into an unclean place outside the town.

Then they are to take other stones to replace these and take new clay and plaster the house.”
(Leviticus 14:36-42)

- Here is another spiritual understanding of the law: Christ was the stone the builder rejected (Psalm 118:22, I Peter 2:7), who took up our infirmities (Isaiah 53:4, Matthew 8:17) that we might be pronounced clean (Isaiah 1:18, I Peter 2:24)!

“If the mildew reappears in the house after the stones have been torn out and the house scraped and plastered, the priest is to go and examine it and, if the mildew has spread in the house, it is a destructive mildew; the house is unclean. It must be torn down—its stones, timbers and all the plaster—and taken out of the town to an unclean place. Anyone who goes into the house while it is closed up will be unclean till evening. Anyone who sleeps or eats in the house must wash his clothes. But if the priest comes to examine it and the mildew has not spread after the house has been plastered, he shall pronounce the house clean, because the mildew is gone. To purify the house he is to take two birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop. He shall kill one of the birds over fresh water in a clay pot. Then he is to take the cedar wood, the hyssop, the scarlet yarn and the live bird, dip them into the blood of the dead bird and the fresh water, and sprinkle the house seven times. He shall purify the house with the bird’s blood, the fresh water, the live bird, the cedar wood, the hyssop and the scarlet yarn. Then he is to release the live bird in the open fields outside the town. In this way he will make atonement for the house, and it will be clean.”
(Leviticus 14:43-53)

- The purification for mildew is the same as the purification for disease.

“These are the regulations for any infectious skin disease, for an itch, for mildew in clothing or in a house, and for a swelling, a rash or a bright spot, to determine when something is clean or unclean. These are the regulations for infectious skin diseases and mildew.”

(Leviticus 14:54-57)

- The next set of rules will deal with “discharges” from male and female sexual organs. It’s worth restating yet again that sex in and of itself is *not* sinful. There are consequences, however, on fallen humanity in general.

“Here, as throughout these chapters on various kinds of uncleanness, we must keep in mind that uncleanness was not in itself a matter of sin, though it could be associated with sinful acts. This chapter includes forms of uncleanness that arose from perfectly legitimate actions or natural functions.”

(Wright, 142)

“The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ‘Speak to the Israelites and say to them: “When any man has a bodily discharge, the discharge is unclean. Whether it continues flowing from his body or is blocked, it will make him unclean. This is how his discharge will bring about uncleanness: Any bed the man with a discharge lies on will be unclean, and anything he sits on will be unclean. Anyone who touches his bed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. Whoever sits on anything that the man with a discharge sat on must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. Whoever touches the man who has a discharge must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. If the man with the discharge spits on someone who is clean, that person must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. Everything the man sits on when riding will be unclean, and whoever touches any of the things that were under him will be unclean till evening; whoever picks up those things must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. Anyone the man with a discharge touches without rinsing his hands with water must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. A clay pot that the man touches must be broken, and any wooden article is to be rinsed with water. When a man is cleansed from his discharge, he is to count off seven days for his ceremonial cleansing; he must wash his clothes and bath himself with fresh water, and he will be clean. On the eighth

day he must take two doves or two young pigeons and come before the Lord to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and give them to the priest. The priest is to sacrifice them, the one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. In this way he will make atonement before the lord for the man because of his discharge.”
(Leviticus 15:1-15)

- This first rule is for male discharges, probably gonorrhoea which causes discharges from the male organ lasting as long as several months.

“When a man has an emission of semen, he must bathe his whole body with water, and he will be unclean till evening. Any clothing or leather that has semen on it must be washed with water, and it will be unclean till evening. When a man lies with a woman and there is an emission of semen, both must bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening.”
(Leviticus 15:16-18)

- Men and women are dealt with equally in these scenarios. Just like *both* the man and woman are unclean due to period blood, here *both* the man and woman are unclean due to the male’s emission of semen.

“When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening. Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean. Whoever touches her bed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. Whoever touches anything she sits on must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. Whether it is the bed or anything she was sitting on, when anyone touches it, he will be unclean till evening. If a man lies with her and her monthly flow touches him, he will be unclean for seven days; any bed he lies on will be unclean.”
(Leviticus 15:19-24)

- This law, like the ones concerning childbirth, provides some natural protection for the women during their period. For seven days, they are excused from sexual activity; extending through the women’s entire period. This protected women from being treated as objects of pleasure.

- The monthly flow touching the man is probably accidentally, on the first day of a period before it is clearly known. This is forbidden in Leviticus 18:19, Leviticus 20:18, and Ezekiel 18:6. Baker provides a funny play on words in his commentary: “Intercourse during the acknowledged period was a heavy crime, and was to be punished by ‘cutting off’” (Baker, 147).

“When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as in the days of her period. Any bed she lies on while her discharge continues will be unclean, as is her bed during her monthly period, and anything she sits on will be unclean, as during her period. Whoever touches them will be unclean; he must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. When she is cleansed from her discharge, she must count off seven days, and after that she will be ceremonially clean. On the eighth day she must take two doves or two young pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. The priest is to sacrifice one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. In this way he will make atonement for her before the Lord for the uncleanness of her discharge.”
(Leviticus 15:25-30)

- Such a case was presented to Jesus in Luke 8:42-48 when a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years touched Jesus. By the rule of the law, Jesus should have become unclean, for “whoever touches them will be unclean.” But a remarkable thing happens! She doesn’t transfer her uncleanness, but instead Jesus transfers His holiness and she is healed!
 - Holiness is from God. It is impossible for us to change God; we cannot make Him unclean.
 - Uncleanness will not persist in God’s presence; it will necessarily be destroyed, for God is only holy.
- We see once again that Jesus is a better High Priest. While the high priest of the Old Covenant could only pronounce clean and unclean by what he observed in the natural, Christ has the ability to *make* clean what He alone can observe in *both* the natural and the spiritual. He heals diseases and forgives sin (Matthew 9:2-7).

“You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them.”
(Leviticus 15:31)

- Once again, we find not abolishment of the Levitical law, but fulfillment. Since we have the Holy Spirit not in a Tabernacle made by human hands but in our hearts, we now protect our bodies from sin and disease with the same fervor as the Israelites in the Old Covenant. In the New Covenant, you “honor God with your body” (I Corinthians 6:20), “offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God” (Romans 12:1), and “those who cleanse themselves from the [common] will be instruments of special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work” (II Timothy 2:21).

“These are the regulations for a man with a discharge, for anyone made unclean by an emission of semen, for a woman in her monthly period, for a man or a woman with a discharge, and for a man who lies with a woman who is ceremonially unclean.”
(Leviticus 15:32-33)

Scapegoat Jesus

Leviticus 16-17

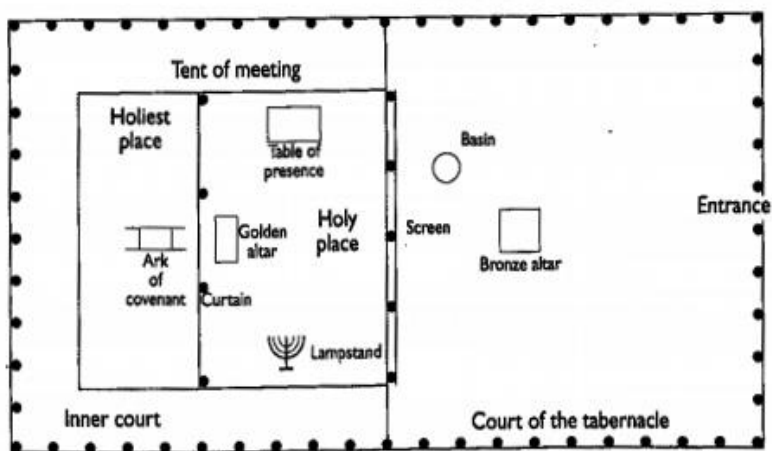
- Here is the climax of all of Leviticus. If the law is a shadow, here is the clearest foreshadowing of Christ. If Leviticus is about being holy in the presence of God, here is the chief way we're holy. If Leviticus is about distinguishing God's people from the world, here is the most basic distinction.
- The Day of Atonement, or *yôm kippûrîm*, was the annual day of great forgiveness for the people. It's connection to Christ's sacrifice on the Cross is undoubtedly clear.
- God explains to Moses and Aaron the ritual by which the people will know they are cleansed of their sins. They are essentially granted a "fresh start" or a "clean slate" every year.

"The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached the Lord. The Lord said to Moses: 'Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.'"

(Leviticus 16:1-2)

- Some have taken "after the death of the two sons" to be quite literally "immediately following the death of the two sons." People who take this view treat chapters 11-15 as an insertion added to Leviticus by Rabbis much later.
- A better understanding of "after the death of the two sons" is to understand it as "in light of the death of the two sons." Nadab and Abihu were killed because they approached the Lord with unauthorized fire; they did not approach Him with appropriate reverence and fear. Aaron is cautioned to be

more careful, and God—through this Day of Atonement—is providing a means for grace that Nadab and Abihu did not receive.



(courtesy of Naylor, 173)

- Aaron cannot enter the Most Holy Place (“Holiest place” on the figure above) whenever he wants, or he would die for seeing the glory of the Lord. He can, however, enter once per year by God’s gracious allowance.
- Before he even enters the tabernacle (“Entrance” at the right of the figure above), he must prepare himself carefully. This shows the proper reverence and fear of God He deserves.

“This is how Aaron is to enter the sanctuary area: with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram from a burnt offering. He is to put on the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments next to his body; he is to tie the linen sash around him and put on the linen turban. These are sacred garments; so he must bathe himself with water before he puts them on. From the Israelite community he is to take two male goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household.”

