

GRACEWAY COMMUNITY CHURCH

PRAXIS

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PRAXIS

on the
HOLY

A Study on the book of Leviticus
“The Law Built on Love”

Graceway Community Church

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On The
HOLY

Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the English Standard Version Bible.

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Welcome to the January edition of Praxis! This month we will work our way through the book of Leviticus. Because of the cultural and ritualistic practices included in Leviticus, it is often regarded as a difficult book to understand. However, when you break down the purposes and intentions behind these practices, we discover powerful meaning that is relevant for us still, today!

The readings are brief, in order to cover the Scripture, present the thought, and allow time to take it in through *meditation, contemplation*, and *prayer*. We encourage you to record your responses and the things that the Holy Spirit shows you. The readings are set up according to the ancient practice of the *daily office*, with a reading for morning hours, and a reading for evening hours. Of course, when and how you do this is completely up to you, but we do encourage you to do it at the same time and place each day, in order to simplify and develop the habit.

Take your time to soak in the Word. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you each day. Even the simplest of things can bring revelation when we dedicate attention to the Spirit and the details.

This compilation has been designed to lead us into the Scripture each day, to help empower us in the Holy Spirit and Truth, and to culminate in the Home Church experience.

Make special note of the pages given to each Sunday, take time to review your readings and responses from the week. This will help prepare you for a richer experience in Home Church, through both sharing and receiving.

If you are not yet part of a Home Church, we would love to have you experience it for yourself! Find out more from the person who gave you this book, or reach us at www.GracewayRI.org

The commentary that accompanies each reading is written by Ed Pichette Sr., who serves as an elder and a Home Church Leader at Graceway Community.



21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it-- 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: **Romans 3:21-22**

Paul tells us that, in Christ, the righteousness of God has been displayed to us "apart from the law." But notice how Paul adds, "although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it." The Law does, in fact, bear witness to God's love for us.

This month as we work our way through the book of Leviticus, we'll look below the surface to see how God's love is demonstrated in the Law. The Law is much more than simply a list of do's and don't's compiled by some capricious god who desires to frustrate us with demands that we cannot meet.

*Have you ever viewed God in this way?
What about now? Write some of your thoughts here.*

¹For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

Hebrews 10:1

The Law cannot deliver us from our sin – as the writer to Hebrews tells us, “it has only a shadow of the good things to come...” Now that the Christ has come and sacrificed Himself for us, God has explained to us what He had planned from the very beginning. In the light of the work of Jesus we can revisit the Law and search out how God was demonstrating His love for us in the Law.

The sacrifices were repeated annually for at least 2 reasons. 1) To continually remind us of God’s perfection and our imperfection. And 2) To emphasize the fact that something was missing. Despite the sacrifices of animals and grains, somehow more was needed. It’s a bit like a repairman trying to fix some broken item. He keeps making repairs but somehow he is not able to make the item function as it should – so he tries another repair.

Only the death of a perfect Lamb can atone for sin. Once His work on the cross was finished, there was no further need for more sacrifices.

¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. Hebrews 10:14

¹The LORD called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, ²"Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock. ³"If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. ⁴He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. ⁵Then he shall kill the bull before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. **Leviticus 1:1-5**

The book of Leviticus opens with a description of an offering that is acceptable to God. Notice how the details concerning this sacrifice reflect elements of Christ's sacrifice.

1) *The offering shall be a male without blemish. The phrase "without blemish" has been understood to refer to the physical health of the animal to be sacrificed. While that is a good understanding, Jesus' perfection was not just physical but spiritual as well. When the Father gives an atoning sacrifice, He is perfect physically and spiritually as well!*

2) *The offering is made at "the entrance of the tent of meeting." As the name implies, that is the place where God spoke with Moses. It was a place where God was present. The offering is made in a place where we can know that God is present to view the event. The sacrifice has the full attention of God.*

3) *The person making the offering "shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering." The laying on of hands in this case is symbolic of the transference of the person's guilt for sin onto the offering. The animal to be sacrificed becomes guilty of the person's sin and then*

4) *The animal "is accepted for him to make atonement for him."*

5) *Finally, "the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar." Jesus' life is forfeited so that we might have life. The connection between life and blood is demonstrated throughout scripture. The first occurrence of this theme is in Genesis 9:4*

But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. Genesis 9:4

The book begins by explaining what God expects in a perfect sacrifice. In Lev. 1:1-5, God explains for us the perfect sacrifice that He would make of His Son for our redemption.

Write some of your thoughts here.

¹⁴"If his offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves or pigeons. ¹⁵ And the priest shall bring it to the altar and wring off its head and burn it on the altar. Its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar. ¹⁶ He shall remove its crop with its contents and cast it beside the altar on the east side, in the place for ashes. ¹⁷ He shall tear it open by its wings, but shall not sever it completely. And the priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire. It is a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. Leviticus 1:14-17

An offering of livestock could be a large expense for many Israelites. In order to make it possible that even the most poor could offer a sacrifice to God, He provides a much less expensive way.

God does not want anyone to be excluded from the opportunity to offer a sacrifice by which they might obtain forgiveness and a restoration of relationship with God. So God provided a means that was accessible for even the poorest in Israel. Here again we can see the love of God in that He provides a means of access for all people regardless of their wealth.

What do you think?

¹"When anyone brings a grain offering as an offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour. He shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it

Leviticus 2:1

Grain offerings were to be made with oil and frankincense. In the OT, oil is often used as a symbol to represent the Holy Spirit. There is here a hint at the trinitarian nature of God. Of course the original hearers would not be able to make that connection, but God placed it there for our benefit so that we could see that His full nature is opposed to sin. The Trinity hates sin and its implications. Sin is hated by God, by the Father and by the Son and by the Holy Spirit.

Frankincense had at least two uses in OT times. First it has a very pleasing aroma – strong and lasting. So frankincense was used in the preparation of a body for burial to cover over any of the unpleasant odors of death. Additionally frankincense could be dried out and then used to seal any breaks in earthen pottery. So it was used to restore broken vessels and make them water tight once again. Do you see the connection with sin offerings being used as a means of atoning for sin?

Frankincense can restore a broken vessel and make it useful again. Sacrifice for sin can restore a broken sinner and put him/her back into right relationship with God. (Of course, these animal and grain sacrifices did not atone for sin themselves. Rather they all pointed forward to the sacrifice of Jesus which is the only means by which we can be forgiven.)

¹"If his offering is a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offers an animal from the herd, male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the LORD.

Leviticus 3:1

The peace offering was provided for at least two different occasions (See Lev. 7:11-21.) First, a peace offering might be made as a means of expressing thanksgiving to God. (See Lev. 7:12-13.) If God had somehow blessed you, you could express your thankfulness to God by offering a peace offering. Secondly, a peace offering could be offered as part of the conclusion of some vow. (See Lev 7:16.)

