

Leviticus Introduction | Sunday February 16, 2025

As I began to study Leviticus, I quickly realized something, I had never heard Leviticus taught in church. I had read it in my own study and heard it referenced at different times but never studied. Yet the Word is clear on the value of the whole Word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV

(16) **All Scripture** is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

(17) **that the man of God may be complete, equipped** for every good work.

All scripture is God's Word breathed out by Him. We need it to help us grow, and mature, so that we can be complete, **well fit, and capable. On our own we do not have what we need to walk with God and walk in what He has for us.** We need the Holy Spirit to take the Word of God and teach, correct, and guide us. He uses His Word to equip us. If we are honest there are parts of scripture where the training and equipping is easier to see. Specifically New Testament letters that are addressed to churches. The connections are more straightforward. Then there are parts of the Old Testament that are so focused on Israel and its history that the equipping we are to receive is harder to see. It is ok to admit this and yet we are going to anchor to God's promises.

Romans 15:4 ESV

(4) For **whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction**, that through endurance and through **the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.**

In context Leviticus was written to instruct Israel. Yet this verse just promised that Leviticus was also written in part for our instruction that we can be encouraged and have hope. One thing that will help us see the book this way is to understand its original purpose. So that we do not get lost in the details of the law but see God's timeless heart. To see this purpose we need to understand where Leviticus fits in God's timeline of revealing Himself.

Genesis 1:26-29 ESV

(26) Then God said, "**Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.** And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

(27) So God created man in His own image, **in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.**

(28) **And God blessed them. And God said to them,** "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

(29) **And God said,** "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.

God took so much pleasure in creation. At each stage He showed His creativity and greatness. Galaxies were formed, landscapes with waterfalls appeared as water was separated from land, and the uniqueness of each animal is astonishing. Yet the pinnacle of it all is when God chose to make a creature in His own image. Then **to this unique creation God started to communicate and reveal Himself.** God wanted to have a fellowship and relationship with humanity that is unique to

anything else He created. Here in the garden before sin, God was revealing reveal His character and heart to humanity as He walked in a fellowship with us. Then we sinned and broke that fellowship. We had disobeyed God, God's holiness demanded that sin had to be punished. Humanity was in need of redemption. Then God did something startling.

Genesis 3:21 ESV

(21) And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife **garments of skins** and clothed them.

This was the first animal sacrifice. Instead of Adam and Eve dying for their sin **an animal was killed in their place**. God was just beginning the process of revealing His plan. **Sin would be dealt with through a substitute**. The sacrifice of this animal did not fully deal with sin but it pointed forward to what would. So, as humanity moved out from the garden, we keep seeing animal sacrifice practiced.

Genesis 4:2-5 ESV

(2) And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground.

(3) In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD **an offering of the fruit of the ground,**

(4) and Abel also brought of **the firstborn of his flock** and of their fat portions. And **the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,**

(5) but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.

At this point in Genesis humanity was not given a freedom to eat animals yet. This would happen after the flood in Gen 9:3-4. Humanly speaking, Cain had the most important job of providing food for the family. Cain's offering would have been more costly and valuable. The younger brother Abel kept the animals, who were only used for clothing and for sacrifice. **Cain brought his best, and most valuable and yet it was not enough. God regarded Abel's offering because it was a blood sacrifice.** The details of sacrifices have not been revealed yet, but here again their importance is shown.

Genesis 8:20-21 ESV

(20) Then **Noah built an altar** to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and **offered burnt offerings on the altar.**

(21) And when **the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma**, the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.

As Noah and His family left the Ark He built an altar and offered sacrifices. This was a pleasing aroma to God. Yet there are so many details that are left out. What should an altar be like, how and why do you offer a sacrifice? Moving through history we see many sacrifices offered by Abram (Gen 12:8), Jacob (Gen 31:54), and even Job, who lived during this time, made sacrifices (Job 1:5). **They were regularly practiced and yet God's instructions for them have not been revealed to us yet.**

This started to change as God called His people Isreal out of Egypt. Jacob who is also named Israel moved His family to Egypt, there were **75** people in total (Acts 7:14). Then when the nation left Egypt at the exodus there were **600,000** men with women and children added to that number (Exd

12:27). **A family had become a nation.** This nation needed to know how to worship their God and be in relationship with Him. As God lead Israel out of Egypt He started this process of revealing Himself and His will.

Exodus 19:3-6; 9-12 ESV

(3) while Moses went up to God. The LORD **called to him out of the mountain**, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel:

(4) ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself.

(5) Now therefore, **if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant**, you shall be My treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine;

(6) and **you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

(9) And the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, **that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever.**” When Moses told the words of the people to the LORD,

(10) the LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and **let them wash their garments**

(11) and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

(12) **And you shall set limits for the people** all around, saying, ‘Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. **Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death.**

God called out to Moses from the mountain. **Israel are His redeemed people that He has purchased out of Egypt**, now He reveals how close of a relationship He desires to have with them. He wants them to be a kingdom of priest, a holy nation, set apart from all others. He is going to give the 10 commandments directly to the people. God must instruct them how to prepare for this moment. They cannot touch the mountain or they will die. **They are God’s people but do not know how to act as His people.** They do not know how to be a nation in the presence of a holy God.