(Leviticus 16:3-6)

- Aaron puts on different garments than those described in Leviticus 8. Those garments—as we heard Josephus describe—demonstrated the brilliant glory of God to the people. But these garments are plain, white, and simple.

“When [Aaron] represented God before the people, he was attired in robes of sumptuous colour and glory. When he represented the people before God, he wore little more than a slave would: linen tunic, shorts, belt and turban.”

(Wright, 143)

- Once Aaron has washed and changed clothes, he may enter the Tabernacle. He may approach the Tent of Meeting with his Sin Offering and Burnt Offering. Now he has properly cleansed both his physical body (bathed, changed clothes) and spiritual body (repentance for sin and thankfulness for God’s forgiveness).

“Then he is to take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. He is to cast lots for the two goats—one lot for the Lord and the other for the scapegoat. Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the Lord and sacrifice it for a sin offering. But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord to be used for making atonement by sending it into the desert as a scapegoat.”

(Leviticus 16:7-10)

- The main event of the Day of Atonement is this scapegoat. Two goats were chosen, as was necessary to both *die* for payment of the sin and *live* to remove the sin from the people. No single animal or being could do both, until Jesus.
- Lots were cast to choose which goat performed what function. This choice was God’s. Similarly, it was God who chose to send His Son out of His great love; and no one could take Jesus’ life from Him unless He chose to lay it down for His friends.

“Aaron shall bring the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household, and he is to slaughter the bull for his own sin offering. He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the Lord and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain. He is to put the incense on the fire before the Lord, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the Testimony, so that he will not die. He is to take some of the bull’s blood and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover; then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the atonement cover. He shall then

slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it. In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. He is to do the same for the Tent of Meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness. No one is to be in the Tent of Meeting from the time Aaron goes in to make atonement in the Most Holy Place until he comes out, having made atonement for himself, his household and the whole community of Israel. Then he shall come out to the altar that is before the Lord and make atonement for it. He shall take some of the bull's blood and some of the goat's blood and put it on all the horns of the altar. He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times to cleanse it and to consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites.”
(Leviticus 16:11-19)

- The high priest makes atonement for the people only after he makes atonement for himself.
- In order for the high priest to be in God's presence, smoke from the incense has to be thick enough to shadow the Ark—where God's glory dwells. We are reminded again that the Old Covenant was a shadow of the glory to be reveled in the New Covenant.

“When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat's head. He shall send the goat away into the desert in the care of a man appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a solitary place; and the man shall release it in the desert.”
(Leviticus 16:20-22)

- It's important to break down how and for whom this atonement happens.
 - "All the wickedness and rebellion," "all their sins" are transmitted corporately to the scapegoat.
 - The sins are taken "away into the desert," "to a solitary place," and released there. They are totally and completely removed.
 - But only the sins "of the Israelites" are cleansed in this way. This atonement is only for those who belong to the covenant; in the Old Covenant, that's Israel.
- In these truths we find a clear analogy to the Cross, where God Incarnate chose to lay down His life as a ransom for all the sin of all the elect, separating them once for all from sin that leads to death and granting them life!

<i>Scapegoat's Atonement</i>	<i>Christ's Atonement</i>
Two in one (16:7)	Two in one (John 1:14)
By God's choosing (16:8)	By God's choosing (John 10:18)
Died as payment for sin (16:9, 16)	Died as payment for sin (I John 2:2)
Lived to atone for sin (16:10, 21)	Lives to atone for sin (Hebrews 7:23-25)
For God's chosen Israel (16:16, 21)	For God's chosen elect (I Peter 2:9-10)
Sin totally removed (16:21-22)	Sin totally removed (Romans 6:6-8)
Done once a year (16:29)	Done once and for all (Hebrews 9:25-26)

- Later traditions were added to the Day of Atonement.
 - At some point, the scapegoat was taken to a cliff and pushed off to further symbolize the separation of the sin.
 - There are also Jewish writings that suggest a scarlet cord was tied to the goats horns and to the place on the cliff. If the cord faded and turned white (as it always would), the sins were forgiven.
 - Other legends suggests the high priest tied a rope to his ankle upon entering the Most Holy Place so he could be dragged out if he died, but this is unsubstantiated.

"Then Aaron is to go into the Tent of Meeting and take off the linen garments he put on before he entered the Most Holy Place, and he is to leave them there. He shall bathe himself with water in a holy place and put on his regular garments. Then he shall come out and sacrifice the burnt offering for himself and the burnt offering for the people, to make atonement for himself and for the people. He shall also burn the fat of the sin offering on the altar. The man

who releases the goat as a scapegoat must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may come into the camp. The bull and the goat for the sin offerings, whose blood was brought into the Most Holy Place to make atonement, must be taken outside the camp; their hides, flesh and offal are to be burned up. The man who burns them must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may come into the camp.”
(Leviticus 16:23-28)

- After the ceremony, both the high priest and the man who takes the goat away have to wash up.

“This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny yourselves and not do any work—whether native-born or an alien living among you—because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins. It is a Sabbath of rest, and you must deny yourselves; it is a lasting ordinance. The priest who is anointed and ordained to succeed his father as high priest is to make atonement. He is to put on the sacred linen garments and make atonement for the Most Holy Place for the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and for the priests and all the people of the community. This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites.’ And it was done, as the Lord commanded Moses.”
(Leviticus 16:29-34)

- The Day of Atonement was to be an annual tradition. Here we have the greatest of the fulfillments of the New Covenant. While the scapegoat needed to take the sins away every year, Christ took sins away once and for all. Hebrews 9 recounts the Day of Atonement and articulates clearly Christ’s fulfillment.

“Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up...When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first

tabernacle was still standing. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washing—external regulations applying until the time of the new order. When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant...For Christ did not enter a man made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sin of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves."

(Hebrews 9:1-2, 6-15, 24-10:1)

- Christ is a better High Priest. Christ is a better sacrifice. Christ mediates a better covenant. This is a point the writer of Hebrews spends most of his letter on, specifically Hebrews 3-10. Reading Hebrews in relation to Leviticus will be more informative than any commentary we can make in this study guide.

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites and say to them: “This is what the Lord has commanded: Any Israelite who sacrifices an ox, a lamb or a goat in the camp or outside of it instead of bringing it to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting to present it as an offering to the Lord in front of the tabernacle for the Lord—that man shall be considered guilty of bloodshed; he has shed blood and must be cut off from his people. This is so the Israelites will bring to the Lord the sacrifices they are now making in the open fields. They must bring them to the priest, that is, to the Lord, at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and sacrifice them as fellowship offerings. The priest is to sprinkle the blood against the altar of the Lord at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and burn the fat as an aroma pleasing to the Lord. They must no longer offer any of their sacrifice stop the goat idols to whom they prostitute themselves. This is to be a lasting ordinance for them and for the generations to come.” Say to them: “Any Israelite or any alien living among them who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice and does not bring it to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting to sacrifice it to the Lord—that man must be cut off from his people.””

(Leviticus 17:1-9)

- The chapter that follows reiterates rules for eating blood and dead animals. Perhaps this is the distinction in the Old Covenant most clearly fulfilled in Christ and established in the New Covenant as the Lord’s Supper.
- Jesus had already claimed in John 6 that He was the bread of life, and the people needed to eat of Him to have eternal life. In light of their law, this caused obvious problems. “How can this man give us flesh to eat?” they wondered (John 6:52). Jesus’ claim was audacious, and in direct contrast with the law.

“Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and by blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him’...From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.”

(John 6:53-56, 66)

- Jesus was asking them to find their identity no longer in the law, but in Him. The law could *not* save, but Christ can. Eating the flesh and blood, as it were, of the law only led to death. But eating the flesh and blood, as it were, of God necessarily means salvation!

“Any Israelite or any alien living among them who eats any blood—I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from his people.

For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life. Therefore I say to the Israelites, ‘None of you may eat blood, nor may an alien living among you eat blood.’ Any Israelites or any alien living among you who hunts any animal or bird that may be eaten must drain out the blood and cover it with earth, because the life of every creature is its blood. That is why I have said to the Israelites, ‘You must not eat the blood of any creature, because the life of every creature is its blood; anyone who eats it must be cut off.’ Anyone, whether native-born or alien, who eats anything found dead or torn by wild animals must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be ceremonially unclean till evening; then he will be clean. But if he does not wash his clothes and bathe himself, he will be held responsible.”

(Leviticus 17:10-16)

- Jesus fulfills the law: “While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body’” (Matthew 26:26).
- Jesus’ body was given for our atonement.
- Jesus fulfills the law: “Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’” (Matthew 26:27-28).
- Jesus’ blood was shed, and now is offered to us for the cleansing of sin.

Sex & Sexuality

Leviticus 18-20

- Many Christians have divided Old Testament law into three parts: moral, civil, and ceremonial. Moral law guards against sin (do not murder), civil law maintains good order among the people (quarantine the sick), and ceremonial law teaches us something about the holiness of God and the reverence with which we ought to approach Him (sacrifices). We find these distinctions in formative documents like the Westminster Catechism.
- However, the Bible nowhere divides the law into parts. In fact, it's clear that the Rabbis held all of the law as one.

“Later writers (mostly Christian) divided the Old Testament law into ceremonial (religious rituals), civil, and moral (including the Ten Commandments). Such a division may be helpful in identifying the areas covered by the Old Testament instructions, but it can also be misleading. To the Hebrews the law was one, and all parts were of equal importance.”

(Scott, 65)

“The division of the law into moral, ceremonial, and civil categories has some usefulness. Still, neither Paul nor any other New Testament writer explains the role of the law by appealing to such categories.”

