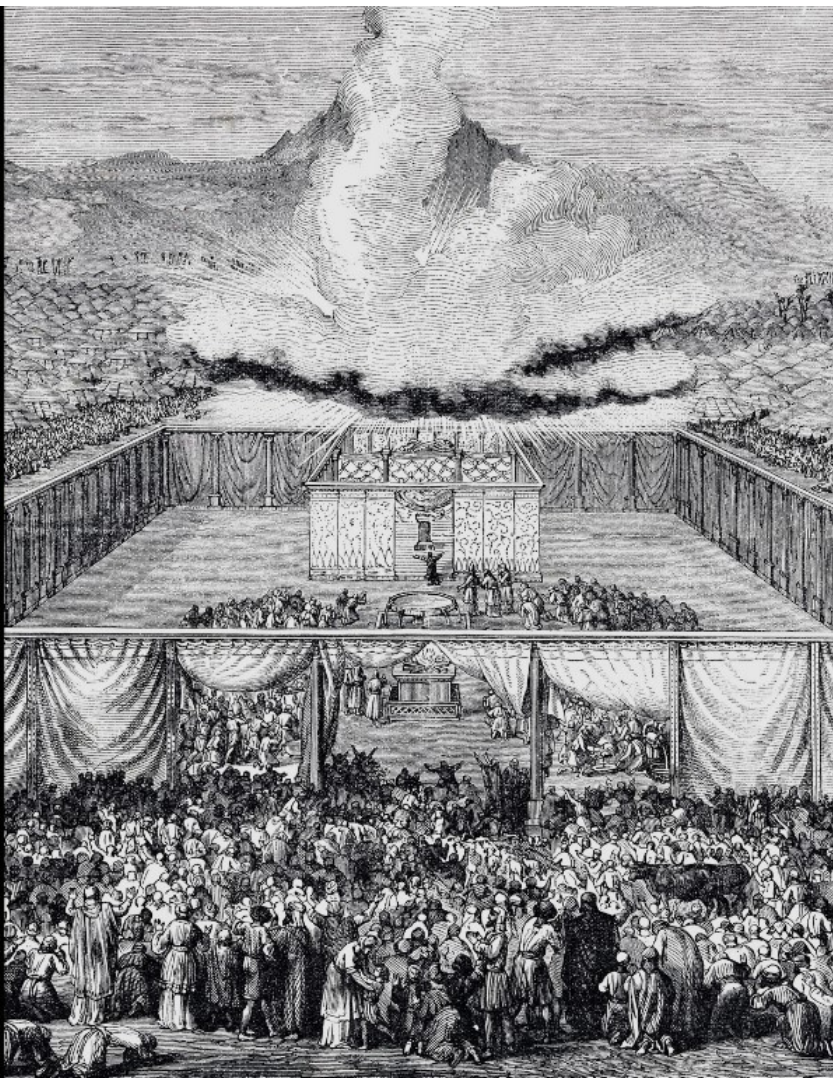


LIVING WITH A HOLY GOD

LEVITICUS



Title	Passage	Sermon	Study
1. Devoted to the Lord	Study 1: Lev 1-3	Apr 23	Apr 24-29
2. Sin is serious	Study 2: Lev 4-5	Apr 30	May 1-6
3. Priests who need a Priest	Study 3: Lev 8-10	May 7	May 8-13
4. Clean and unclean	Study 4: Lev 11-15	May 14	May 15-20
5. The Day of Atonement	Study 5: Lev 16	May 21	May 22-27
6. Be holy because God is Holy	Study 6: Lev 18-20	May 28	May 29- 3
7. A better deal	Study 7: Lev 26-27	Jun 4	Jun 5-10

Some helpful background to Leviticus

I think if we are all honest Leviticus is a book that most of us have had limited experience with. As I start to read it, I get lost in all the different details. I find it hard to follow. It's interesting that we avoid the book, where as it's the first book Jewish children would learn.