So here we see that not all offerings were meant to be primarily offerings for sin. Offerings might also be made to thank God or to formally conclude some vow that a worshiper had made to God. The sacrificial system was broad enough to express a whole range of interactions between people and God. As we who live in NT times are invited to confidently approach God with all sorts of differing circumstances, in OT times people offered various sacrifices based on their circumstances.

¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:16

Write some of your thoughts here.

¹ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If anyone sins unintentionally in any of the LORD's commandments about things not to be done, and does any one of them, ³ if it is the anointed priest who sins, thus bringing guilt on the people, then he shall offer for the sin that he has committed a bull from the herd without blemish to the LORD for a sin offering. Leviticus 4:1-3

In Lev. 4 we see the idea of unintentional sin. God's hatred of sin is complete and total. If someone should sin without knowing about it, it still has damaging effects. That is why God hates it as He does.

In the opening verses of Lev. 4, we see the consequences of unintentional sin committed by a priest. Because a priest is a representative of the people before God, his sin brings guilt on those whom he represents. This is an interesting idea. If someone is acting on my behalf and that person should sin, then, according to this idea, I too become guilty of sin. God is not, in these verses, trying to find reasons to condemn us. What He is doing, I think, is showing us just how terrible sin is. Satan is never satisfied with sin that has already taken place. Rather the devil uses past sin to try to goad the sinner on to sinning more often and with greater and greater results.

Sin won't sit still. It will continue as far and wide as it can in its attempt to bring destruction. Can you see why God hates it so? God wants us to be aware of the nature of sin. He wants us to hate it even as He does. So when we become aware of sin we may have committed unintentionally it is not enough to simply say, "I didn't know it at the time." God provided a means of atonement for unintentional sin as well.

What are your thoughts on this?

¹³ "If the whole congregation of Israel sins unintentionally and the thing is hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they do any one of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, and they realize their guilt, ¹⁴ when the sin which they have committed becomes known, the assembly shall offer a bull from the herd for a sin offering and bring it in front of the tent of meeting. Leviticus 4:13-14

Also in Lev. 4, the law deals with the concept of corporate sin. Sin does not effect just individuals singly and independently. Sin can be committed by and have disastrous effects on a community of people. When a congregation becomes aware of its corporate sin then it is obliged to deal with the situation. Do you see how harmful sin is? Can you begin to understand why God hates it as He does?

God knows that sin must be completely eradicated. To tolerate any small sin individually or corporately is to allow it to fester and grow. God does not want us to become overly scrupulous – constantly looking for sin in our lives and living in fear that we may be sinning without realizing it. Perfect love casts out fear. But at the same time, He does want us to understand how pervasive sin is in our world. Be aware that it is out there trying to deceive and corrupt you constantly and continuously. Hate it thoroughly and completely as He does. When you do become aware of it, take action to put it to death.

In what ways have you actively taken measures to remove sin from your life?

¹"If anyone sins in that he hears a public adjuration to testify, and though he is a witness, whether he has seen or come to know the matter, yet does not speak, he shall bear his iniquity; Leviticus 5:1

In Lev 5:1 we see an example of sinning by failing to act. In this particular case, the sin is failing to speak up about some situation that one has knowledge of and knows that those in charge of the matter are looking for witnesses to help them make a right judgment. Sin is not always active and overt. It can also be passive. You can sin when you know that you should do something and you refuse to do it. This idea is explicitly dealt with in the NT as well as here in the OT.

¹⁷So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. James 4:17

What do you think about this?

² or if anyone touches an unclean thing, whether a carcass of an unclean wild animal or a carcass of unclean livestock or a carcass of unclean swarming things, and it is hidden from him and he has become unclean, and he realizes his guilt; ³ or if he touches human uncleanness, of whatever sort the uncleanness may be with which one becomes unclean, and it is hidden from him, when he comes to know it, and realizes his guilt; ⁴ or if anyone utters with his lips a rash oath to do evil or to do good, any sort of rash oath that people swear, and it is hidden from him, when he comes to know it, and he realizes his guilt in any of these; ⁵ when he realizes his guilt in any of these and confesses the sin he has committed, ⁶ he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation for the sin that he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat, for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin.

Leviticus 5:2-6

Here the Word lists several different ways that a person might sin unintentionally. Our nature is such that we want to defend and excuse ourselves whenever we can. Instead of trying to understand the nature of sin and its impact on us, we look for some small detail to excuse ourselves and try to say that we are innocent. To counter this tendency, God goes to great lengths in the word to describe various sins so that we will be unable to escape the associated guilt. He does not do this with an angry or vicious intention. Rather He does it to help us understand what sin is. He wants us to know sin for what it is. He wants us to avoid sin. When we do sin, He wants us to repent and avoid sin in the future. Sin destroys. He wants us to avoid that destruction.

Write some of your thoughts here.

7 "But if he cannot afford a lamb, then he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation for the sin that he has committed two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. Leviticus 5:7

11 "But if he cannot afford two turtledoves or two pigeons, then he shall bring as his offering for the sin that he has committed a tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering. He shall put no oil on it and shall put no frankincense on it, for it is a sin offering. Leviticus 5:11

In Lev. 5:6 we saw that the required offering was a lamb or a goat. In v. 7 God declares that if a person could not afford these then two turtledoves or two pigeons would suffice. In v. 11 He goes further still. If the birds were too expensive then an offering of flour was acceptable.

God would not and does not demand of a person more than they can afford. In all reality, the price of our sin is greater than all the world's riches. And God had already determined that He would pay that price with His own Son's life. It is offered to us without cost.

God does not want all that you have. God simply wants all that you are - He wants your love.

12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

1 Corinthians 2:12

Is there a cost you are not willing to offer in response to God's invitation?

¹⁵ "If anyone commits a breach of faith and sins unintentionally in any of the holy things of the LORD, he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation, a ram without blemish out of the flock, valued in silver shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt offering. ¹⁶ He shall also make restitution for what he has done amiss in the holy thing and shall add a fifth to it and give it to the priest. And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and he shall be forgiven. Leviticus 5:15-16

In Lev. 5:16 we are told that, as part of the offering for sin, restitution should be made with a 20% penalty added on. Why this penalty? When we sin, we join in sin's goal of destruction. We cause spiritual and physical destruction. Whatever we've destroyed physically, must be restored. In the process of restoration more is spent than the value of what was destroyed. In recognition of this truth, God provides for an added penalty to be paid to the one who was sinned against. In this way, the victim can be made whole.

I'm not aware of anything in the NT that parallels this idea. I think that's because Jesus' sacrifice includes any "extra" necessary payment. His sacrifice provides complete restoration for all those who will put their trust in Him. Nothing more needs to be added to what He has done. Surely, nothing more could be added!

What do you think?

⁹ "Command Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the burnt offering. The burnt offering shall be on the hearth on the altar all night until the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it. ¹⁰ And the priest shall put on his linen garment and put his linen undergarment on his body, and he shall take up the ashes to which the fire has reduced the burnt offering on the altar and put them beside the altar. ¹¹ Then he shall take off his garments and put on other garments and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place.