(Schreiner, 94)

- These distinctions (moral, civil, ceremonial) have a good purpose in communicating some consistency to the modern reader. In other words, these distinctions help us answer the questions “How is this law fulfilled in Christ, and what purpose does it serve today?”

- There is a place for this threefold distinction, but we won't use it here. Instead, we'll ask: "What is this law a shadow of?" In other words, what is the purpose and intent behind the law that we understand now that we've seen the Christ?
- We're able to gain considerable clarity from two indicators:
 - The punishment prescribed in the Old Testament will indicate the seriousness of the offense in the eyes of God. Laws that seem to be *only* about distinction (i.e. food laws) have little or no punishment (unclean till evening). But laws against immoral acts of sin (i.e. sexual deviancy) come with the death penalty.
 - The revelation of Jesus Christ and the New Covenant established in the New Testament will often make clear for us the intent of the Old Testament law. Some of the laws are restated (i.e. do not steal), some are expanded (i.e. do not murder, do not even hate), some are abolished (i.e. food laws).

"The Lord said to Moses, 'Speak to the Israelites and say to them: "I am the Lord your God. You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the Lord your God. Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the Lord."'"

(Leviticus 18:1-5)

- At first glance, you might read this section as being about *distinction*; "*Be distinct from Egypt and Canaan.*" But we'll see at the end of chapter 18 that things Egypt and Canaan "do" are "detestable" and they "became defiled." Morality *is* the distinction.
- The line "the man who obeys them will live by them" has caused some division. Some wrongly interpret this as support for works based salvation. We've shown already that the Old Testament never established works based salvation. Instead, understand "live" not to mean "eternal life" but instead "life-giving." The man who obeys the laws of God will by them have fullness of life. Obeying the law of God leads to good relationships, good health, and holiness. We experience the full joy of life when we live the way God intends.

“No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the Lord.”
(Leviticus 18:6)

- Here is why it is important to understand these laws as much about morality as about distinction. We’re talking about wrong sexual relations. What follows is a list of ways sexual relations might be done wrong.

“Do not dishonor your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother; do not have relations with her. Do not have sexual relations with your father’s wife; that would dishonor your father. Do not have sexual relations with your sister, either your father’s daughter or your mother’s daughter, whether she was born in the same home or elsewhere. Do not have sexual relations with your son’s daughter or your daughter’s daughter; that would dishonor you. Do not have sexual relations with the daughter of your father’s wife, born to your father; she is your sister. Do not have sexual relations with your father’s sister; she is your father’s close relative. Do not have sexual relations with your mother’s sister, because she is your mother’s close relative. Do not dishonor your father’s brother by approaching his wife to have sexual relations; she is your aunt. Do not have sexual relations with your daughter-in-law. She is your son’s wife; do not have relations with her. Do not have sexual relations with your brother’s wife; that would dishonor your brother. Do not have sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter. Do not have sexual relations with either her son’s daughter or her daughter’s daughter; they are her close relatives. That is wickedness. Do not take your wife’s sister as a rival wife and have sexual relations with her while your wife is living. Do not approach a woman to have sexual relations during the uncleanness of her monthly period. Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor’s wife and defile yourself with her.”
(Leviticus 18:7-20)

- Such sexual perversion is considered “wickedness.” Having sex with close relatives not only causes natural consequences like birth defects, but destroys families and erodes trust. Ancient Near East families lived together in close proximity. Households are the places you should feel safest and family members are the people you should trust most. To abuse the safety

net of the family household is a great offence to God. Such abuse is also condemnable under the New Covenant according to I Corinthians 5:1.

- Polygamy is condemned here, as it is in the New Testament in I Timothy 3:2.

“It is true, of course, that the Old Testament contains evidence of much falling short of the full meaning of this command. The polygamy practiced by the patriarchs, the kings and others opened the marriage relationship up to what might be called sanctioned adultery in favor of the man in a patriarchal society...It is important to note that polygamy is at least implicitly ruled out by the teaching of Jesus, whose words called his listeners back to God’s original intention for sex and marriage—the joyful lifetime union of one man with one woman.”

(Gushee, 295)

- Concern for family structure and children’s safety is what causes the next law to be included in this list.

“Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the Lord. Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable. Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion.”

(Leviticus 18:21-23)

- These three laws (child sacrifice, homosexuality, and bestiality) might be grouped together because they were common pagan practices—practices of Egypt and Canaan that God explicitly detests.
- “Profane,” “detestable,” “perversion” imply a strong negative response from God and more literally translate “confusion.” Romans 1 picks up this idea in relation to homosexuality.

“Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way he men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.”

(Romans 1:26-27)

- These laws are a shadow of Christian marriage and family. In the New Covenant, all forms of sexual immorality are condemned (Ephesians 5:3) and sex is reserved for marital relationships (I Corinthians 7:1-5). Christian marriage is a carefully constructed and maintained office (Ephesians 5:21-33, Colossians 3:18-21, I Peter 3:1-8).
- Jesus extends these laws to include forms of adultery even in our imagination. Any kind of lustful thought is a wicked, detestable, profane perversion. This would certainly include pornography.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

(Matthew 5:27-28)

- Child abuse, incest, polygamy, polyamory, homosexuality, pornography, and bestiality are all forms of sexual relations that deviate from God’s intent for sex and sexuality.

“Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do any of these detestable things, for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it committed out the nations that were before you. Everyone who does any of these detestable things—such persons must be cut off from their people. Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the Lord your God.”

(Leviticus 18:24-30)

- It’s for these sins that Canaan is punished by God. The destruction of the nations in Canaan by Israel is often used as a critique on Christianity. Why would God allow the mass genocide of these nations? But that’s not a legitimate telling of the story. This was not an arbitrary judgment, it was for

the sins of child sacrifice, child abuse, incest, polygamy, homosexuality, and idol worship that these nations were judged.

“The destruction of the Canaanites was not a matter of arbitrary divine favoritism, but of explicit moral judgment on a society which is described in the Bible, and confirmed by archaeology, as degraded, perverted and oppressive. Furthermore, God showed his moral consistency by not only threatening Israel with the same judgment for the same sins, but also actually carrying it out in their history.”
(Wright, 146)

- God is consistent and unchanging. He demands holiness from everyone, for He has sufficiently revealed Himself to all creation (Romans 1:19) and His law is understood by their consciences (Romans 2:14-15). God judges unrighteousness without favoritism (Romans 2:9-11).

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: “Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.”’”
(Leviticus 19:1-2)

- This begins a chapter titled “Various Laws.” Most of the Ten Commandments are included here in some way, shape, or form.

“Each of you must respect his mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. I am the Lord your God. Do not turn to idols or make gods of cast metal for yourselves. I am the Lord your God.”
(Leviticus 19:3-4)

- These are commandments 2, 4 and 5. In family, work, and worship we ought to love God above all.
- Next comes a list of laws about loving your neighbor. It starts by repeating a law from Leviticus 7 regarding Fellowship Offerings (that were supposed to include your neighbor).

“When you sacrifice a fellowship offering to the Lord, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf. It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it or on the next day; anything left over until the third day must be burned up.

If any of it is eaten on the third day, it is impure and will not be accepted. Whoever eats it will be held responsible because he has desecrated what is holy to the Lord; that person must be cut off from his people. When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the Lord your God.”
(Leviticus 19:5-10)

- These rules about harvesting were intended to protect the poor and hungry; it’s how Ruth survived after her husband died (Ruth 2). These laws are repeated all over the place in the Old Testament. Jesus affirms this kind of care for the poor and hungry in Matthew 25:34-46, and condemns greed and storing abundance of treasures in Luke 12:13-21 and Matthew 6:19-21.

“Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another. Do not swear falsely by any name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord. Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him. Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the Lord. Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life. I am the Lord. Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”
(Leviticus 19:11-18)

- The section on loving your neighbor concludes with commandments 3, 8, 9 and 10.
- We’ve been reminded several times through Leviticus to be like God in our holiness. We’ve seen this chapter that God is consistent and does not show favoritism, and we’re commanded to do likewise. The apostle Peter is rebuked by Paul for such actions; and James picks up the theme, too.

“When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate

himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.”

(Galatians 2:11-13)

“If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder.’ If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.”

(James 2:8-11)

- Here is where Christians are condemned for “picking and choosing.” While most of the laws to this point have been explicitly restated—and therefore didn’t need much revealing for the shadow to be understood—these types of laws are harder to decode.

“Keep my decrees. Do not mate different kinds of animals. Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed. Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material.”

(Leviticus 19:19)

- These laws about mating different kinds and wearing clothes of two material are more “shadowy.” On the one hand, since there is no punishment described for breaking these anywhere and since the New Covenant doesn’t *specifically* re-establish them, we could consider them as gone as the kosher food laws. On the other hand, there are some principles behind these laws that we can point to in the New Covenant.
 - Mating different kinds is an ethical questions still being asked today. We face ethical dilemmas in how much control we have over the characteristics of our animals or even our children. In some instances, we’ve introduced invasive species—creating a problem in an attempt to solve one. It’s risky business imitating the Creator.
 - Clothes woven of two fabrics might have been a way of distinguishing Israelite dress from that of the surrounding nations. Christians today ought to have a way of dressing distinct in its modesty (I Peter 3:3, I Timothy 2:9).

