

(Zechariah 14:16-19 refers this feast to the end of time.)

Turn your reflections into prayer.

Day 5. Justice and Obedience

Leviticus 25 - 26

Chapter 24 turns from the feast days to the regular duties of the weekly offering of the twelve loaves and the lamp which must be kept alight.

God's concern for justice has always been evident.

1. Read Leviticus 25, noting down what commandments are given in terms of seeing justice for the poor, the slave and the foreigner. What does this say about God?
2. How can his people today share this aspect of his character? Spend time thinking over this.
3. Read chapter 26 and then make a list of the blessings which obedience brings. What privileges can you think of which we can have in Christ for our obedience? How does such obedience apply to groups of people as well as individuals?

Note: The Year of Jubilee ideally occurred every 49 years.

4. Why does God punish disobedience? Again, how might such punishment be communal as well as individual? How can we be restored? You might like to compare the ideas here with Hebrews 12:1-13.

Thank God that he treats us as his children even if that means discipline. Pray that you will be willing to accept all that God gives you.

Weekend

1. Throughout our reading of parts of Leviticus we have seen that God is holy and will not tolerate sin. Do some background work on this subject, perhaps by reading *Holiness* by J. C. Ryle (Evangelical Press), or by looking up the entry on 'holiness' in a good Bible dictionary. What practical lessons can you learn from the book of Leviticus' concern for the whole of life, not merely the narrowly spiritual and religious?
2. Also on the theme of holiness you could study chapters 11-15. They deal with the ugliness of the results of sin. Leprosy is usually taken as an illustration of sin and how it should be dealt with. In chapter 15 you could examine the parallels which exist between it and secret sin. How does sin prevent acceptance with God in chapter 14? Hebrews 12:14-29 can provide a starting point for an answer. In thinking about sin, keep in mind Leviticus' emphasis on communal as well as personal evil. Are there features of your own society which perhaps merit God's judgment? What form might such judgment take today?



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Meeting With God Bible Reading Notes

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Week 48: Selections from Leviticus (A detailed study)

Leviticus is a rulebook which was sometimes termed the 'priest's law' by the Jews. God gave us the book because he intended that all the people should know and keep the law. To us, it might perhaps seem a strange book - dealing with unfamiliar and even repulsive topics such as leprosy, skin diseases, and blood-sacrifices. It is a fascinating book too, because it is the background to the greatest event of all time - the death of Jesus Christ. You will have discovered this when you studied the Letter to the Hebrews in week 33.

Unfortunately, we shall be able to read only a small part of this lengthy book in these detailed studies. But as you read the intervening chapters for yourself, bear in mind that the rites and regulations are not an end in themselves. They are a foretaste of the fullness of salvation that we enjoy in Christ. In some of the studies you will find suggested passages to read in Hebrews which will illustrate the relevance of Leviticus for a fuller understanding of Christ's sacrifice.

'Be holy...' (Leviticus 19:2) is a recurring phrase throughout the book, occurring even in the midst of dietary laws, showing how holiness applies to all of life, no matter how ordinary.

Day 1. The sacrifices

Leviticus 1 & 4

Chapters 1-7 describe the instructions that the people were given concerning five categories of sacrifice. These were the burnt, cereal, peace, purification and guilt sacrifices. (We shall be able to look at only two of them.) Similar rites were common throughout all the ancient nations. Yet there are certain unique features in the sacrifices for Israel. The tone was austere and reverent, contrasting with the orgies, sorcery and human sacrifices of the neighbouring nations. All the sacrifices are descriptive of the relationship between God and his people. They knew him as the one, true and holy God who dealt with them in justice and love.

1. Read chapter 1 about the burnt offering. This was the commonest sacrifice, carried out every day at least. What do you notice about the sacrificial victim? What role did the offerer have to play, and what about the priest's part? What was achieved by the sacrifice (verses 3-4,9)?
2. How aware are you that when your relationship with God is being restored, you are in fact pleasing him?

Sacrifice is the appointed means whereby peaceful co-existence between a holy God and sinful man becomes a possibility.