Leviticus 6:9-11

The fire on the altar where the burnt offering was made was to burn throughout the night. The destruction of that offering was to be total and complete. Complete consumption of the offering demonstrates the complete consumption of all guilt associated with the sin. It is a picture that looks forward to Jesus' sacrifice. His death would be total. He did not suffer just to a point very close to death but not totally dead.

Through the centuries, many skeptics have claimed that Jesus was unconscious from His suffering but not dead when He was taken down from the cross. This is sometimes referred to as "the swoon theory." But Jesus was not merely unconscious. He was dead! His death has paid the price for my sin and yours. Just as Jesus' sacrifice was total and complete, so also the fires of the burnt offering on the altar within the temple were made to burn throughout the night so that the offering might be completely and totally consumed.

Write some of your thoughts here.

¹² The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not go out. The priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and he shall arrange the burnt offering on it and shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. ¹³ Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; it shall not go out. Leviticus 6:12-13

In this morning's devotion we saw that the fire on the altar was to burn throughout the night. Here we read that the fire was also kept burning all day. So the fire within the altar was to be kept burning continually. The altar is always prepared to accept the sacrifice of another burnt offering. Jesus' shed blood is always constantly and continuously available to cover the sins of anyone who will confess his sin and call on Jesus for forgiveness. There is never a time when a sinner must wait to receive forgiveness.

⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

Thank God today that there is no waiting period to receive forgiveness and be whole.

¹This is the law of the guilt offering. It is most holy.

Leviticus 7:1

Lev 7:1 turns our attention to the guilt offering. The differences between the various offerings are not always completely clear. But it does seem that the guilt offering emphasizes the restoration of the relationship between the sinner and the sin's victim. This idea is also present in the NT.

¹⁷Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Hebrews 2:17

²He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 John 2:2

In these two verses we read that Jesus is the propitiation for our sin. Propitiation involves more than forgiveness. Forgiveness implies that the price of our sin has been paid in full and we are no longer guilty. Propitiation goes further and implies that the relationship that existed before the sin is restored.

If I sin against a friend, then my friend is commanded by scripture to forgive. However, he is not commanded to continue the relationship as it was before the sin. Importantly, he is encouraged to reconcile but not commanded! How, for example, can we reconcile if I am not willing to admit that I sinned in the first place? Reconciliation is bigger than forgiveness. Reconciliation is not always possible. Forgiveness is always possible and always required of the believer. This concept of the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation is contained in both the OT and the NT. The Bible is all about relationship – first between God and people and secondly between people.

³⁶"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." **Matthew 22:36-40**

²³ "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, You shall eat no fat, of ox or sheep or goat. ²⁴ The fat of an animal that dies of itself and the fat of one that is torn by beasts may be put to any other use, but on no account shall you eat it. ²⁵ For every person who eats of the fat of an animal of which a food offering may be made to the LORD shall be cut off from his people. ²⁶ Moreover, you shall eat no blood whatever, whether of fowl or of animal, in any of your dwelling places. ²⁷ Whoever eats any blood, that person shall be cut off from his people."

Leviticus 7:23-27

Here we read that the fat and the blood were not to be eaten. The fat was representative of the best parts of the animal. The very best parts were to be offered to God - not kept back to be consumed by the one making the offering. Blood was representative of life. Blood was never to be consumed because life is in the blood. How often are we told in the NT that it is Jesus' blood that was shed for our sin - Jesus' very life!

¹¹ For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.

Leviticus 17:11

²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Matthew 26:28

Write some of your thoughts here.

What struck you most in this week's readings?

What questions or comments did you come away with?

How does what you learned relate to your life?

How does it relate to the Church family?

What can you share with your church family from what you've received?

Notes from Home Church.

⁷ And he put the coat on him and tied the sash around his waist and clothed him with the robe and put the ephod on him and tied the skillfully woven band of the ephod around him, binding it to him with the band. Leviticus 8:7

In Lev.8 we learn about the Levitical priests. We learn about their clothing and their installation ceremony. In v. 7, we're told that the ephod was tied onto the high priest. The ephod had two stones on the shoulder pieces on which were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. In this way, the priest brought the names of Israel's tribe with him into the temple. The picture is reminiscent of another NT theme. God is present with us whenever we gather with other believers seeking God's will.

¹⁸ Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

Matthew 18:18-20

What do you think about this?

⁸ And he placed the breastpiece on him, and in the breastpiece he put the Urim and the Thummim. Leviticus 8:8

In Lev.8 we learn about the Levitical priests. We learn about their clothing and their installation ceremony. In Lev. 8:88, we're told that the Urim and Thummim were to be worn in the breastpiece of the high priest. Little is known about the Urim and Thummim. They are referred to several times in the OT. While we don't know what they looked like, their use was something like modern day dice. The Urim and Thummim were intended to be used to ascertain God's will.

At times, the priests would not be sure about how to deal with some situation. The Urim and Thummim were "cast" and then read to determine God's answer. While the Urim and Thummim are not mentioned as such in the NT, the NT does have at least one instance of lots being cast to determine God's will.

²⁴ And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." ²⁶ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. Acts 1:24-26

What are your thoughts?

⁶ And Moses said, "This is the thing that the LORD commanded you to do, that the glory of the LORD may appear to you." ⁷ Then Moses said to Aaron, "Draw near to the altar and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and for the people, and bring the offering of the people and make atonement for them, as the LORD has commanded." ⁸ So Aaron drew near to the altar and killed the calf of the sin offering, which was for himself.
Leviticus 9:6-8

¹⁵ Then he presented the people's offering and took the goat of the sin offering that was for the people and killed it and offered it as a sin offering, like the first one. ¹⁶ And he presented the burnt offering and offered it according to the rule.
Leviticus 9:15-16

As part of the ordination celebration, offerings were made for Aaron and for the people. The priest was similar to all others in that he too was a sinner. So he could not come before God while guilty of sin. So a sacrifice had to be made first for the priest and then he could present an offering for others. This has no exact counterpart in the NT. In the NT, Jesus, our high priest, is without sin. No offering needs to be made for Him. Rather, He Himself becomes guilty of our sin AND He becomes the offering that brings our righteousness before the Father.

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
2 Corinthians 5:21

Write some of your thoughts here.

24 And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the pieces of fat on the altar, and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces. **Leviticus 9:24**

At the conclusion of their ceremony, God shows up by sending out fire that consumes the burnt offering. The people fall down, amazed to see the glory of God. By sending fire that consumes the offering, God demonstrates that He is pleased with the offerings. In the NT, God demonstrates that He is pleased with His Son's offering by raising Him from the dead. When we worship God in Spirit and in Truth, He accepts what we offer to Him and He restores us to life in Christ!