“If a man sleeps with a woman who is a slave girl promised to another man but who has not been ransomed or given her freedom, there must be due punishment. Yet they are not to be put to death, because she had not been freed. The man, however, must bring a ram to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting for a guilt offering to the Lord. With the ram of the guilt offering the priest is to make atonement for him before the Lord for the sin he has committed, and his sin will be forgiven.”
(Leviticus 19:20-22)

- People the world has traditionally considered “less than” are given equal status. In this instance, both parties (“they”) were to be punished together. Remember, as atrocious a concept as slavery is, it’s been practiced for all of human history—and universally accepted until the last century. God never condones slavery, but always argues for humane treatment of all people. Such thinking is articulated by Paul (Ephesians 6:9, Philemon).

“When you enter the land and plant any kind of fruit tree, regard its fruit as forbidden. For three years you are to consider it forbidden; it must not be eaten. In the fourth year all its fruit will be holy, an offering of praise to the Lord. But in the fifth year you may eat its fruit. In this way your harvest will be increased. I am the Lord your God.”
(Leviticus 19:23-25)

- Fruit trees take a few years to bear fruit that’s worthwhile. This ensured the people would give real “firstfruits,” and not pawn off the inedible fruit from the first years as their offerings.

“Do not eat any meat with the blood still in it. Do not practice divination or sorcery. Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard. Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the Lord. Do not degrade your daughter by making her a prostitute, or the land will turn to prostitution and be filled with wickedness. Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the Lord”
(Leviticus 19:26-29)

- God cares about physical things; He cares about our bodies (I Corinthians 6:19-20).

“Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God. Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord. When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God. Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt. Keep all my decrees and all my laws and follow them. I am the Lord.”
(Leviticus 19:33-37)

- Along with protecting children and infants from sacrifice, God is pro-life across age (aged and elderly), gender (care for women), ability (deaf and blind), and race (aliens as native-born).
- Chapter 20 is why we can draw conclusions in the sexual laws about morality that we can't draw about “two kinds of cloth.” There is punishment associated with these laws that aren't seen with laws only concerned with distinction.

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Say to the Israelites: “Any Israelites or any alien living in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech must be put to death. The people of the community are to stone him. I will set my face against that man and I will cut him off from his people; for by giving his children to Molech, he has defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name. If the people of the community close their eyes when that man gives one of his children to Molech and they fail to put him to death, I will set my face against that man and his family and will cut off from their people both him and all who follow him in prostituting themselves to Molech. I will set my face against the person who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute himself by following them, and I will cut him off from his people. Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the Lord your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the Lord, who makes you holy.”
(Leviticus 20:1-8)

- God cares about all of life, and consistently makes special arrangements to protect the weakest in society. In this case, God is protecting children from wanton destruction. Child abuse of any kind is despicable in the eyes of the Lord and worthy of death.
- The murder of children ignites God’s anger in several places in Scripture. In Exodus, the Egyptians murder of Israelites children ignites God’s anger against Pharaoh and the people. God destroys the nations in Canaan for this same child sacrifice. It is no stretch to consider God’s anger is incited by the abortion practices today.

“If anyone curses his father or mother, he must be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother, and his blood will be on his own head. If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death. If a man sleeps with his father’s wife, he has dishonored his father. Both the man and the woman must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads. If a man sleeps with his daughter-in-law, both of them must be put to death. What they have done is a perversion; their blood will be on their own heads. If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads. If a man marries both a woman and her mother, it is wicked. Both he and they must be burned in the fire, so that no wickedness will be among you. If a man has sexual relations with an animal, he must be put to death, and you must kill the animal. If a woman approaches an animal to have sexual relations with it, kill both the woman and the animal. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads. If a man marries his sister, the daughter of either his father or his mother, and they have sexual relations, it is a disgrace. They must be cut off before the eyes of their people. He has dishonored his sister and will be held responsible. If a man lies with a woman during her monthly period and has sexual relations with her, he has exposed the source of her flow, and she has also uncovered it. Both of them must be cut off from their people. Do not have sexual relations with the sister of either your mother or your father, for that would dishonor a close relative; both of you would be held responsible. If a man sleeps with his aunt, he has dishonored his uncle. They will be held responsible; they will die childless. If a man marries his brother’s wife, it is an act of impurity; he has dishonored his brother. They will be childless.”

(Leviticus 20:9-21)

- There is no picking and choosing when it comes to laws with such severe punishment. To make one null is to make them all null. This is not a matter of uncleanness—which we’ve shown does not always equate to sin—this is clearly penalized as a matter of moral sin.

“Keep all my decrees and laws and follow them, so that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out. You must not live according to the customs of the nations I am going to drive out before you. Because they did all these things, I abhorred them. But I said to you, ‘You will possess their land; I will give it to you as an inheritance, a land flowing with milk and honey.’ I am the Lord your God, who has set you apart from the nations. You must therefore make a distinction between clean and unclean animals and between unclean and clean birds. Do not defile yourselves by an animal or bird or anything that moves along the ground—those which I have set apart as unclean for you. You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.”
 (Leviticus 20:22-26)

- The New Covenant comes with grace not seen here. There is a greater High Priest and a greater sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. Our sins *can be* forgiven and Jesus can rescue us from death!
- Whether you’re a victim of child abuse, or in need of post-abortive counseling, or struggle with same sex attraction know that Christ is enough for you.

“Homosexual conduct is one [of many] form of sexual expression that falls outside the will of God...Yet homosexual persons are precious, made in the image of God and bearers of all the dignity that God affords to all humanity. Christ-followers are never permitted to treat homosexuals as less than what God has declared all people to be. Spending one’s life crusading against homosexuals, as some Christians do, hardly fits with the virtues of love, kindness, humility, peace and patience that are to characterize the follower of Christ. Looking for ways to deny homosexuals personal safety and security, access to jobs, housing, government service or other basic rights of participation in American society is abhorrent. On the other hand, supporting efforts by churches to enable homosexuals to deal with their sexuality in a redemptive way within the parameters offered by Scripture is certainly to be

encouraged and fits with the transforming initiative approach we are taking to Jesus' teachings. We must love homosexual persons while remaining clear in our convictions about God's intentions for human sexuality—and equally clear that all of us stand guilty and in need of redemption.”

(Gushee, 311)

- There have been several laws pertaining to spiritists and mediums included in these chapters, too. While God often mocks the idols of the nations as “mute” and “deaf” objects of wood and stone, there is a very real spiritual power that opposes God. For this reason, idolatry and any other spiritual practice is expressly condemned.

“A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death. You are to stone them; their blood will be on their own hands.”

(Leviticus 20:27)

- Mediums and palm readers are often seen today as frauds and fakes—and in many cases this is true. There are many who fake spiritual insights to deceive others. But it's not always the case. There is a very real spiritual realm that we interact with daily.
- The Bible describes a few different mediums, and even contains a story where a medium makes contact with the dead.

“Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in his own town of Ramah. Saul had expelled the mediums and spiritists from the land...He inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets. Saul then said to his attendants, ‘Find me a woman who is a medium, so I may go and inquire of her.’ ‘There is one in Endor,’ they said. So Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothes, and at night he and two men went to the woman. ‘Consult a spirit for me,’ he said, ‘and bring up for me the one I name.’ But the woman said to him, ‘Surely you know what Saul has done. He has cut off the mediums and spiritists from the land. Why have you set a trap for my life to bring about my death?’ Saul swore to her by the Lord, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, you will not be punished for this.’ Then the woman asked, ‘Whom shall I bring up for you?’ ‘Bring up Samuel,’ he said. When the

woman saw Samuel, she cried out at the top of her voice and said to Saul, ‘Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!’”

(I Samuel 28:3, 7-12)

- In both the Old Testament and New Testament, we find false prophets who are able to perform miracles and so deceive people by the power of evil spirits. Their intent is to deceive and profane the glory of God.

“Their minds are permanently set to oppose God, goodness, truth, the kingdom of Christ, and the welfare of human beings, and they have real if limited power and freedom of movement, though in Calvin’s picturesque phrase they drag their chains wherever they go and can never hope to overcome God.”

(Packer, 67)

- There is a very real and dangerous spiritual battle, one that we participate in (Ephesians 6:12). But thanks be to God that our victory is sure in Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit!

“When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

(Revelation 20:7-10)

Infirmities & Invitations

Leviticus 21-22

- This next set of rules is not spoken “to the Israelites,” but instead just “to the priests.” Priests are an example of holiness for the people, so they are specially regulated and especially careful not to taint what is holy.
- Priests were placeholder mediators until Christ would fulfill that purpose. These rules for the priests should inform us on Christ’s ministry as Great High Priest.

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: “A priest must not make himself ceremonially unclean for any of his people who die, except for a close relative, such as his mother or father, his son or daughter, his brother, or an unmarried sister who is dependent on him since she has no husband—for her he may make himself unclean. He must not make himself unclean for people related to him by marriage, and so defile himself.”

(Leviticus 21:1-4)

- We’ve established a few important things already:
 - Holiness is transferable
 - Uncleanness cannot be transferred to God, His holiness destroys uncleanness.

- Remember when Jesus encountered the woman who was bleeding? When she touched Him, He didn't become *unclean* but rather *she* became *clean*. We can apply that same principle here. When Jesus touches the dead, He doesn't become *unclean* but even the dead give up their uncleanness and come back to life! Every time Jesus touches a dead body, the body comes back to life.
 - He raised a widow's son (Luke 7:14-15)
 - He raised Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:54-55)

“Priests must not shave their heads or shave off the edges of their beards or cut their bodies. They must be holy to their God and must not profane the name of their God. Because they present the offerings made to the Lord by fire, the food of their God, they are to be holy.”
(Leviticus 21:5-6)

- As we've mentioned before, the way we dress matters to God.

