

Words of Life: Holiness
Leviticus

God dwelling among His people (Leviticus 1-9, 23-25)

- The first verse of the book tells us that God spoke to Moses *from the tent*.

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. (Exodus 40:34-35)

- God was among them, which was great.
- But they were sinful, which was a problem!

- The book of Leviticus resolves the tension of a holy God living among a sinful people.

- The book of Leviticus helps answer the fundamental problem of the Bible, and...
- The book of Leviticus points to the final hope of Bible.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. (Revelation 21:3)

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. (Leviticus 26:11-12)

- God cleansed Israel of their sins through sacrifices. (Leviticus 1-9)

- God provided Israel with an ongoing system of sacrifice.
 - He prescribed five offerings for Israel. (Leviticus 1:2-6:7)
 - He prepared mediating priests for Israel. (Leviticus 6:8-8:36)

- God demonstrated His presence among Israel by receiving Aaron’s offering. (Leviticus 9)

Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he came down from offering the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings. ²³ And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and when they came out they blessed the people, and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. 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 9:22-24)

- God reminded Israel of His grace through ceremonies. (Leviticus 23-25)

God distinct through His people (Leviticus 11-15, 17-22)

- The story of Nadab and Abihu underscored the seriousness of living in the presence of God. (Leviticus 10)
- The various laws of Israel were meant to set Israel apart from the nations.

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 10:8-11)

- Israel was given cleanliness laws. (Leviticus 11-15)
 - The cleanliness laws were (basically) divided in two categories.
 - Laws about what you consume. (Leviticus 11)
 - Laws about what you contact. (Leviticus 12-15)
 - Importantly, uncleanness was not always related to sin. (e.g. childbirth)
 - But God was making the point that He is utterly different and must be shown so.
 - Israel was taught that all of life is lived *before God* and the world.
 - We are reminded that our lives, too, are lived before God and the world.
- Israel was given holiness laws. (Leviticus 17-22)

Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? ¹⁸ But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. ²⁰ These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.” (Matthew 15:17-20)

- Whereas the cleanliness laws made Israel distinct in their normal lives, the holiness laws made Israel distinct in their neighborly loves.
- God was (and is) demanding complete integrity among His people.

Strive... for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:14)

Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, (Philippians 2:14-15)

God merciful to His people (Leviticus 16)

- God *scheduled* the Day of Atonement—a recognition of Israel’s ongoing need for mercy and forgiveness.

As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:12)

- God has provided a final, perfect atoning sacrifice in Christ!

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. (Hebrews 9:11-12)