The name Leviticus comes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It is called Leviticus because it deals with a lot of issues that relate to priests who were from the tribe of Levi or Levites. Although it is a mistake to think the book is a handbook for priests. It's alternative name is the third book of Moses.

Through the book there are 33 statements that God makes to Moses who is to pass them on to the people. The phrase "The Lord said to Moses..." introduces each new section. But why does God get Moses to write all of this down? That is where it's helpful to understand what happened before Leviticus, infact in Hebrew (the original language of the OT) Leviticus starts with an 'and' because this is a continuation of what has already taken place.

In Exodus we find out that God rescues his people from slavery and he wants them to be his special people. The Lord says numerous times in Exodus that he wants to live with his people in this special tent called the Tabernacle. This special tent will be in the middle of God's people and God's presence will dwell in the tent, especially in a part of the tent called the Holy of Holies.

God wanting to live with people, is always what God has wanted. Adam and Eve did live with God in the Garden but they got kicked out for wanting to be God. However, ever since that event God has been seeking to restore the relationship between him and humanity. But this poses a big question—How is a holy God going to live among an unholy people? Leviticus tells us how this will work, there are sacrifices, there are priests, there are food laws and laws about sex and all sorts of things, it appears that even mullets are forbidden (you will have to find the verse). There is a big warning about how to live at the end of the book. The people are presented with two options.

But how is this relationship between a holy God and his unholy people going to work? Well the centre of the book and the centre of the Pentateuch gives us the answer. It's the Day of Atonement. It's only with lots of blood that this relationship will work. In fact on the Day of Atonement blood is smeared or sprinkled a total of 49 times or 7 times 7, making it clear that the atonement is comprehensive.

We will see that as we work through the book of Leviticus, that people are to be holy just like God is Holy. They are to be different to the world around them as they live in the presence of their holy God.

The book can be broken up numerous ways but a general overview of the book looks like this.

Chapters 1-7—the five main offerings to God—rules for sacrifices

Chapters 8-10—The priesthood gets started... badly!

Chapters 11-15—Keeping clean

Chapters 16-17—Atonement Day and the tabernacle

Chapter 18—Life/sex-being different to the other nations

Chapter 19-20 - Be Holy like God

Chapters 21-23—Holy priests and holy feasts

Chapter 24—God means business—an example of punishment

Chapter 25—Jubilee-slaves set free

Chapter 26—How long in the land?

Chapter 27—Devotion to the Lord

We will not be looking at every chapter or idea in the book of Leviticus. We will be looking at 7 sections that hopefully will give us a sense of the whole. The sections we are looking at in church and bible study are generally outlined on the front of the bible study booklet.

As we study the book of Leviticus, we need to remember where we are in salvation history. The book of Leviticus is written before the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus says in Luke 24 that all of the Old Testament scriptures point to him. Below are three things we should try to do as we wrestle with the scriptures, but particularly the OT scriptures.

- 1. What is this section saying to the original audience?*
- 2. How does this section naturally point to Jesus?*
- 3. How does this section apply to us as followers of Jesus?*

As we study this book it's my hope that we are struck by many things, but here are four big things:

- 1) I hope that we are struck by how great the God of the Bible is. He is Holy but he wants to be in relationship with us;
- 2) I hope that we are struck by just how serious sin is, it separates us from God. Sin must be punished;
- 3) I hope that we see how amazing Jesus is and all that he has done to ensure us that we can confidently draw near to God; and
- 4) Lastly I hope that this book helps us to think about how we might be holy—how we might be fully devoted to the Lord.

Praying for a fruitful time in a often overlooked book. - your brother in Christ, Simon

Kick off: Would you describe your life as being devoted to the Lord? Why/why not?

Read Leviticus 1:1-2

1. The Lord is speaking to Moses from the tent of meeting. What is the tent of meeting? And why is the Lord in it?
2. What does the Lord say to Moses?
3. Do these offerings sound like something the people have to do or something they might like to do?