“They must not marry women defiled by prostitution or divorced from their husbands, because priests are holy to their God. Regard them as holy, because they offer up the food of your God. Consider them holy, because I the Lord am holy—I who make you holy. If a priest's daughter defiles herself by becoming a prostitute, she disgraces her father; she must be burned in the fire. The high priest, the one among his brothers who has had the anointing oil poured on his head and who has been ordained to wear the priestly garments, must not let his hair become unkempt or tear his clothes. He must not enter a place where there is a dead body. He must not make himself unclean, even for his father or mother, nor leave the sanctuary of his God or desecrate it, because he has been dedicated by the anointing oil of his God. I am the Lord. The woman he marries must be a virgin. He must not marry a widow, a divorced woman, or a woman defiled by prostitution, but only a virgin from his own people, so he will not defile his offspring among his people. I am the Lord, who makes him holy.”
(Leviticus 21:7-13)

- Priests could not marry women who had been united with another man. Christ our Great High Priest needed no union with a woman, but was fulfilled by His relationship to the Father in a life of singleness. Singleness, a way Paul

followed, is described in the New Testament as an ideal lifestyle for some—and perhaps the better lifestyle (I Corinthians 7:1).

- These rules for priests make the story of Hosea the prophet more provocative. Hosea was commanded by God to “take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness” (Hosea 1:2).

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Say to Aaron: “For the generations to come none of your descendants who has a defect may come near to offer the food of his God. No man who has any defect may come near: no man who is blind or lame, disfigured or deformed; no man with a crippled foot or hand, or who is hunchbacked or dwarfed, or who has any eye defect, or who has festering or running sores or damaged testicles. No descendant of Aaron the priest who has any defect is to come near to present the offerings made to the Lord by fire. He has a defect; he must not come near to offer the food of his God. He may eat the most holy food of his God, as well as the holy food; yet because of his defect, he must not go near the curtain or approach the altar, and so desecrate my sanctuary. I am the Lord, who makes them holy.”’ So Moses told this to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites.”
(Leviticus 21:14-24)

- We should interpret this section carefully: never in this passage are people with disabilities called unclean. Levites with disabilities were not to perform the function of the priests because their disability kept them from performing the task.
- People with disabilities were not cut off from the people and were not required to perform any special ceremonial cleansing. They have every right of an Israelite. They are invited to the table to eat and commune with the people. They are kept from work that would be dangerous, and are provided for.
- King David displays this principle when he honors and provides for his friend’s grandson Mephibosheth, who was crippled in both feet. David three times invites Mephibosheth to “eat at my table” (II Samuel 9:7, 10, 13).
- Jesus also showed no hesitancy to love, teach, and heal people with all kinds of disabilities. In Luke 14, He taught that the Great Banquet would be attended by “the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame” (Luke 14:21). People with disabilities are invited to the table.

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Tell Aaron and his sons to treat with respect the sacred offerings the Israelites consecrate to me, so they will not profane my holy name Say to them: “For the generations to come, if any of your descendants is ceremonially unclean and yet comes near the sacred offerings that the Israelites consecrate to the Lord, that person must be cut off from my presence. I am the Lord. If a descendant of Aaron has an infectious skin disease or a bodily discharge, he may not eat the sacred offerings until he is cleansed. He will also be unclean if he touches something defiled by a corpse or by anyone who has an emission of semen, or if he touches any crawling thing that makes him unclean, or any person who makes him unclean, whatever the uncleanness may be. The one who touches any such thing will be unclean till evening. He must not eat any of the sacred offerings unless he has bathed himself with water. When the sun goes down, he will be clean, and after that he may eat the sacred offerings, for they are his food. He must not eat anything found dead or torn by wild animals, and so become unclean through it. I am the Lord. The priests are to keep my requirements so that they do not become guilty and die for treating them with contempt. I am the Lord, who makes them holy.””
(Leviticus 22:3-9)

- Disability is *not* uncleanness. People with disabilities are not kept from the table, but people with sickness are. Disability is not equated with sickness.

“No one outside a priest’s family may eat the sacred offering, nor may the guest of a priest or his hired worker eat it. But if a priest buys a slave with money, or if a slave is born in his household, that slave may eat his food. If a priest’s daughter marries anyone other than a priest, she may not eat any of the sacred contributions. But if a priest’s daughter becomes a widow or is divorced, yet has no children, and she returns to live in her father’s house as in her youth, she may eat of her father’s food. No unauthorized person, however, may eat of it. If anyone eats a sacred offering by mistake, he must make restitution to the priest for the offering and add a fifth of the value to it. The priests must not desecrate the sacred offerings the Israelites present to the Lord by allowing them to eat the sacred offerings and so bring upon them guilt requiring payment. I am the Lord, who makes them holy.”
(Leviticus 22:10-16)

- Male, female, rich, poor, slave, free—all are invited to the table. That’s what being a “kingdom of priests” means in the New Covenant (Galatians 3:26-29).

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites and say to them: “If any of you—either an Israelites or an alien living in Israel—presents a gift for a burnt offering to the Lord, either to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering, you must present a male without defect from the cattle, sheep or goats in order that it may be accepted on your behalf. Do not bring anything with a defect, because it will not be accepted on your behalf. When anyone brings from the herd or flock a fellowship offering to the Lord to fulfill a special vow or as a freewill offering, it must be without defect or blemish to be acceptable. Do not offer to the Lord the blind, the injured or the maimed, or anything with warts or festering or running sores. Do not place any of these on the altar as an offering made to the Lord by fire. You may, however, present as a freewill offering an ox or a sheep that is deformed or stunted, but it will not be accepted in fulfillment of a vow. You must not offer to the Lord an animal whose testicles are bruised, crushed, torn or cut. You must not do this in your own land, and you must not accept such animals from the hand of a foreigner and offer them as the food of your God. They will not be accepted on your behalf, because they are deformed and have defects.”’”
 (Leviticus 22:17-25)

- Only real offerings are acceptable. Animals of little or no value aren’t offerings at all, and God will not accept it as a genuine expression of thanksgiving or repentance.
- Consider Ananias and Sapphira—who we covered earlier. They gave a “maimed” offering to fulfill what they vowed, and died for such a transgression (Acts 5:1-11).

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘When a calf, a lamb or a goat is born, it is to remain with its mother for seven days. From the eighth day on, it will be acceptable as an offering made to the Lord by fire. Do not slaughter a cow or a sheep and its young on the same day.’”
 (Leviticus 22:26-28)

- This might be a law about stewardship. It would be poor management to kill off a family line of animals in a day.

“When you sacrifice a thank offering to the Lord, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf. It must be eaten that same day; leave none of it till morning. I am the Lord. Keep my commands and follow them. I am the Lord. Do not profane my holy name. I must be acknowledged as holy by the Israelites. I am the Lord, who makes you holy and who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. I am the Lord.
(Leviticus 22:29-33)

- Remember: it is God who makes us holy. He is our rescuer and deliverer. Our obedience does not earn our holiness or deliverance, but is a thankful response to the God who saves and forgives faithfully.

Celebrate Good Times

Leviticus 23, 25

- We've been trying to remove the "harsh" stigma from Leviticus and show the great grace—that God is pleased with His people, He's rescued them, and He's made a way for them to be reconciled. Leviticus 23 and 25 contain nine different feasts and festivals to serve as regular times of rest, relaxation, and celebration.

"To encourage the people in their spiritual lives there were several festivals scattered throughout the year, in addition to the weekly Sabbath. Leviticus 23 presents a summary of these events, which took place between the first and seventh months, or roughly from March until October. All of those festivals are referred to as 'sacred assemblies', days of rest that were set apart to the Lord, and by observing these special seasons the Israelites were reminded of God's faithfulness and goodness."

(Wolf, 181)

- These celebrations are not unlike the regular traditions in the church calendar marking different reasons for rejoicing and celebrating—Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, etc.

The Sabbath Day

"The Lord said to Moses, 'Speak to the Israelites and say to them: "These are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the Lord, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies. There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a Sabbath to the Lord.'"

(Leviticus 23:3)

- The first of these is a weekly celebration: Sabbath. Sabbath was instituted by God on the seventh day of creation (Genesis 2:2-3) and reaffirmed in the 10 Commandments (Exodus 20:8-11). It was a day to model God by resting to view and enjoy the majesty of His creation.

“The meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to holiness in time. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world.”

(Heschel, 10)

- Sabbath was very important to the Israelites.
- The shadow of Sabbath is a difficult one to see fulfilled. It’s established in creation order and repeated in the 10 Commandments. It has all the markers of something that ought to be a moral obligation. Yet Jesus describes it, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27), and seems to suggest a considerable amount of liberty was available to the people. So what, exactly, is Sabbath a shadow of?

“What is God’s will for you in the fourth commandment [honor the Sabbath day]? ...That every day of my life I rest from my evil ways, let the Lord work in me through his Spirit, and so begin already in this life the eternal Sabbath.”

(Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 103)

- Sabbath is a way of separating from worldliness and finding peace and fulfillment in God. We practice Sabbath every day when we choose to submit to God. Ultimately, we look forward to “eternal Sabbath” in Heaven where sin is gone and our longing for rest is satisfied in God for eternity.

Passover & The Feast of Unleavened Bread

“These are the Lord’s appointed feasts, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times: The Lord’s Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. On the fifteenth day of that month the Lord’s Feast of Unleavened Bread begins; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast. On the first day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular

work. For seven days present an offering made to the Lord by fire. And on the seventh day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work.”
(Leviticus 23:4-8)

- Exodus 12 recounts the story of Israel’s hasty departure from Egypt. Without time for the bread to rise, they made their bread without yeast. God delivered them from the hand of the Egyptians.
- At Passover, the people sacrificed the “Passover lamb.” The lamb took the place of the firstborn son, so God would spare the people from that judgment.