¹ Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. ² And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. ³ Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD has said: 'Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.'" And Aaron held his peace. Leviticus 10:1-3

In Lev 10:1-3 we see an example of men who, having seen the power of God's sending fire to consume the offering, act in the name of God without having His authorization. The result is disastrous. We must never claim God's authority without His leading and approval. This, too, has a close parallel in the NT.

¹¹ And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. ¹³ Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." ¹⁴ Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. ¹⁵ But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" ¹⁶ And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. Acts 19:11-16

⁶ And Moses said to Aaron and to Eleazar and Ithamar his sons, "Do not let the hair of your heads hang loose, and do not tear your clothes, lest you die, and wrath come upon all the congregation; but let your brothers, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning that the LORD has kindled. ⁷ And do not go outside the entrance of the tent of meeting, lest you die, for the anointing oil of the LORD is upon you." And they did according to the word of Moses. ⁸ And the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying, ⁹ "Drink no wine or strong drink, you or your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. ¹⁰ You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, ¹¹ and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them by Moses." Leviticus 10:6-11

Moses warns Aaron his sons not to do the things ordinarily done to mourn for a dead relative. To do so would be proclaiming that God had been unjust in putting Nadab and Abihu to death. No matter the personal costs involved, we must always declare the Name of the Lord to be holy. Indeed He is Holy!

Having warned them what they must not do, the word goes on to tell them what they should do. They are to abstain from alcohol and they are to teach all the laws that God had given. We too are to do the work of the Lord.

²⁶ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷ Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal." ²⁸ Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" ²⁹ Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." John 6:26-29

¹ And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them, ² "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, These are the living things that you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth. Leviticus 11:1-2

There is not much consensus on the matter of clean and unclean animals. It is not always clear why some animals were to be considered clean and others unclean. One proposal is health issues. Some of the animals God declared unclean can cause health problems. Another idea is that unclean animals may have had some significance in the religions of other peoples in the Ancient Near East.

While it is unclear what the motivation is for declaring an animal clean and unclean, these laws do show the extent of God's concern for His people. He details for us even those animals that we should and should not consume. He cares about everything we do and everything that happens to us. He wants what is best for us in every case.

While I do believe that God is concerned with the details of our lives, I don't want to be overly scrupulous. For example, God does want me to gather together with other believers every Sunday. While He wants me to go to church, He is not, I think, overly concerned with how I get there. I can drive my car, ride my bicycle or walk to church – whichever I may choose. God leaves room for me to be me and do some things the way I choose to do them.

What are your thoughts?

³⁹ "And if any animal which you may eat dies, whoever touches its carcass shall be unclean until the evening, ⁴⁰ and whoever eats of its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening. And whoever carries the carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening.

Leviticus 11:39-40

While there is no consensus about why some animals are clean and some are unclean, some laws dealing with clean and unclean are easier to understand. For example consider this law about touching dead animals. We understand perfectly well today the potential harms we may face when we come into contact with dead animals.

While this is common knowledge today such ordinary understanding about germs and harmful bacteria were not always part of common knowledge. As recently as the Civil War, soldiers used dirt to stop the bleeding from open wounds without any idea of the gangrene that might set in from bacteria in the dirt.

What do you think about this?

¹The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²"Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. ³And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. Leviticus 12:1-3

The possible health concerns from coming into contact with blood are also common knowledge today. But it was not so in the ANE.

Also in these verses is the command to circumcise a child when he is eight days old. At birth, a child's blood has some ability to clot. This "clotting factor" will increase dramatically in the first week of life. On a child's eighth day the amount of clotting factor in the blood will reach a very high level that will never again be obtained throughout life. It's no circumstance that God commands that a child be circumcised on his eighth day. That is the optimal time to stop the bleeding as quickly and effectively as possible. God's timing in all things is always perfect.

Write some of your thoughts here.

⁸ And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean." Leviticus 12:8

Note that here God inserts into His word yet again that a lesser offering is acceptable if a person does not have the means to provide the more expensive offering. We have seen this several times now. The more important matters in the word of God are repeated. This is at least the third time we've seen God state that if a person is poor then a less expensive offering is acceptable. Once again God reminds us that He will not allow poverty to become an obstacle in the way of the person who desires to be in right relationship with Him.

What do you think about this?

¹The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, ²"When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, and it turns into a case of leprous disease on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests, ³ and the priest shall examine the diseased area on the skin of his body. And if the hair in the diseased area has turned white and the disease appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a case of leprous disease. When the priest has examined him, he shall pronounce him unclean.

Leviticus 13:1-3

In Lev. 13, the word deals with communicable diseases. The first disease dealt with is leprosy. Part of the process of dealing with leprosy involves quarantining. While leprosy is still around today, the disease du jour is, of course, COVID-19. In the three or four millennia since Leviticus was written we still have no better means to protect society at large from some diseases than to quarantine the sick.

God's word provided the best ways for people to protect themselves long before there was any concept of science concerning the best practices to protect oneself from some diseases.

What are your thoughts?

¹²And if the leprous disease breaks out in the skin, so that the leprous disease covers all the skin of the diseased person from head to foot, so far as the priest can see, ¹³ then the priest shall look, and if the leprous disease has covered all his body, he shall pronounce him clean of the disease; it has all turned white, and he is clean. ¹⁴But when raw flesh appears on him, he shall be unclean. ¹⁵And the priest shall examine the raw flesh and pronounce him unclean. Raw flesh is unclean, for it is a leprous disease. ¹⁶But if the raw flesh recovers and turns white again, then he shall come to the priest, ¹⁷ and the priest shall examine him, and if the disease has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce the diseased person clean; he is clean. **Leviticus 13:12-17**

God continues to explain how to distinguish healthy and unhealthy issues with leprosy. As much information as could possible be determined by a simple examination is explained by God's word to His people. God's purpose is to keep His people as healthy as possible and to avoid allowing communicable diseases to decimate their population.

The law is about physical as well as spiritual health. In both the OT and the NT, God wants His people to be as healthy as possible.

⁸for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

1 Timothy 4:8

⁴⁷"When there is a case of leprous disease in a garment, whether a woolen or a linen garment, ⁴⁸in warp or woof of linen or wool, or in a skin or in anything made of skin, ⁴⁹if the disease is greenish or reddish in the garment, or in the skin or in the warp or the woof or in any article made of skin, it is a case of leprous disease, and it shall be shown to the priest. ⁵⁰And the priest shall examine the disease and shut up that which has the disease for seven days.

Leviticus 13:47-50

God's word goes to the extent that it explains that people can become sick by coming into contact with inanimate items that carry disease. While we take this knowledge for granted, that was not the case in the ANE.

God loves His people and he wants us to be whole in every way – physically and spiritually. So in His Law He provides abundant information about behaviors and actions to take to be proactive in avoiding dangerous situations. God loves us even more than we love ourselves. He wants the best for us even when we don't know what is the best thing for us.