Read Leviticus 1:3-9

4. Why do you think the animal is to be without defect?
5. Why is the person who is offering the sacrifice to put their hands on the animal's head, to kill the animal and to skin and cut up the animal?
6. What do the priest do with the animal?

Read Leviticus 1:10-17

7. In these verses the Burnt offering is also being described but it's how you do the offering with less expensive animals. Why do you think God gives the people different options when it comes to the cost of the offering?

Read Leviticus 2

8. What is this sacrifice?
9. What are the people to do?
10. What are the priests to do?

11. Why do you think the priests get to keep some of this sacrifice?

Read Leviticus 3

12. What is this sacrifice?

13. What are the people to do?

14. What are the priests to do?

15. Do the people get to keep part of this offering? Explain your answer.

It appears that the people do not have to complete these offerings. They are sacrifices they choose to do. You will see that the next offerings we look at are not optional. The reason that the people are to lay their hands on the animal is to identify with it, this animal represents them. The Burnt offering mentioned in chapter 1 is an expensive sacrifice. The people do not get any of the sacrifice, which begs the question why would they do this if they don't get to have any of it? The answer is they have just been rescued out of slavery in Egypt, the one true God is going to live in their presence in a tent, it seems quite reasonable that the people could want to make a costly sacrifice to the Lord.

Read Romans 12:1-2

16. How has God shown us his mercy?

17. What are we called to do in response?

18. What will it look like for you to be a living sacrifice, how will you die to yourself to love and serve God and his people?

What can you pray for in response to the study?

What can you pray for each other?

Kickoff: Do you think there are any sins that are beyond forgiveness?

Read Leviticus 4:1-35

1. What type of sin is this section dealing with?
2. What is the Priest to do if he sins unintentionally? (verses 3-12)
3. What are the whole Israelite community to do if they sin unintentionally? (13-21)
4. What is a leader to do if they sin unintentionally? (22-26)
5. What is a member of the Israelite community to do if they sin unintentionally? (27-35)

Read Leviticus 5:1-13

6. What type of sins are we dealing with in this section?
7. What are the people do if they sin in any of these ways?

Read Leviticus 5:14-6:7

8. What type of sin are we dealing with this section?
9. What type of sin is missed in this section?

It seems like in all of the offerings that are presented so far there is no offering available for big intentional sins. Maybe the Day of Atonement covers this (see Leviticus 16:30). However after chapter 16 we have rules about how to live for God and it appears that if you sin in a big intentional way you are to be put to death, there is no offering mentioned to fix up the problem (see Leviticus 20). We live in a different time, but hopefully this section is helping us to see how serious sin is. It is not something we should just brush over.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

10. Who does Paul say will not inherit the Kingdom of God?

11. It's worth noting that some of the sins mentioned in these verses are sins that God's OT people were to be put to death for—there was no sacrifice to pay for their sin. What surprising thing does Paul say about the Corinthians and these sins in the first half of verse 11?

12. Although this is how the Corinthians used to live what has happened to them? And what does this tell us about the death of Christ?

13. In Jesus' death and resurrection we have complete payment for our sin and that is wonderful life changing news. But hopefully this section of Leviticus has helped us to see just how serious sin is. Recently in a talk I heard the preacher say 'what pet sins do you have?' He was saying what sins do you keep returning to? What sins do you want to keep in your life to help you cope? What are your pet sins?

14. It's hard isn't it. We all have sins we run to for comfort....How can we help each other to treat sin seriously?

15. How can we remind each other of the amazing news of Jesus' death?

What can you pray for in response to the study?

What can you pray for each other?

Kickoff: Do you think we need a Priest? Explain your answer.

When the Lord rescued the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt he rescued them to be his special people. They will be his special people if they can keep his commands. They will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. They are to be different to the nations around them and to point those nations to the one true God. But they are going to need some people to offer sacrifices on their behalf, so they can live in the presence of a holy God. The next three chapters are all about this.

Read Leviticus Chapter 8

1. What is happening in this chapter?
2. Why do the newly appointed priests need all of this? (see verse 34-35)
3. Do Aaron and his sons follow everything that was commanded?