“Closely associated with the Passover was the feast of Unleavened Bread, which began on the next day and continued from the fifteenth to the twenty-first of the month. Since the people had to leave Egypt quickly, they did not have time to bake dough with yeast. In [Exodus 12:8] the bread without yeast is eaten along with bitter herbs, a reminder of the hard labor they had been required to perform. As this feast was celebrated from year to year, parents reminded children about their bitter experiences in Egypt, and together they gave thanks for God’s deliverance. Down through the years the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread virtually became one feast.”
(Wolf, 139)

- If it seems like lambs being sacrificed for the forgiveness of the people is becoming commonplace, you’re right. The Passover is yet another foreshadowing of Christ’s sacrifice for His people. Israel, God’s firstborn, was spared by the sacrifice of the spotless Lamb of God.

“For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.”
(1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

- In the Old Covenant, God rescued Israel from Egypt—and the Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorated their leaving of that old life for a better one.
- In the New Covenant, Jesus rescued His elect from sin—and our spiritual “Feast of Unleavened Bread” commemorates our leaving of that old life for a

better one. Paul, in I Corinthians, says we leave “malice and wickedness” out of this new life just like yeast was left out of the bread.

- Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread is comparable to our Holy Week: where we remember God’s rescue and celebrate our new life.

Firstfruits

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Speak to the Israelites and say to them: “When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest. He is to wave the sheaf before the Lord so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath. On the day you wave the sheaf, you must sacrifice as a burnt offering to the Lord a lamb a year old without defect, together with its grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil—an offering made to the Lord by fire, a pleasing aroma—and its drink offering of a quarter of a hin of wine. You must not eat any bread, or roasted or new grain, until the very day you bring this offering to your God. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live.”

(Leviticus 23:9-14)

- Like the Israelites, we’re commanded to give our best to God. This includes our harvest earnings, our time, our energy, and our desires.

The Feast of Weeks

“From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the Lord. From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, baked with yeast, as a wave offering of firstfruits to the Lord. Present with this bread seven male lambs, each a year old and without defect, one young bull and two rams. They will be a burnt offering to the Lord, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings—an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord. Then sacrifice one male goat for a sin offering and two lambs, each a year old, for a fellowship offering. The priest is to wave the two lambs before the Lord as a wave offering, together with the bread of the firstfruits. They are a sacred offering to the Lord for the priest. On that same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be

a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the Lord your God.”
(Leviticus 23:15-22)

- The Feast of Weeks could be considered an ancient “Thanksgiving Day.” The people would bring offerings of food in thankful celebration for all God provided for them.
- This could be translated “The Feast of Pentecost.” Notice that while at Passover they ate unleavened bread, here they ate bread “baked with yeast.” There is an agent of transformation (yeast) added to the bread. In the same way, 50 days after Christ’s resurrection the Church received the Holy Spirit—an inner agent of transformation given to God’s people.

The Feast of Trumpets

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Say to the Israelites: “On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts. Do no regular work, but present an offering made to the Lord by fire.”’
(Leviticus 23:23-25)

- The Feast of Trumpets is probably the least clear of the festivals. It’s a commemoration, but never mentions of what. It may simply be that the “seventh month” is to be treated similar to the “seventh day” with an additional Sabbath rest. Almost the entire seventh month is filled with different celebrations.
- It might also be similar to our Advent season, where we prepare our hearts and minds for Christmas—the revealing of Christ. The Feast of Trumpets came nine days before the Day of Atonement. The trumpet blasts may be a reminder to the people to prepare for the Day of Atonement.
- An interesting side note: Moses is credited with inventing the trumpets they used in Israel. “Moreover, Moses was the inventor of the form of their trumpet, which was made of silver” (Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 3.12.6. 291).

The Day of Atonement

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves, and present an offering made to the Lord by fire. Do not work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement is made for you before the Lord your God.

Anyone who does not deny himself on that day must be cut off from his people. I will destroy from among his people anyone who does any work on that day. You shall do no work at all. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. It is a Sabbath of rest for you, and you must deny yourselves. From the evening of the ninth day of the month until the following evening you are to observe your Sabbath.’”

(Leviticus 23:26-32)

- A more thorough description of the Day of Atonement was included in Leviticus 16 and chapter 8 of this study guide.

The Feast of Tabernacles

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Say to the Israelites: “On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the Lord’s Feast of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. For seven days present offerings made to the Lord by fire, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present an offering made to the Lord by fire. It is the closing assembly; do no regular work. (These are the Lord’s appointed feasts, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies for bringing offerings made to the Lord by fire—the burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings required for each day. These offerings are in addition to those for the Lord’s Sabbaths and in addition to your gifts and whatever you have vowed and all the freewill offerings you give to the Lord.) So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the Lord for seven days; the first day is a day of rest, and the eighth day also is a day of rest. On the first day you are to take choice fruit from the trees, and palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars, and rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. Celebrate this as a festival to the Lord for seven days each year. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come; celebrate it in the seventh month. Live in booths for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in booths so your descendants will know that I

had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.” So Moses announced to the Israelites the appointed feasts of the Lord.”

(Leviticus 23:33-44)

- Here we have a joyful celebration of heritage—like Hollandfest or Greek Fest. The people are to live in tents (booths) like their ancestors did and sing the songs of old. They are commanded to “rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days.”
- We’ll skip past Leviticus 24 now to see the festivals prescribed in the Leviticus 25. Leviticus 24 will be covered in the next chapter of this study guide.

The Sabbath Year

“The Lord said to Moses on Mount Sinai, ‘Speak to the Israelites and say to them: “When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a Sabbath to the Lord. For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a Sabbath of rest, a Sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. Whatever the land yields during the Sabbath year will be food for you—for yourself, your manservant and maidservant, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten.””

(Leviticus 25:1-7)

- Every seven years the people would refrain from working the fields. We’ve now seen God provide Sabbath rest for people (Israelites), times (seventh day), and places (fields and vineyards). This is the depth of concern God has for all His creation.
- Not planting food for a year is incredibly risky. The temptation to plant would have been great—but God asks for faithfulness and self-control. Trust Him to provide.

The Year of Jubilee

“Count off seven Sabbaths of years—seven times seven years—so that the seven Sabbaths of years amount to a period of forty-nine years. Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan. The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields.”
(Leviticus 25:8-12)

- Not only is Sabbath rest commanded every seven days and rest for the land every seven years, but now every 50 years there is rest yet again. Notice that now both the 49th year (a Sabbath Year) and 50th year (a Year of Jubilee) are without planting and harvesting. There is an exercise in trusting God as much as it is joy and relaxation.

“In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to his own property. If you sell land to one of your countrymen or buy any from him, do not take advantage of each other. You are to buy from your countryman on the basis of the number of years since the Jubilee. And he is to sell to you on the basis of the number of years left for harvesting crops. When the years are many, you are to increase the price, and when the years are few, you are to decrease the price, because what he is really selling you is the number of crops. Do not take advantage of each other, but fear your God. I am the Lord your God.”
(Leviticus 25:13-17)

- This is a pretty radical law. Every fifty years, land is returned to its original owner. After the people entered the Promised Land, God divided it up for each family of each tribe (Joshua 13-22). Every fifty years, families would regain control of their land if they had sold it or rented it.
- Notice the provision included to control the price. If you sold land in the 48th year, it would not be very valuable since it would be returning to the owner after two non-planting years.

- The Year of Jubilee provided incredible protections for the poor. No family could go more than one generation without a “reset” of sorts. Land ownership would never be denied any family of any tribe. Two years of no harvesting emptied storehouses and prevented people from amassing their own wealth and protections. This ensured trust and reliance on God.
- The Year of Jubilee is also a shadow of Heaven. The land belongs to God, who had prepared a place for each family. Although things would trade hands under the shadow of the Old Covenant, in the New Creation we will live forever in a place prepared for us by the Son of God (John 14:1-3).

Some Guiding Principles

- Chapter 25 concludes by fleshing out the details and implications of the Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee.

“Follow my decrees and be careful to obey my laws, and you will live safely in the land. Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live there in safety. You may ask, ‘What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?’ I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in.”

(Leviticus 25:18-22)

- God promises to provide food for the people. There will be three years worth of food harvested in the sixth year. This would always get them through two years without planting. Consider Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 6:19-34. He commands the people not to store up treasures on earth, but instead to consider the birds who don’t stockpile food yet are fed adequately by their Creator. So it is with God’s people, we trust Him to provide our daily bread.

“The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants. Throughout the country that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land. If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold. If, however, a man has no one to redeem it for him but he himself prospers and acquires sufficient

means to redeem it, he is to determine the value for the years since he sold it and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it; he can then go back to his own property. But if he does not acquire the means to repay him, what he sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. It will be returned in the Jubilee, and he can then go back to his property. If a man sells a house in a walled city, he retains the right of redemption a full year after its sale. During that time he may redeem it. If it is not redeemed before a full year has passed, the house in the walled city shall belong permanently to the buyer and his descendants. It is not to be returned in the Jubilee. But houses in villages without walls around them are to be considered as open country. They can be redeemed, and they are to be returned in the Jubilee. The Levites always have the right to redeem their houses in the Levitical towns, which they possess. So the property of the Levites is redeemable—that is, a house sold in any town they hold—and is to be returned in the Jubilee, because the houses in the towns of the Levites are their property among the Israelites. But the pastureland belonging to their towns must not be sold; it is their permanent possession.”
(Leviticus 25:23-34)

- The sale of any property is to be considered “on loan.” The original owner can buy it back at any time. This is because God says “the land is mine and you are but...tenants.” This is a picture of Heaven, where permanent places are prepared for God’s people.
- Only homes in urban cities can be sold permanently. This may be due to the lack of faith shown in putting up walls for protection. The place God provides needs no wall for protection.