⁴⁰"When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a case of leprous disease in a house in the land of your possession, ³⁵ then he who owns the house shall come and tell the priest, 'There seems to me to be some case of disease in my house.'³⁶ Then the priest shall command that they empty the house before the priest goes to examine the disease, lest all that is in the house be declared unclean. And afterward the priest shall go in to see the house.³⁷ And he shall examine the disease. And if the disease is in the walls of the house with greenish or reddish spots, and if it appears to be deeper than the surface,³⁸ then the priest shall go out of the house to the door of the house and shut up the house seven days.³⁹ And the priest shall come again on the seventh day, and look. If the disease has spread in the walls of the house,⁴⁰ then the priest shall command that they take out the stones in which is the disease and throw them into an unclean place outside the city. Leviticus 14:34-40

The conquest of Canaan lay in the future. But here God gives some laws about how the congregation is to protect itself when it dwells in the promised land. Diseases living within the walls of a building are somewhat similar to diseases in clothing. The difference is that a piece of clothing is much more easily done away with than a house. God's word takes that into account.

Read on through verse 48 to see the details that God prescribes to deal with such a situation. Attempts will be made to preserve the house if possible. But in the end, it is the health of the people that wins out. The house may need to be destroyed.

Write some of your thoughts here.

What struck you most in this week's readings?

What questions or comments did you come away with?

How does what you learned relate to your life?

How does it relate to the Church family?

What can you share with your church family from what you've received?

Notes from Home Church.

¹The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, ²"Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any man has a discharge from his body, his discharge is unclean. ³And this is the law of his uncleanness for a discharge: whether his body runs with his discharge, or his body is blocked up by his discharge, it is his uncleanness. ⁴Every bed on which the one with the discharge lies shall be unclean, and everything on which he sits shall be unclean. ⁵And anyone who touches his bed shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. ⁶And whoever sits on anything on which the one with the discharge has sat shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. ⁷And whoever touches the body of the one with the discharge shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. **Leviticus 15:1-7**

Chapter 15 deals with issues concerning the reproductive organs of both males and females. Any sort of abnormal discharge or blockage is to be interpreted as some sort of uncleanness. The uncleanness is assumed to be contagious so that anyone who touches a person with such a problem also becomes unclean.

Sexual diseases have almost always been treated with special discretion. Because they may involve illicit sexual behavior, such problems can affect a person's reputation as well as their physical health. Nonetheless they must be dealt with if we are to remain whole individually and corporately. As the scripture indicates, steps must be taken to ensure that such diseases are not spread. As elsewhere in the law, God shows His love for His people by giving laws that will protect them from sexual disease.

Write some of your thoughts here.

¹⁶"If a man has an emission of semen, he shall bathe his whole body in water and be unclean until the evening. ¹⁷ And every garment and every skin on which the semen comes shall be washed with water and be unclean until the evening. ¹⁸ If a man lies with a woman and has an emission of semen, both of them shall bathe themselves in water and be unclean until the evening.

Leviticus 15:16-18

It is unclear why the emission of semen should be singled out as making a man unclean. Perhaps it is related somehow to the idea, common in the ANE, that semen was a sort of seed for human life which when planted within a woman would grow and develop into a human being. But why should this make a man unclean? There is no consensus on the matter.

What are your thoughts?

¹⁹ "When a woman has a discharge, and the discharge in her body is blood, she shall be in her menstrual impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening. ²⁰ And everything on which she lies during her menstrual impurity shall be unclean. Everything also on which she sits shall be unclean. ²¹ And whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. ²² And whoever touches anything on which she sits shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. **Leviticus 15:19-22**

The matter of impurity related to the menstrual cycle is, perhaps, more easily understood as it involves blood which has so much significance in both the OT and the NT. While the details in this particular case are not made very explicit, it is clear here that, as far as the law is concerned, the emission of blood makes a woman unclean.

¹ The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died, ² and the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. ³ But in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with a bull from the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. **Leviticus 16:1-3**

The day of atonement, yom kippur, may be the most solemn day in the Jewish calendar. On this day the high priest, Aaron on the very first yom kippur, entered into the Most Holy Place. This is the only day when anyone was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place.

As we read in Hebrews 9:7, this day involved atonement for unintentional sin. There were specific sacrifices to be offered for specific sins. The day of atonement was atoning for those sins which the people had committed without realizing that they were sinning. Here we see the extent of God's hatred for sin. One of the most important days in the Jewish calendar marks the rites involved in the process of seeking God's forgiveness for unintentional sin. God never winks at sin. Sin must be thoroughly dealt with in all its manifestations - whether the specifics about the sin are known or unknown.

How does this align with your ideas about sin? Do you hate sin to the same extent that God does?

⁵ And he shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. ⁶ "Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. Leviticus 16:5-6

Aaron, himself, was sinner like you and me. So before he could go through the veil into the Most Holy Place, he first had to make a sacrifice for the forgiveness of his own sin. When the time came for Jesus to offer Himself as the sacrifice for all the sin of mankind, there was no need for Him to offer a sacrifice for Himself. He was always without sin so no sacrifice was necessary for Him.

Write some of your thoughts here.

⁷ Then he shall take the two goats and set them before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ⁸ And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Azazel. ⁹ And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD and use it as a sin offering, ¹⁰ but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel. **Leviticus 16:7-10**

Two goats were offered as part of the sacrifices for the people on yom kippur. One would be killed so that its blood could symbolically be shed for the forgiveness of the people's sin. The other goat was the scapegoat.

The priest would place his hands on the head of the scapegoat to symbolically place all the people's sin on it. The scapegoat was then sent out into the wilderness to carry the people's sin far from them so that it would never be remembered.

In the NT, Jesus fulfills the roles of both goats. Firstly, He is killed so that He truly becomes the offering presented to the Father for the forgiveness of our sin. Secondly, He is raised from the dead and lives to carry all our sin far from us so that it will never be remembered again. All our sin, known and unknown has been atoned for by his death. He has carried all our guilt far from us so that we need never be reminded of it again!

Praise Him today for what He has done for you. Worship Him because He is worthy!

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the people of Israel and say to them, This is the thing that the LORD has commanded. ³ If any one of the house of Israel kills an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or kills it outside the camp, ⁴ and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to offer it as a gift to the LORD in front of the tabernacle of the LORD, bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood, and that man shall be cut off from among his people. ⁵ This is to the end that the people of Israel may bring their sacrifices that they sacrifice in the open field, that they may bring them to the LORD, to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and sacrifice them as sacrifices of peace offerings to the LORD. ⁶ And the priest shall throw the blood on the altar of the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting and burn the fat for a pleasing aroma to the LORD. ⁷ So they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to goat demons, after whom they whore. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations.

Leviticus 17:1-7

God knew the temptations that His people would face when they entered the promised land. He understood that they would be tempted to worship the Canaanite gods that were worshiped by the people living in the land of Canaan.

In advance of that threat and as a means of protecting His people from it, He commanded them to make their sacrifices at the entrance of the tent of meeting. If they had obeyed then they would have protected themselves from the consequences of going after foreign gods. All too sadly we know that their history tells of their failure in this regard. Many of God's people would forsake the Lord and follow after foreign gods – to their our destruction. In His mercy and grace, God had provided, in the law, commands that would protect them. While God had provided, they chose to disobey.