Gordon Wenham, The Book of Leviticus (Hodder).

3. Then turn to chapter 4 to read about the less frequently performed purification or sin offering. As you do so, note down the distinctions between the sacrifice of the priest, the Israelite community, and an individual.

The purification offering ... was designed to cope with a subsidiary problem created by human sin-pollution and defilement.

Gordon Wenham, The Book of Leviticus (Hodder).

4. How seriously do you consider the consequences of sin - both your own, and those of the larger community or nation?

Ask God not only to forgive you for any known sin, but also to deal with the consequences. As with Israel, he still longs to be fully reconciled with his purified people.

Day 2. Aaron's ordination

Leviticus 9

Chapter 8 describes how Moses carried out God's instructions (Exodus 29) by consecrating Aaron and his sons to the priesthood. They were to carry out the duties described in chapters 1-7 that we have already partly examined. Following their ordination, they offered their first sacrifices, which we shall study in this chapter.

1. Why do you think the priest needed to make an offering for himself? How did this compare with Christ's priesthood (Hebrews 7:23-28)?

Notes: The priests were appointed to lead the religious life of Israel. This privilege was reserved for Aaron (Moses' brother) and his descendants (Numbers 3:10). They were assisted in this task by the Levites who had a particular responsibility in caring for the tabernacle.

Verse 2. The perfect calf contrasts with the idolatrous golden one (Exodus 32).

Verse 22. The blessing may have been Numbers 6:24-26.

2. Note down everything that is said about the Lord in this chapter. How joyful are the times when you worship with others? When joy appears to be absent, why is this?
3. How did God show his pleasure in, and acceptance of, their worship?

Spend time thanking God that in Christ we have a perfect high priest, succeeding where all others had failed.

Day 3. The Day of Atonement

Leviticus 16

Chapters 11-15 cover the rules for daily living. With advances in medical science we

can now see that God was working through natural processes to deal with Israel's health problems (as promised in Exodus 23:25). We also can see now how amazingly revolutionary the hygiene rules were.

The Day of Atonement was an annual event for the nation, when the high priest was allowed into the inner sanctum, or Holy of Holies. This chapter sets out the proper rituals he must carry out to enter safely.

1. Note down from the reading the conditions necessary for entering into God's presence. Then, from Hebrews 9:11-28 and 10:1-25 contrast the advantages held by the believer, since Christ, in approaching God.
2. From what you have read in the books, how is guilt dealt with in both Leviticus and Hebrews?
3. How important is it for you, in your worship of God, to be reminded that you have a cleansed conscience? Is repentance, along with a seeking of forgiveness, a regular part of your personal devotions? Do you enter God's presence aware of his holiness and purity, as the priest had to?

Day 4. Feast days

Leviticus 23

Chapters 18-20 describe the various moral laws. Some of these might seem strange requirements to us, so it is well to bear in mind that a few of them are specifically directed against the evil practices of the neighbouring nations. But most reinforce for us what we already know of God's holiness. 'Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy' (19:2, NIV).

Chapters 21 and 22 deal with special rules for priests. They were subject to particular stringency because of their privileged position.

1. Read chapter 23. Make a list of the seven different feast days. Write a brief description of the nature and purpose of each of them where the text makes it clear. What are their similarities and differences?
2. Three of these feasts were of particular importance. Take each of them in turn and consider how the original purpose of them applies to the church today.
 - a. **The Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread** - it served to act as an annual reminder of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. How are you reminded of your deliverance? (Your studies on Exodus in week 35 may help here.) See 1 Corinthians 5:6-8.
 - b. **The Feast of Weeks or Harvests** was an annual reminder of God's provision of material gifts in the harvest. How do you consciously express your gratitude for God's goodness?
 - c. **The Feast of Tabernacles/Booths/Ingathering** - an annual reminder that Israel had once lived in booths as they wandered through the wilderness (see verse 42) but God had been faithful to his people. How do you respond to God's faithfulness in all sorts of areas of your life?