“If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you. Do not take interest of any kind from him, but fear your God, so that your countryman may continue to live among you. You must not lend him money at interest or sell him food at a profit. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God. If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells himself to you, do not make him work as a slave. He is to be treated as a hired worker or a temporary resident among you; he is to work for you until the Year of Jubilee. Then he and his children are to be released, and he will go back to his own clan

and to the property of his forefathers. Because the Israelites are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt, they must not be sold as slaves. Do not rule over them ruthlessly, but fear your God. Your male and female slaves are to come from the nations around you; from them you may buy slaves. You may also buy some of the temporary residents living among you and members of their clans born in your country, and they will become your property. You can will them to your children as inherited property and can make them slaves for life, but you must not rule over your fellow Israelites ruthlessly.”
(Leviticus 25:29-46)

- We dealt with slavery in chapter 9 of this study guide. If the Israelites were going to participate in “slavery,” it was going to be a much more gracious form than practiced anywhere else. They may not rule “ruthlessly” over slaves.
 - Slaves could not be beaten harshly. If a slave is beaten to death, the owner must be put to death (Exodus 21:20). If a slave is injured from the beating, they are to be set free (Exodus 21:26-27).
 - Slaves are to work in safe environments and protected from the animals (Exodus 21:32).
 - Slaves must rest on the Sabbath like everyone else (Exodus 23:12).
 - Runaway slaves must not be returned to their master (Deuteronomy 23:15).
 - Slaves cannot be taken unwillingly; if so, the captor must be put to death (Deuteronomy 24:7).
 - Slaves are entitled to the food in the household (Leviticus 22:11).
- It is clear that slavery according to the law of God is a more gracious, careful practice than what it often devolves into today. God cares for the oppressed and marginalized.

“If an alien or a temporary resident among you becomes rich and one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells himself to the alien living among you or to a member of the alien’s clan, he retains the right of redemption after he has sold himself. One of his relatives may redeem him: An uncle or a cousin or any blood relative in his clan may redeem him. Or if he prospers, he may redeem himself. He and his buyer are to count the time from the year he sold himself up to the Year of Jubilee. The price for his release is to be based on the rate paid to a hired man for that number of years. If many years remain, he must

pay for his redemption a larger share of the price paid for him. If only a few years remain until the Year of Jubilee, he is to compute that and pay for his redemption accordingly. He is to be treated as a man hired from year to year; you must see to it that his owner does not rule over him ruthlessly. Even if he is not redeemed in any of these ways, he and his children are to be released in the Year of Jubilee, for the Israelites belong to me as servants. They are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”
(Leviticus 25:47-55)

- Leviticus 23 and 25 show yet again the great joy in the law; God schedules time for joy and celebrating! If the people obey His law, they will rejoice.

Stoned

Leviticus 24

- We're returning to Leviticus 24 for the second of two narrative stories included in all of Leviticus.
- The first narrative story recorded the death of Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu. In our second narrative story, a man is stoned for blaspheming the Name of God. These narrative stories seem harsh, but are included by the author to demonstrate the holiness of God to the people throughout the generations. It's as if Moses is writing: "Remember, this God is so very holy."
- Before this story, though, Leviticus 24 includes a bit of detail about some consecrated items set before God in the Tent of Meeting.

"The Lord said to Moses, 'Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning continually.

Outside the curtain of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, Aaron is to tend the lamps before the Lord from evening till morning, continually. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. The lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the Lord must be tended continually. Take fine flour and bake twelve loaves of bread, using two-tenths of an ephah for each loaf. Set them in two rows, six in each row, on the table of pure gold before the Lord. Along each row put some pure incense as a memorial portion to represent the bread and to be an offering made to the Lord by fire. This bread is to be set out before the Lord regularly, Sabbath after Sabbath, on behalf of the Israelites, as a lasting covenant. It belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in a holy place, because it is a most holy part of their regular share of the offerings made to the Lord by fire."

(Leviticus 24:1-9)

- These seemingly unrelated details about bread are important to understand the character of God on display here.
- We've been saying all along that the heart of the giver is what matters to God; it's the reality—not the shadow—that God cares about. Nadab and Abihu didn't die because they put the wrong oil in the fire, they died because they put their own desires before God's.
- Consider Kings Saul and David. We know something about their hearts; Saul had an evil spirit (I Samuel 16:14) and David had a heart for God (I Samuel 13:14).
 - Saul offered sacrifices he was not permitted to offer, and was rebuked for it (I Samuel 13:9).
 - Yet David is able to eat this consecrated bread that was for the priests (I Samuel 21:6).
- This illustrates our point. Saul's problem was not killing a calf, it was lack of faith in God. David's eating was not selfish indulgence, but necessity for sustaining life. The heart is what matters to God.
- We'll keep this distinction in mind as we enter this last narrative story.

“Now the son of an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father went out among the Israelites, and a fight broke out in the camp between him and an Israelite.

The son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name with a curse; so they brought him to Moses. (His mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri the Danite.) They put him in custody until the will of the Lord should be made clear to them. Then the Lord said to Moses: ‘Take the blasphemer outside the camp. All those who heard him are to lay their hands on his head, and the entire assembly is to stone him. Say to the Israelites: “If anyone curses his God, he will be held responsible; anyone who blasphemes the name of the Lord must be put to death. The entire assembly must stone him. Whether an alien or native-born, when he blasphemes the Name, he must be put death.”’”

(Leviticus 24:10-16)

- The Israelites held the Name of the Lord in high regard, they would not even speak it out loud. This young man “blasphemed the Name with a curse,” or expressed his hatred toward God, His character, and His law. It was an attempt to put God beneath man, to profane Him.
- In Luke 10:12, Jesus calls such blasphemy against God “unpardonable”—unable to be forgiven. Failure to submit to the Triune God is unforgivable.

- The young man deserved death for his sin. Notice how the people take great care in working out justice. This isn't something they're willing to go about quickly or rashly.

“If anyone takes the life of a human being, he must be put to death. Anyone who takes the life of someone’s animal must make restitution—life for life. If anyone injures his neighbor, whatever he has done must be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. As he has injured the other, so he is to be injured. Whoever kills an animal must make restitution, but whoever kills a man must be put to death. You are to have the same law for the alien and the native-born. I am the Lord your God.”
(Leviticus 24:17-22)

- This is a paradox. They need to put to death the blasphemer, but taking the life of a human being means they too would be guilty of death.
- This is the problem in the Old Covenant; there is an endless shedding of blood. No person or animal could pay the debt for the sin of another, for all have sinned and fall short of God’s law—and the wages owed for that sin is death.
- Christ—as the only sacrifice who owed no debt Himself—was able to pay that penalty for sin and so ransom all of creation.

“The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship...Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest [Jesus Christ] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”
(Hebrews 10:1, 11-14)

- The Israelites obeyed the law, and stoned the blasphemer who hated God. And by subjecting themselves to the law, they had become guilty.

“Then Moses spoke to the Israelites, and they took the blasphemer outside the camp and stoned him. The Israelites did as the Lord commanded Moses.”

(Leviticus 24:23)

- The transformational part of the New Covenant is not an increase in lawlessness, but an increase in grace. We are not content to let sin increase, but know that Christ has grace for us in our weakness.
- Consider how Jesus transformed and transcended the law. The story in John 8 of the woman caught in adultery will help.
 - A woman had been caught in the act of adultery. According to the law, she deserved death for her sin. The teachers of the law brought her to the temple and set her before Jesus. Jesus famously responds, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”
 - In saying this, Jesus calls out the intent of the law: we all stand condemned. This is the meaning of James 2:10, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it...If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.” The law condemns all alike, there is no one righteous.
 - But thanks be to God for His rich grace and mercy! For in Christ there is forgiveness! Not only does he spare the woman caught in adultery from the death she deserves, but he forgives her sins and calls her, “Go now and leave your life of sin.”
 - This is the Gospel. Guilty, lawbreaking, condemned sinners are forgiven by God in Christ and inspired to obey the law of God not in fear of condemnation, but in joy and thanksgiving!

Promised Redemption

Leviticus 26-27

- Leviticus' final chapters include promised blessings for obedience, and prophetic curses for disobedience, followed by the way in which God would redeem all of Creation from people to land to things.
- It begins by calling our attention to the first and greatest commandment: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. This God is to be holy, set apart from all others.

“Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone for yourselves, and do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it. I am the Lord your God. Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the Lord.”

(Leviticus 26:1-2)

- If these rescued people remain thankful to their Rescuer—honoring His name and obeying His commands—things will go well for them. This is because God's law *necessarily* leads to good things. He wouldn't prescribe something that profaned or harmed His people.

“If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees of the field their fruit. Your threshing will continue until grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until planting, and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land. I will grant peace in the land, and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid. I will remove savage beasts from the land, and the sword will not pass through your country. You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall by the sword before you. Five of you will chase a hundred, and

a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you. I will look on you with favor and make you fruitful and increase your numbers, and I will keep my covenant with you. You will still be eating last year's harvest when you will have to move it out to make room for the new. I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt so that you would no longer be slaves to the Egyptians; I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with heads held high."
(Leviticus 26:3-13)

- Obedience leads to:
 - Provision
 - Protection
 - Pleasing relationship with God

"But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will bring upon you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and drain away your life. You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it. I will set my face against you so that you will be defeated by your enemies; those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee even when no one is pursuing you."
(Leviticus 26:14-17)

- Disobedience leads to:
 - Frailty
 - Famine
 - Faced off against God

"If after all this you will not listen to me, I will punish you for your sins seven times over."
(Leviticus 26:18)

- Remember, Leviticus is not a *harsh* book, but a *gracious* one. Even when the people deserve punishment for disobedience, God waits for them to listen and repent. He'll send priests, prophets, judges, and kings with His Word with opportunity after opportunity for repentance. This God is certainly slow to anger and abounding in love.