Exodus 25:8-9 ESV

(8) And let them make Me a sanctuary, **that I may dwell in their midst.**

(9) **Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle**, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.

God desired to dwell with them so He gave them the instructions to build the tabernacle. This would be the place where God’s presence would dwell with His people. **It had to be built to exact specifications because it mirrored a true tabernacle in heaven (Heb 8:5; 9:24).** God’s purpose for Israel did not stop once He redeemed them from Egypt. He desired to be with them and the tabernacle is how He could.

Exodus 29:43-46 ESV

(43) **There I will meet with the people of Israel**, and it shall be sanctified by My glory.

(44) I will consecrate **the tent of meeting and the altar.** Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve Me as priests.

(45) **I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God.**

(46) And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt **that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.**

God shares His purpose; He brought them out so that He could dwell with them. **God has been seeking to restore the relationship that was lost all the way back in the garden.** It is from the tabernacle that He will be able to guide them and instruct them. The building of the tabernacle is how the book of Exodus finishes.

Exodus 40:1-2; 16-17; 34-35 ESV

(1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

(2) “On the first day of the first month **you shall erect the tabernacle** of the tent of meeting.

(16) This Moses did; **according to all that the LORD commanded him, so he did.**

(17) In the first month in **the second year**, on the first day of the month, **the tabernacle was erected.**

(34) Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and **the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.**

(35) And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and **the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.**

Moses had the tabernacle built just as God asked Him to. God’s presence then descended onto the tabernacle and His glory filled it. **Israel now had the Holy God who created the entire universe dwelling in their presence.** One year from the first Passover and their exodus out of Egypt. This is the context of the beginning of Leviticus.

Leviticus 1:1-2 ESV

(1) The 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.

The first word of the book serves as its title in the Hebrew Bible **“and He called.”** Our English name emphasizes the instructions given to the Levites. This was a momentous event. God had a way to dwell with man again, in a temporary tent. No longer is God calling out from the mountain to the people or Moses, but He is calling from the tabernacle. He wants to instruct them. The whole book will take place **in about a month**, before the census takes place in Numbers.

Leviticus explains how God’s people should live in His holy presence. The Word Holy is used over **90 times**, and words about cleansing are used over **70 times**. God will describe what their worship through sacrifices should look like. How they should behave as a people in the presence of God. He will explain the blessings for being in His presence and the curses for walking away from it. **This is not a book focused on how to become God’s people.** They were redeemed from Egypt through the blood of the Passover lamb.

Exodus 12:13 ESV

(13) The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. **And when I see the blood, I will pass over you**, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

Isaiah 51:10 ESV

(10) Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea **a way for the redeemed to pass over?**

God did not kill the firstborn child when He saw the blood of the Passover lamb. God once again provided a sacrifice to protect His people. Notice what Isaiah calls Isreal as they left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, the redeemed. Isreal is God's people, and He is dwelling with them. Now they need to know how to live. **Leviticus is a book that is focused on sanctification.** How to live in the presence of a holy God. It is a book of how to respond in worship to what God had done for them. The gospel of John focused on presenting Jesus so that we could believe in Him and receive eternal life. **Leviticus will focus on how God's people should reflect Him and then what to do when we do not.**

Leviticus will go into detail of how sacrifices should be performed, something that had not been revealed yet. As we understand these sacrifices, we will see clearly how Jesus is the perfect sacrifice. As Leviticus describes the Priest and their role we will see the requirements on Jesus as the perfect High priest.

Even the various rules and regulations have application for us. **God was revealing to His people how they should approach Him.** What practical holiness looked like even in the mundane things of life. My hope is that we would not get lost in the cultural application, but see God's timeless holiness showing through. This Holy God that is calling out to Moses is the same Holy God you and I worship today.

Malachi 3:6 ESV

(6) **"For I the LORD do not change;** therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.

I am so thankful for this truth! God does not change; His character is the same throughout generations. When He makes a promise, He will not change His mind somewhere down the line. God has interacted with humanity in real time. His fellowship and relationship with Adam were different than they were with Moses. To Adam God called out in the garden. To Moses God called out of a burning bush, then a mountain and know at the start of Leviticus from the Tabernacle. Yet, He is the same unchanging God. How God practical interacted with humanity changed over time but He never does.

This same principal applies to the practical holiness presented in Leviticus. **God is still holy and we as His people are still called to reflect that Holiness,** just like Isreal was called to.

1 Peter 1:14-19 ESV

(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."**

(17) And if you call on Him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile,

(18) knowing that **you were ransomed** from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,

(19) **but with the precious blood of Christ,** like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

This call to holiness is not about how to be saved or earn our own righteousness. **We are called to let the character of God who saved us reflect in us.** We have been ransomed, by the precious blood of Jesus. He is the perfect sacrifice and what secured our salvation. This quote Peter uses

“You shall be holy, for I am holy.” Is found at least **5 times throughout Leviticus**. We have been called to let God’s character show in us as His people. My prayer is that through studying Leviticus we will have a better understanding of the Holy God who saved us and we will let His Holiness show in our lives.
