

Laws and Feasts – Leviticus Chapters 17-25

God is holy, and His people must be holy.

FURTHER Revised Class Outline

1. Offerings (*Ch. 1-7*)
2. Holiness and Cleanness (*Ch. 8-15*)
3. The Day of Atonement (*Ch. 16*)
4. **Laws and Feasts (*Ch. 17-23*)**
5. Promise and Punishment (*Ch. 24-27*)

Opening Discussion

- When you were growing up, were there any rules that you thought were unreasonable at the time but now agree with? Are there any rules that you changed when you had kids of your own?

Review

Israel is following God through the wilderness, where God is progressively revealing himself to them, more and more through each new revelation from Moses. God wants Israel to be ‘holy’, set apart from the rest of creation, that they might be a blessing to the rest of creation which does not know God. If Israel is to remain God’s people, then they must remain holy, but they must also pass this revelation on to generations which have not seen God’s miracles. God knows how difficult this will be, so he establishes a system of offerings to foster, maintain, and repair the relationship between this mortal nation and the eternal and awesome God. He teaches them laws to maintain their purity, and he gives them a day each year on which to have their sins forgiven. But God has even more planned to ensure that this mission is accomplished... a second set of rules to ensure that they stay truly “set apart” and a series of celebrations designed to teach every new generation the power and goodness of God.

Lesson

Leviticus 17:8-12 – The place of Sacrifice, Lifeblood

- Because of these verses, the location of sacrifice becomes very important in Israel. Much of the debate between Jews and Samaritans centers on the location of worship. Why do you think God wanted worship to only happen in one place?

Leviticus 18:1-5 – Israel and the Nations

- What is supposed to differentiate Israel most clearly from the rest of the nations?

Leviticus 18:24-30 – Sexual Sins

- What is made unclean by these actions? What is Leviticus’ solution?

Leviticus 20:10-16 – Punishment for Adultery

- What's the punishment for adultery?

John 8:1-11 – The woman caught in adultery

- How do we square this story with Leviticus 20? Is Jesus disobeying the law?

Group Discussion 2

- What's your favorite holiday? What does that holiday mean? How does the way that you celebrate that holiday reflect its meaning?

Feast of Tabernacles or Booths — Leviticus 23:33-43

In Jesus' day, the 7th day was the "Great Day", with two spectacular ceremonies:

Torch ceremony on the temple mount – John 8:12

You see, at the end of the first day of the Feast, the Temple was gloriously illuminated. According to the Mishnah (part of the oral tradition of the rabbis), gigantic candelabras stood within the court of the women. Each of the four golden candelabras is said to have been 50 cubits high. A cubit is somewhere between 18 and 22 inches, so we're talking about candelabras that were about 75 feet tall! Each candelabra had four branches, and at the top of every branch there was a large bowl. Four young men bearing 10 gallon pitchers of oil would climb ladders to fill the four golden bowls on each candelabra. And then the oil in those bowls was ignited. Picture sixteen beautiful blazes leaping toward the sky from these golden lamps. Remember that the Temple was on a hill above the rest of the city, so the glorious glow was a sight for the entire city to see. In addition to the light, Levitical musicians played their harps, lyres, cymbals and trumpets to make joyful music to the Lord. What a glorious celebration! The light was to remind the people of how God's Shekinah glory had once filled His Temple.¹

Then Jesus says, "I am the light of the world."

Water drawing ceremony John 7:37-38

Imagine a whole parade of worshipers and flutists led by the priest to the pool of Siloam (where Jesus told the blind man to bathe his eyes after He put clay over them). The priest has two golden pitchers. One is for wine. He fills the other with water from the pool. As the flutes continue to play, a choir of Israelites chants Psalm 118. The whole procession heads back to the Temple through the Water Gate. A trumpet sounds as the priest enters the Temple area. He approaches the altar where two silver basins are waiting. He pours wine into one of the basins as a drink offering to the Lord and water from the pool of Siloam into the other.

Then Jesus says, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink"

¹ David Brickner. "Finding Jesus in the Feast of Tabernacles" <https://www1.cbn.com/biblestudy/finding-jesus-in-the-feast-of-tabernacles>

Daily Devotions Schedule

Day 1 – Life is in the blood.

Read **Leviticus 17:10-16**

“Life is in the blood.” What NT connections can you imagine with this?

(See Matthew 26:28, Acts 20:28, Colossians 1:20, Ephesians 1:7, Hebrews 9:13-14 for ideas)

Day 2 –You shall be holy...

Read **Leviticus 19:1-2**, & then skim **the rest of the chapter** with the following questions in mind:

“You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy,” is a refrain throughout the OT. Skim the chapter. What kind of commands characterize the holiness God requires here?

Are these the same commands that you expected? How do these laws differ from the clean-ness laws?

Day 3 – Judgment for Sin

Skim **Leviticus 20:1-21**, & then read **Leviticus 20:22-26**

Almost all of the transgressions in this chapter are to be punished with death. Does the punishment seem to fit the crime?

Except perhaps in some Muslim societies, there isn't a crime in [this chapter] that would merit capital punishment in most nations today, including murder. But the biblical view of law is different from the modern view. God gave His law to restrain sin, not to reform sinners; the penalties He imposed were for the purpose of upholding His law, not improving the offenders. However, this doesn't mean that Christians today should lobby for the death penalty for all these offenses. While we want to do what we can to see just laws enforced justly, our main task is winning people to Christ and our main weapons are the Word of God and prayer (Acts 6:4)...

Molech (vv. 1–5) was the god of the Ammonites. His metal image was heated red hot and little children were placed in his arms and burned to death (see 2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chron. 33:6; Jer. 32:35).²

² Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, “Be” Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 87–88.

Day 4 – Aaron’s Sons and Blemishes

Read **Leviticus 21:16-24**

- Note that this section is specifically dealing with priests, and in it we are told that priests with blemishes may not make offerings or enter the Holy Place. Does this seem fair?

Day 5 – The Passover

Read **Leviticus 23:4-8**

Read **Leviticus 23:37-38**

How does the Passover relate to Christ?

For a fuller explanation of the feast’s significance to both the Old and New Testament, read Exodus 12-13 and the two texts below.

The Passover was of supreme theological significance for the Israelites, since it marked one of the most momentous acts of divine intervention in their history, the beginning of their deliverance from bondage in Egypt when, in the final plague, God destroyed the firstborn of the Egyptians but spared those Israelites whose homes had blood smeared on the doorposts (Ex 12:11–30)... By NT times the festivals of Passover and unleavened bread were well-attended celebrations and were known as the “days of unleavened bread” (Lk 22:1; Acts 12:3). The theme of Israel’s deliverance from the power of Egypt by divine intervention assured the Israelites that God was always ready to act on behalf of a faithful and obedient covenant people. It also reminded them that they had once been slaves (Dt 16:12). In Israelite life the early Passover and unleavened bread observances were comparatively simple in character, but during the monarchy more elaborate passover rituals came into use (cf. 2 Kgs 23:21–23; 2 Chr 35:1–19).³

... it is clear that the Eucharist was instituted at Passover time, and Christian writers from St Paul (1 Cor. 5:7) onwards have stressed that the death of Christ was the fulfilment of the sacrifice foreshadowed by the Passover. It is probable also that the earliest celebrations of the Christian Easter (the Paschal Vigil Service) developed from the Jewish Passover rite, while the account of the Exodus and the institution of the Passover have from a very early date provided one of the readings in the Paschal liturgy of the W. Church.⁴

³ R.K. Harrison, “Feasts and Festivals of Israel,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 786.

⁴ F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1237.