What are your reflections?

¹⁰ "If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. ¹¹ For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life. ¹² Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood. **Leviticus 17:10-12**

In God's economy, blood played a very special role. Many of the pagan rites that the Israelites would encounter in the promised land cheapened the value of blood as it represented life in God's word. Again in an effort to protect His people and keep them from sin, He commanded that they abstain from eating blood. Again, sadly, the people would reject God's word and follow their own ways - to their own destruction and ultimately to exile.

What do you think?

¹ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the LORD your God. ³ You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. ⁴ You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God. ⁵ You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD. Leviticus 18:1-5

Having dealt with some more specific issues with regard to the worship of foreign gods by His people, here in Lev. 18, God presents the general principal with respect to worshiping foreign gods. Simply put, His people are to reject worshiping foreign gods in any way, shape or form. They shall make it their business to know God's law and to keep it to the best of their ability. In verse. 5 the word tells us that to keep His law is to live.

Of course, we know all too well that no one is able to keep all of God's law perfectly. So no one will live by means of law-keeping. But as God would reveal elsewhere in the OT and in the NT, He has made another way for us. The law is weak in that no one can be saved through the law because no one can keep the law. But there is One who has kept the law. He has indeed fulfilled all of His Father's Law. By sacrificing Himself, He has become our righteousness.

³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. Romans 8:3-6

Write some of your thoughts here.

⁶ "None of you shall approach any one of his close relatives to uncover nakedness. I am the LORD. Leviticus 18:6

¹⁸ "Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, ²⁵ and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. ²⁶ But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you ²⁷ (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), ²⁸ lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. ²⁹ For everyone who does any of these abominations, the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people. ³⁰ So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God." Leviticus 18:24-30

In Lev. 18:6-23, God forbids any kind of sexual relations with family members and in verse 23 he forbids sexual relations with animals. In verses 24-30 He explains that these are behaviors that the Israelites will observe among the people of the promised land where He is bringing them. Again, by way of warning, He tells them to abstain from such behavior. Unfortunately, the Israelites will not all obey. Those who disobey will bear the consequences of their sin. In the book of Numbers, we read that sin cannot and will not be overlooked.

²³ But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out. Numbers 32:23

¹ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. Leviticus 19:1-2

The reason for the law is quite obvious. Our God is a holy God. He separates Himself from sin totally and completely. His people must be a people who are also holy – also completely and totally separated from sin. In Jesus, you have been made holy. None of us has separated himself/herself from sin. But Jesus has accomplished that goal for us. In Him we are holy!

¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." 1 Peter 1:14-16

*Do you believe that you are truly holy through Jesus?
What does that mean to you?*

⁹"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. ¹⁰And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God. Leviticus 19:9-10

As God is a generous God, His law provided that His people should also be a generous people. Here in Lev. 19 we read that God's people were not to reap their fields completely. Instead, they were to leave some fruit behind so that the poor and sojourners might be able to come after the reapers were done and find enough food left for them to survive.

Surely we see here God's mercy and grace being expressed through His law. God's law also demonstrates His grace and mercy for all people.

¹The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²"Say to the people of Israel, Any one of the people of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. ³I myself will set my face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given one of his children to Molech, to make my sanctuary unclean and to profane my holy name.
Leviticus 20:1-3

The worship of the foreign god Molech involved child sacrifice. In His word, God made a special point of condemning such behavior. Anyone who would sacrifice a child to Molech was to be cut off from His people.

The god Molech was often represented by a statue of a god seated with his hands extended out and placed together with palms open upward. Fires were then burned within these outstretched hands and Molech was worshiped by people who threw their newborn children into these fires. The pagan belief system promised that Molech would bless those who worshiped him in this way by providing them with successful crops. This type of worship of a foreign deity is especially condemned by God here in Leviticus and elsewhere in the OT.

Write some of your thoughts here.

⁴ And if the people of the land do at all close their eyes to that man when he gives one of his children to Molech, and do not put him to death, ⁵ then I will set my face against that man and against his clan and will cut them off from among their people, him and all who follow him in whoring after Molech.

Leviticus 20:4-5

God's hatred of offering children to foreign gods is further emphasized here in Lev. 20:4-5. The person who would worship Molech in this way was to be put to death. If he was not killed, then God promised to set His face against him and his clan. By refusing to kill him, his relatives were tacitly agreeing with what he had done. God hates this so much that He promises to cut the entire clan off from His people because of their refusal to deal with this sin.

What do you think about this?

What struck you most in this week's readings?

What questions or comments did you come away with?

How does what you learned relate to your life?

How does it relate to the Church family?

What can you share with your church family from what you've received?

Notes from Home Church.

¹ And the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them, No one shall make himself unclean for the dead among his people, ² except for his closest relatives, his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, his brother, ³ or his virgin sister (who is near to him because she has had no husband; for her he may make himself unclean). ⁴ He shall not make himself unclean as a husband among his people and so profane himself.

Leviticus 21:1-4

There are some laws that apply specifically to priests. Remember that a person was made unclean by coming into contact with a dead body. When a family member died, people had to prepare the body for burial and then bury the body. As a result family members became unclean when they cared for the body of a dead relative. But a special law applied to the priests. They could not defile themselves by attending to the bodies of dead relatives with just a few exceptions as listed.

Why do you think God had special laws like this that applied only to priests?

⁵They shall not make bald patches on their heads, nor shave off the edges of their beards, nor make any cuts on their body. ⁶They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God. For they offer the LORD's food offerings, the bread of their God; therefore they shall be holy. Leviticus 21:5-6

The things listed in verse 5 were part of pagan practices when a family member died. Because the priests were to be especially devoted to God, they were forbidden from doing any of these things themselves. Their special status as priests required that they not defile themselves by copying pagan acts.

What do you think about this?

⁷They shall not marry a prostitute or a woman who has been defiled, neither shall they marry a woman divorced from her husband, for the priest is holy to his God. ⁸You shall sanctify him, for he offers the bread of your God. He shall be holy to you, for I, the LORD, who sanctify you, am holy. Leviticus 21:7-8

Here is another law applied specifically to priests. They were forbidden from marrying any woman who had been defiled or a prostitute or who had been divorced. Priests were required to marry only women who were considered to be sexually pure.

Write some of your thoughts here.

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²"Speak to Aaron and his sons so that they abstain from the holy things of the people of Israel, which they dedicate to me, so that they do not profane my holy name: I am the LORD. ³Say to them, 'If any one of all your offspring throughout your generations approaches the holy things that the people of Israel dedicate to the LORD, while he has an uncleanness, that person shall be cut off from my presence: I am the LORD.

Leviticus 22:1-3

Lev. 22 continues specifying laws that applied to priests. The priests had special responsibilities. They were the only ones who could bring the people's offerings before the Lord. Here in Lev. 22:3 they are expressly forbidden from bringing any offering before the Lord while they are unclean themselves.