“I will break down your stubborn pride and make the sky above you like iron and the ground beneath you like bronze. Your strength will be spent in vain, because your soil will not yield its crop, nor will the trees of the land yield their fruit. If you remain hostile toward me and refuse to listen to me, I will multiply your afflictions seven times over, as your sins deserve.”
(Leviticus 26:19-21)

- A second time, God examines their hearts to see if any are truly repentant.

“I will send wild animals against you, and they will rob you of your children, destroy your cattle and make you so few in number that your roads will be deserted. If in spite of these things you do not accept my correction but continue to be hostile toward me, I myself will be hostile toward you and will afflict you for your sins seven times over.”
(Leviticus 26:22-24)

- A third time, God examines their hearts to see if any are truly repentant.

“And I will bring the sword upon you to avenge the breaking of the covenant. When you withdraw into your cities, I will send a plague among you, and you will be given into enemy hands. When I cut off your supply of bread, ten women will be able to bake your bread in one oven, and they will dole out the bread by weight. You will eat, but you will not be satisfied. If in spite of this you still do not listen to me but continue to be hostile toward me, then in my anger I will be hostile toward you, and I myself will punish you for your sins seven times over.”
(Leviticus 26:25-28)

- God offers a fourth chance for the people to repent and return to Him.

“You will eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters. I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars and pile your dead bodies on the lifeless forms of your idols, and I will abhor you. I will turn your cities into ruins and lay waste your sanctuaries, and I will take no delight in the pleasing aroma of your offerings. I will lay waste the land, so that your enemies who live there will be appalled. I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. Then the land will enjoy its Sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its Sabbaths. All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the Sabbaths you live in it. As for those of you who are left, I will make their hearts so fearful in the lands of their enemies that the sound of a windblown leaf will put them to flight. They will run as though fleeing from the sword, and they will fall, even though no one is pursuing them. They will stumble over one another as though fleeing from the sword, even though no one is pursuing them. So you will not be able to stand before your enemies. You will perish among the nations; the land of your enemies will devour you. Those of you who are left will waste away in the lands of their enemies because of their sins; also because of their fathers’ sins they will waste away.”
(Leviticus 26:29-39)

- This is a prophecy of the Israelites’ exile, where they are scattered across Babylon. But even in this punishment, God preserves a remnant of people that He will rescue. Over and over again, this God demonstrates His grace in His great love and patience with these lawbreaking people.
- Notice, too, that the purpose of the punishments is not merely “eye for an eye” justice, but God uses the punishments to change the hearts of the people and move them toward repentance. In the same way, Revelation describes eschatological judgments with frequent pauses to see if the people had repented. God is just and God is loving—at the same time!

“But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers—their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies—then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, I will remember

my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.”
(Leviticus 26:40-42)

- Although the covenant has been broken by the disobedience of the people, still God honors it—an unearned blessing and undeserved mercy.

“For the land will be deserted by them and will enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them. They will pay for their sins because they rejected my laws and abhorred my decrees. Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them nor abhor them so as to destroy them completely, breaking my covenant with them. I am the Lord Their God. But for their sake I will remember the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God. I am the Lord. These are the decrees, the laws and the regulations that the Lord established on Mount Sinai between himself and the Israelites through Moses.”
(Leviticus 26:43-46)

- What a message! Although we stand condemned—with desperately wicked hearts, dead in our sins and transgressions—still God patiently pursues His chosen people that none of His flock would be found out of the fold. God has a plan for His people, and He will accomplish it. We are assured that God will not leave us in our sin, but will effectively draw us to Himself!
- The final chapter of Leviticus answers the question, “But what aspects of our life and of creation fall under that great care and control of God? What do we turn over to His control?” The unsurprising answer is, “Everything.”

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Speak to the Israelites and say to them: “If anyone makes a special vow to dedicate persons to the Lord by giving equivalent values, set the value of a male between the ages of twenty and sixty at fifty shekels of silver, according to the sanctuary shekel; and if it is a female, set her value at thirty shekels. If it is a person between one month and five years, set the value of a male at five shekels of silver and that of a female at three shekels of silver. If it is a person sixty years old or more, set the value of a male at fifteen shekels and of a female at ten shekels. If anyone making the vow is too poor to pay the specified amount, he is to present the person to the priest,

who will set the value for him according to what the man making the vow can afford.””
(Leviticus 27:1-8)

- **People**—regardless of age, ability, or gender—ought to be committed to the Lord’s care and control. We belong to God.

“If what he vowed is an animal that is acceptable as an offering to the Lord, such an animal given to the Lord becomes holy. He must not exchange it or substitute a good one for a bad one, or a bad one for a good one; if he should substitute one animal for another, both it and the substitute become holy. If what he vowed is a ceremonially unclean animal—one that is not acceptable as an offering to the Lord—the animal must be presented to the priest, who will judge its quality as good or bad. Whatever value the priest then sets, that is what it will be. If the owner wishes to redeem the animal, he must add a fifth to its value.”
(Leviticus 27:9-13)

- **Creatures**—both clean and unclean—ought to be committed to the Lord’s care and control. They belong to God.

“If a man dedicates his house as something holy to the Lord, the priest will judge its quality as good or bad. Whatever value the priest then sets, so it will remain. If the man who dedicates his house redeems it, he must add a fifth to its value, and the house will again become his.”
(Leviticus 27:14-15)

- **Material things**—valuable or not—ought to be committed to the Lord’s care and control. They belong to God.

“If a man dedicates to the Lord part of his family land, its value is to be set according to the amount of seed required for it—fifty shekels of silver to a homer of barley seed. If he dedicates his field during the Year of Jubilee, the value that has been set remains. But if he dedicates his field after the Jubilee, the priest will determine the value according to the number of years that remain until the next Year of Jubilee, and its set value will be reduced. If the man who dedicates the field wishes to redeem it, he must add a fifth of its

value, and the field will again become his. If, however, he does not redeem the field, or if he has sold it to someone else, it can never be redeemed. When the field is released in the Jubilee, it will become holy, like a field devoted to the Lord; it will become the property of the priests. If a man dedicates to the Lord a field he has bought which is not part of his family land, the priest will determine its value up to the Year of Jubilee, and the man must pay its value on that day as something holy to the Lord. In the Year of Jubilee the field will revert to the person from whom he bought it, the one whose land it was. Every value is to be set according to the sanctuary shekel, twenty gerahs to the shekel.”

(Leviticus 27:16-25)

- The land ought to be committed to the Lord’s care and control. It belongs to God.

“No one, however, may dedicate the firstborn of an animal, since the firstborn already belongs to the Lord; whether an ox or a sheep, it is the Lord’s. If it is one of the unclean animals, he may buy it back at its set value, adding a fifth of the value to it. If he does not redeem it, it is to be sold at its set value. But nothing that a man owns and devotes to the Lord—whether man or animal or family land—may be sold or redeemed; everything so devoted is most holy to the Lord. No person devoted to destruction may be ransomed; he must be put to death.”

(Leviticus 27:26-29)

- The only thing that doesn’t belong to God are people “devoted to destruction.” Some live unrepentant lives devoted to destruction rather than to God. God will leave those people where they desire to be—a way that leads to death.

“A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord. If a man redeems any of his tithe, he must add a fifth of the value to it. The entire tithe of the herd and flock—every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd’s rod—will be holy to the Lord. He must not pick out the good from the bad or make any substitution. If he does make a substitution, both the animal and its substitute become holy and cannot be redeemed.”
(Leviticus 27:30-33)

- Our earnings—everything we produce—ought to be committed to the Lord’s care and control. It belongs to God.

“These are the commands the Lord gave Moses on Mount Sinai for the Israelites.”
(Leviticus 27:34)

- God reveals His character in Leviticus. He rescues His people. He’s pleased with His people. He expects a changed heart and makes a way forward when they fall short. He cares for all life and all creation. He is merciful in His justice.
- God has now established a people set apart—a kingdom of priests. These people will participate in God’s plan to redeem the whole world. This law provides a way for the people to interact with the world, yet remain distinctly holy.
- The Old Covenant is obsolete (Hebrews 8:13), but the New Covenant doesn’t change all that is true about God’s character, His sovereignty, and His plan for His creation. God had revealed Himself to the people in this law, but we understood Him only by His shadow. Now God has revealed Himself to us through His Son Jesus Christ, and we understand more fully. The Spirit no longer dwells *among* the people, but *within* the people.
- There are simple and straightforward tools for understanding the usefulness of Leviticus and the law today. We shouldn’t be afraid of “harsh” or “inconsistent” cries from non-believers. Rather, let’s articulate the realities found in Jesus Christ that fill out these shadows. God still rescues His people. He is still concerned with the marginalized. He still makes a way forward for us guilty lawbreakers. He still commands holiness. He still wants a distinct kingdom of priests.

- Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ. In Him is the fulfillment. He is the blood we can drink that offers life. He is the lamb without blemish or defect slain for the sins of the world. He is our Great High Priest and mediator before God. He is our Sabbath rest.
- Even while we praise the Christ of God, we long for the day we will know *even more fully* when He is revealed to us again and we dwell with God face to face.

“Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face.

Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

(I Corinthians 13:12)

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