Read Leviticus Chapter 9

4. In verses 1-4 what does Moses command Aaron and his sons to do? Why are they to do this?
5. In verse 7 what is Aaron to do for himself and the people?
6. In the rest of the chapter Aaron goes about offering the necessary sacrifices. In verses 23-24 what are the signs that Aaron has done everything as has been required?

Read Leviticus Chapter 10

7. At the end of Chapter 9 everything seems to be happening as it should. Aaron has offered the necessary sacrifices, Aaron and Moses get to go into the tent of meeting and fire comes out burning up the sacrifices testifying to the legitimacy Aaron has as a priest on behalf of the people. It's all functioning rather well. But what happens in verse 1 of chapter 10?

8. What is the consequence of Nadab and Abihu's actions and why does this happen?

9. In verse 6 what are Aaron and his sons instructed not to do?

10. In the rest of chapter 10 Moses gives Aaron further instructions. However in verses 16-20 another problem is raised. What is the problem and how is it resolved?

We live in a different time. But we too like the Israelites are called to be priests. We are called to point the world to the one true God. But we also need a priest operating on behalf of us. We need a mediator between us and God. The priests in the OT were to mediate on behalf of the people but they could never do the job perfectly.

Read Hebrew 7:23-27

11. Why is Jesus the perfect high priest?

Read Hebrews 4:14-16

12. Why can we approach God confidently in prayer?

13. What will we receive when we approach God?

14. The Israelites were Priests who need a Priest to continue to live in God's presence. We are different but the same. How do you think you are going at being a Priest to the world?

What can you pray for in response to the study?

What can you pray for each other?

Kick off: Would you describe yourself as a clean person? Explain your answer.

Read Leviticus 11:1-25

1. How many times do the words 'unclean' and 'detestable' appear in these verses?
2. What are the rules for deciding what's clean and what's not?
3. What is the result of eating or even touching an unclean animal?

Browse through chapters 12 and 13

4. It's not just animals that are clean or unclean. It's people too! List a few of the reasons people can be declared clean or unclean?
5. Even clothes, fabrics and the walls of your house could be divided into "clean" and "unclean" (e.g. 13:47-52). What's the usual way people or things move from being 'unclean' to 'clean' (see Leviticus 14:19-21 and 49-52)?
6. Everything in life is defined as either clean (holy) or unclean. The most important rule was that the 'unclean' can never come into contact with the Holy. In everyday life, almost every Israelite would have experienced what it was like to be 'unclean'. Imagine it was you. How would you feel?
7. According to Leviticus 16:30 and 17:11 what was required to make the 'unclean' 'clean'?

Read Mark 1:40-45

8. What does the man with Leprosy ask Jesus to do?

9. How does Jesus respond?

10. Note that in Leviticus touching someone who was 'unclean' made you 'unclean'. What happens when Jesus touches the leper, and what does it demonstrate?

11. Why do you think Jesus still made the man go see the priest and offer the appropriate sacrifices?

12. Think back to question 7. Why is it that Jesus is able make unclean things clean (how does he finally satisfy the regulations of Leviticus)?

13. The only way to shift all the stains in our life is to trust in Jesus. If this is true, list all the consequences for our lives...

What can you pray for in response to the study?

What can you pray for each other?

Kickoff: Why can unholy people live in the midst of a Holy God?

Read Leviticus 16:1-10

1. In verse 1 what incident are we reminded of? And what warning is given to Aaron?
2. Usually Aaron the High Priest wore very ornate robes. Why do you think he wore plain linen clothes on the day of atonement?
3. Before Aaron can appear before God on behalf of the people, what does he have to do for himself and why?
4. Who or what was it that atoned for the sins of people?

Read Leviticus 16:11-34

5. In verses 2, 12 and 15 we are reminded that the atonement cover - the lid of the 'ark of the covenant'- is behind the curtain in the Most Holy Place. What's there and why?
6. How does the ritual with the live goat in verses 21-22 show the effect of the atonement?
7. According to the summary in verses 29-34, how long will the people of Israel have to keep doing this? How often will they need to do it? What will the effect be?