God's holiness is to be guarded at all times. Anything that might call His integrity into question is to be avoided. If God is not holy then He is not what He claims to be - He would then be a fraud. God will not allow Himself to be compromised in any way. He jealously guards His holiness.

What do you think about this?

¹⁰ "A lay person shall not eat of a holy thing; no foreign guest of the priest or hired worker shall eat of a holy thing, ¹¹ but if a priest buys a slave as his property for money, the slave may eat of it, and anyone born in his house may eat of his food. ¹² If a priest's daughter marries a layman, she shall not eat of the contribution of the holy things. ¹³ But if a priest's daughter is widowed or divorced and has no child and returns to her father's house, as in her youth, she may eat of her father's food; yet no lay person shall eat of it.

Leviticus 22:10-13

Certain portions of the offerings that people made were allowed to be kept back and eaten by the priests and their families. These portions were also considered to be holy and special laws defined what they were and who could eat them.

It is interesting to see the details in Lev. 21 and 22 that define the limitations placed on the priests by God's law. In the Law, the more specialized the role that a person played the more restrictions applied to that person - sometimes to their advantage and sometimes at their cost.

What's your take on this?

¹The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²"Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, These are the appointed feasts of the LORD that you shall proclaim as holy convocations; they are my appointed feasts. ³"Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to the LORD in all your dwelling places.

Leviticus 23:1-3

In Lev. 23 God's word provides a list of Jewish feasts. You might think that the list would begin with the Passover – one of the most, if not the most, important feast in the Jewish calendar. But here in Lev. 23:3 we find that the first feast in the list is the weekly Sabbath. By giving it the leading position in this listing, God shows us how important it is to Him.

He wants us to be in community together. He is Himself a vital part of that community. I don't think that we fully understand how important this is to God.

To be a Christian is to live in community. Anyone who thinks that they can survive and live a healthy Christian life in isolation has totally deceived themselves. I know several people who truly do love God but they've been so hurt by the church that they find it extremely difficult to be involved in any church, anywhere. Whenever we are in relationship there are risks involved. Whenever you enter into deep relationship you make yourself vulnerable to others. Being a vital part of a church is risky business. At the same time, it holds many blessings and opportunities that you will not find apart from church. God knows that everything considered, we are better off to be a part of a church than to isolate ourselves from it. His desire is that we should join ourselves to His community.

Write some of your thoughts here.

In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight, is the LORD's Passover. ⁶ And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread.

Leviticus 23:5-6

The first feast listed after the Sabbath is the Passover. The Passover is the OT equivalent of Jesus' death in the NT. The Passover marked the time and place where God delivered the Hebrews out from their slavery to Egypt. In the NT parallel, Jesus' death marks the time and place where God delivered those who trust in Him out from their slavery to sin and death. The Passover is clearly one of the most important feasts on the Jewish calendar. The modern Christian parallel for the feast of the Passover is Easter.

The feast of Unleavened Bread is related to the Passover. Unleavened Bread is a reminder of the fact that the Hebrews had to leave Egypt on such short notice that they did not have time to allow the bread dough to rise before cooking it. When God says the time for action has come, don't look back and try to be sure you have everything you want to take with you. When He says it's time to go then it's time to go!

Are there things in your life that cause hesitation when God says to act?

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁰ "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest, ¹¹ and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, so that you may be accepted. On the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. ¹² And on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering to the LORD. ¹³ And the grain offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, a food offering to the LORD with a pleasing aroma, and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, a fourth of a hin. ¹⁴ And you shall eat neither bread nor grain parched or fresh until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

Leviticus 23:9-14

The feast of firstfruits celebrates the harvest of the yearly crops that God has blessed His people with. It is a time to remember that, while we may plant and water the crops, it is God who gives the increase. This works on a physical level and, in the NT, we see it applied on a spiritual level. The modern Christian equivalent is also Easter.

‘I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 1 Corinthians 3:6

God is pleased when we celebrate the success He has brought to us – when we thank Him for all He’s done for us!

"You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering. ¹⁶ You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the LORD. ¹⁷ You shall bring from your dwelling places two loaves of bread to be waved, made of two tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour, and they shall be baked with leaven, as firstfruits to the LORD. ¹⁸ And you shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, and one bull from the herd and two rams. They shall be a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. ¹⁹ And you shall offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of peace offerings. ²⁰ And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. ²¹ And you shall make a proclamation on the same day. You shall hold a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work. It is a statute forever in all your dwelling places throughout your generations.

Leviticus 23:15-21

The feast of weeks is celebrated seven weeks after the Passover. It occurs fifty days after the Passover. In the NT, its parallel is Pentecost – Pentecost derives from the Latin word for fifty. On Pentecost Sunday we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit to dwell within the hearts of believers.

In the OT, believers celebrated God's provision for their physical needs at the feast of weeks. In the NT we celebrate God's provision of Himself – to come and live within our hearts. At Pentecost we celebrate the fact that God has come to supply our spiritual needs – to live in us and to fulfill His desires for our lives.

²³ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁴ "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with blast of trumpets, a holy convocation. ²⁵ You shall not do any ordinary work, and you shall present a food offering to the LORD." ²⁶ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁷ "Now on the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be for you a time of holy convocation, and you shall afflict yourselves and present a food offering to the LORD. ²⁸ And you shall not do any work on that very day, for it is a Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God. ²⁹ For whoever is not afflicted on that very day shall be cut off from his people. ³⁰ And whoever does any work on that very day, that person I will destroy from among his people. ³¹ You shall not do any work. It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. ³² It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict yourselves. On the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your Sabbath." Leviticus 23:23-32

The feast of trumpets is celebrated in the fall. It is mentioned in Lev. 23:23-25. While scripture provides little more about this feast, it is usually connected with the idea of spiritual preparation.

The feast of the Day of Atonement is also celebrated in the fall. We saw many of the details of this feast earlier in Lev. 16. Remember that it is a time to consider the truly destructive nature of sin. It is a time to seek forgiveness for all sin – those known to us as well as those unknown.

Write some of your thoughts here.

³⁴ "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the Feast of Booths to the LORD. ³⁵ On the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work. ³⁶ For seven days you shall present food offerings to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall hold a holy convocation and present a food offering to the LORD. It is a solemn assembly; you shall not do any ordinary work. Leviticus 23:34-36

The feast of Booths was a time for the Jews to remember how their ancestors had journeyed for forty years in the desert. As they traveled in the desert, God provided for them in many miraculous ways.

¹ "The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers. ² And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. ³ And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. ⁴ Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. ⁵ Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you. Deuteronomy 8:1-5

Write some of your thoughts here.

¹The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²"Command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil from beaten olives for the lamp, that a light may be kept burning regularly. ³Outside the veil of the testimony, in the tent of meeting, Aaron shall arrange it from evening to morning before the LORD regularly. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. ⁴He shall arrange the lamps on the lampstand of pure gold before the LORD regularly. ⁵"You shall take fine flour and bake twelve loaves from it; two tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf. ⁶And you shall set them in two piles, six in a pile, on the table of pure gold before the LORD. ⁷And you shall put pure frankincense on each pile, that it may go with the bread as a memorial portion as a food offering to the LORD.

Leviticus 24:1-7

Immediately following the discussion of the feasts we find this text dealing with lamps and bread. While the feasts were celebrated only once each year, these two elements – oil for lamps and bread were to be continuously provided. The lamps were never to go out and the bread should continually be replaced.

Perhaps the placement of this text here is to emphasize the fact that while some things should be done infrequently (the feasts were celebrated once per year), there are some other things that need constant ongoing attention.

Perhaps God is reminding us to keep our guard up at all times – Satan is looking for any opportunity. We need to be on guard to avoid his attacks and to be available to God's leading in our lives.

What are your thoughts?

¹⁰ Now an Israelite woman's son, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the people of Israel. And the Israelite woman's son and a man of Israel fought in the camp, ¹¹ and the Israelite woman's son blasphemed the Name, and cursed. Then they brought him to Moses. His mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan. ¹² And they put him in custody, till the will of the LORD should be clear to them. ¹³ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁴ "Bring out of the camp the one who cursed, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him. ¹⁵ And speak to the people of Israel, saying, Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. ¹⁶ Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.

Leviticus 24:10-16

As the book of Leviticus is coming to its end we find this story dealing with a person who has blasphemed the Lord's name. The ten commandments are given in scripture in two places. They can be found in Exodus 20 and in Deuteronomy 5. The third commandment forbids taking the Lord's name in vain.

It may be the case that this story is placed here, near the very end of all these Laws, to remind us of the importance of the basis of the Law. The commandments sum up the intent of the Law. They are the foundation which describes God's holiness and, by contrast, our sinfulness.

The detailed law-giving that has been done in Leviticus in no way overrides the fundamental basics of the Law as given in the ten commandments. While we should glean all we can from the Law about who God is and how we ought to relate to Him, we always want to keep the main thing the main thing!

Begin by getting a good understanding of the basic principles and then it will be easier to grasp the finer details later on.

¹ The LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, ² "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you, the land shall keep a Sabbath to the LORD. ³ For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its fruits, ⁴ but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the LORD. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. ⁵ You shall not reap what grows of itself in your harvest, or gather the grapes of your undressed vine. It shall be a year of solemn rest for the land. ⁶ The Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you, for yourself and for your male and female slaves and for your hired worker and the sojourner who lives with you, ⁷ and for your cattle and for the wild animals that are in your land: all its yield shall be for food. **Leviticus 25:1-7**

In the Law, God provided that just as man needed a sabbath day each week, so also the land needed a sabbath year every seven years. The land was created to work in such a way that it required a time to rest and recover. I don't know if Israel ever celebrated a year of jubilee. We are far too needy to allow an entire year to go by without showing some profit from it.

What harm we do to ourselves when we ignore such commands!? What benefits do we cheat ourselves out of when we insist that we know how to care for ourselves and our world better than God does?

What do you think?

What struck you most in this week's readings?

What questions or comments did you come away with?

How does what you learned relate to your life?

How does it relate to the Church family?

What can you share with your church family from what you've received?

Notes from Home Church.

⁸ "You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you forty-nine years. ⁹ Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land. ¹⁰ And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan. ¹¹ That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of itself nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. ¹² For it is a jubilee. It shall be holy to you. You may eat the produce of the field. ¹³ "In this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his property. Leviticus 25:8-13

Not only was every seventh year to be a "sabbath year." Even further every seventh sabbath year was to be a year of jubilee. If an Israelite became desperately poor he could sell his land to gain enough money to survive. He could even sell himself as a slave or indentured servant to deal with his poverty.

But when it came to selling land or selling oneself as a slave, the Laws provided that there would be an end to all such transactions. God intended that the land given to each individual tribe should remain forever the property of that tribe. So every fifty years, on the year of jubilee, any property that had been sold during that fifty years would return to the people of the tribe that originally owned it. The same applied with people who had sold themselves. Every fifty years they were to be set free.

What do you think about the year of Jubilee to reset ownership?

"If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, ⁴ then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. ⁵ Your threshing shall last to the time of the grape harvest, and the grape harvest shall last to the time for sowing. And you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely. ⁶ I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. And I will remove harmful beasts from the land, and the sword shall not go through your land. ⁷ You shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. ⁸ Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. ⁹ I will turn to you and make you fruitful and multiply you and will confirm my covenant with you. ¹⁰ You shall eat old store long kept, and you shall clear out the old to make way for the new. ¹¹ I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. ¹² And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people. ¹³ I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves. And I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect.

Leviticus 26:3-13

Leviticus 26:3-13 gives us a long list of the blessings that will follow those who keep God's law. God's desire is to bless His people. We must remember that our God is a holy God. His desire is that we too should be holy even as He is holy. Being holy involves loving God and loving neighbor.

²⁵ And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" ²⁷ And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." ²⁸ And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

Luke 10:25-28

So, being a holy people and being a loving people are two sides of the same coin. To keep the Law is to love – even though it may not seem so at times. If we truly are believers then we will trust God. We demonstrate our trust by doing what His word tells us to do – even when it may seem to us to be unloving.

What is love? Is it what you think it should be or is it what God says it is in His word? Who has the final say?

¹⁴"But if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments, ¹⁵if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant, ¹⁶then I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. ¹⁷I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you. ¹⁸And if in spite of this you will not listen to me, then I will discipline you again sevenfold for your sins, ¹⁹and I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. ²⁰And your strength shall be spent in vain, for your land shall not yield its increase, and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit.

Leviticus 26:14-20

Following the list of blessings that would accompany obedience comes a list of curses that would accompany disobedience. In the ANE, there were certain common elements or components of covenant documents. One common element was the "blessings and curses."

Toward the end of covenant documents there was, typically, a list of the blessings that would accompany obedience and a list of curses that would accompany disobedience. By including these lists of blessings and curses, God is speaking to His people in a way that was familiar to them. They understood what covenant meant and what it involved.

⁴⁰ "But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, ⁴¹ so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies-- if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, ⁴² then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. Leviticus 26:40-42

As we come to the end of the list of curses, God includes these verses. In typical ANE covenant documents, the list of blessings was complete and totally encapsulated into one part of the document. The same is true for the list of curses. But here in Leviticus as we draw near the end of the list of curses, God promises that He will relent from bringing the covenant's curses on those who repent.

God does not wish to bring curses upon His people. His desire is to bless. He does indeed bless us by His response to our actions. When we continue in disobedience He brings difficulties our way, and His intention is to get our attention and to turn us away from our sin. If we will repent, then He will bless again. He promises to do that in His word! He always remains a faithful loving God!

Take time to express your gratitude for the Lord's faithfulness and patience!