Read Hebrews 9:24-29

8. According to these verses, why don't we need to observe a Day of Atonement?

Read Hebrews 10:19-24

9. Why can we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place?

10. Since we can come into God's presence (essentially by prayer), from verse 22 what should we do?

11. Do you feel like you are drawing near to God in prayer? Explain your answer.

12. How are you going at holding unswervingly to your hope?

13. How are you going at being regular at church and encouraging others to keep living for Jesus?

What can you pray for in response to the study?

What can you pray for each other?

Kickoff: How does the Old Testament apply to New Testament believers?

Read Leviticus 18

1. What does the Lord remind his people of in verses 1-5?
2. Why do you think the Lord lists all the different ways his people are not to sin sexually?
3. What does the Lord remind the people of in verses 24-30?

Read Leviticus 19

4. What does the Lord remind the people of in verse 2?
5. There is a large list of commands in this chapter, what commands stick out to you?
6. What does the Lord remind his people of in verse 36?

Read Leviticus 20

7. Chapter 20 seems to be dealing with some sins that have already been listed. The punishments are being made clear here. What are some of the punishments listed and how do they make you feel?
8. From verses 22-26 why does the Lord want the people to follow all of his decrees and laws? There are multiple answers.

God's OT people were to be holy just like God is holy. We also are called to be holy just like God is holy (See 1 Peter 3:15-16). But are we to go around stoning people to death for not living God's way? What we really need to consider here is how do New Testament believers apply the Old Testament. It's a very tricky question and people have lots of different views. There are two important passages for us to consider below.

Read Matthew 5:17-20

9. When Jesus says he didn't come to abolish the Law and the Prophets but to fulfil them what do you think he means?

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

10. From verses 19 and 22 what do you think this passage is about?

11. In verse 20 Paul says he becomes like the Jews, who follow the law, to win them for Jesus. But he also says he is not under law. What does Paul mean by saying that he is not under the law anymore?

12. In verse 21 Paul says he becomes like those not having the law to win them to Jesus, But he can't just do whatever these people are doing because he is under Christ's law. What is Christ's law?

13. It seems that to be under Christ's law means that we have to follow anything that Jesus or the apostles said. We are called to follow the commands listed in the New Testament. That also means we are to see the Old Testament as Wisdom for life but not commands. So what are we to do with Leviticus 18-20 as New Testament Believers?

What can you pray for in response to the study?

What can you pray for each other?

Kick off: What are some key differences between God's OT people and us?

Read Leviticus 26:1-13

1. In verse 1 the people are commanded not to set up idols and worship them. Why is this made clear?
2. If the people follow the Lord's decrees and carefully obey his commands what will be the result?
3. What does the beautiful picture in these verses remind you of?

Read Leviticus 26:14-46

4. What will happen to the people if they don't listen to the Lord and carry out all his commands?
5. Does this passage offer any hope?
6. We obviously live a long time after Leviticus was written. Did the people follow the commands or not?
7. Why do you think the people couldn't follow the commands?

In the book of Jeremiah, as God's people are being carried off to Exile by the Babylonians for not living God's way, he tell them that after a period of 70 years, he will bring them back. He also talks about a new deal or new contract with the people. One where the people will have new hearts and their sins will be remembered no more. It's a new deal where they will be able to live God's way.

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34

8. How will the new covenant or contract be different to the old contract?

9. When God says that he will put his law in their minds and write it on their hearts what do you think he is referring to?

10. Why can we ultimately have the Holy Spirit?

Read Galatians 5:16-17

11. As people who trust in Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit living inside of us. Do you think that means we will now be perfect? Explain your answer

12. How can we help each other to walk by the Spirit?

13. Are there any areas of your life where you are particularly strugglingly to live in step with the Spirit? Share with the group if you feel comfortable.

What can you pray for in response to the study?

What can you pray for each other?