



Servants'

Preparation Program



Coptic Orthodox
Diocese of the
Southern
United States

*"For I have given you an example,
that you should do as I have done to you"
John 13:15*

Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States of America

COMMENTARY ON THE HOLY BOOK OF LEVITICUS

BY

Dr. MEDHAT S. IBRAHIM

OT 101

Servants' Preparation Program

2002

High School Boys (July 22 – 26)

High School Girls (July 26 – 30)

College (August 6 – 10)

Nashville, TN

About the Book of Leviticus

Leviticus used to be the first book that Jewish children studied in the synagogue. In the church it tends to be the last part of the Bible anyone looks at seriously.

Characteristics of the Book of Leviticus

(1) Leviticus is largely a codebook, a book of regulations. If any book of the Old Testament could be called a “book of the law” surely the Book of Leviticus is such. The book is filled with regulations.

(2) The Book of Leviticus is, to a great degree, a book of priestly regulations. In the Hebrew text the first word of the Book of Leviticus, translated “and He called,” serves as the title of the book. The English title, Leviticus, is borrowed from the Latin Vulgate, which, in turn, is derived from the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew text. Leviticus is not an inappropriate title for this, the third of the books of the Pentateuch written by Moses. It focuses on the Levitical priesthood, who are prominently featured in this book.

(3) The Book of Leviticus contains many regulations pertaining to the laity, as well as to the priests. It should be pointed out, however, that the book is not written exclusively for the levitical priests, but has much instruction directed to the Israelite layman.

(4) The Book of Leviticus is a book of regulations which is given by God through Moses, spoken to him from the tent of meeting. The very first words of the Book of Leviticus are: “Then the LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, ‘Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ...’” (Lev. 1:1-2). The regulations of Leviticus are a direct revelation from God to and through Moses.

(5) Leviticus is closely connected with the entire Pentateuch, and especially with Exodus and Numbers. In the original text the Book of Leviticus begins with a connective, which is essentially equivalent here to “and,” indicating to the reader that the book simply follows on with the events and content of the Book of Exodus. At the very conclusion of the Book of Exodus the presence of God descends upon the tabernacle. In Leviticus, the implications of the presence of God are spelled out.

(6) Essentially, Leviticus can be divided into two major divisions, separated by chapter 16, which deals with the annual Day of Atonement. Chapters 1-15 deal with what we might call “priestly holiness” for they give instructions about sacrifices and rituals, which ceremonially relate to one’s holiness. Chapters 17-27 deal more with what we could call “practical holiness,” that is holiness, which is worked out, in one’s daily walk, rather than by one’s religious or ritualistic activities.

(7) Leviticus makes a great deal of some distinctions. Much of the Book of Leviticus is devoted to distinguishing between what is “clean” and “unclean,” and that which is “holy” from that which is “profane.”

Finally, there are four key elements in the theology of the book:

- The Presence of God
- Holiness
- The Role of Sacrifice
- The Sinai Covenant

We find the regulations for the various sacrifices in two major texts:

First Regulations:	Subsequent Regulations:
(More “laity” directed)	(More Priestly in orientation)
Burnt Offering, ch. 1	Law of Burnt Offering, 6:8-13
Grain Offering, ch. 2	Law of Grain Offering, 6:14-18 (vv. 19-23, the priests grain offering), 7:9-10
Peace Offering, ch. 3	Law of Peace Offering, 7:11-34
Sin Offering, ch. 4	Law of Sin Offering, 6:24-30
Guilt Offering, ch. 5, 6:1-7	Law of Guilt Offering, 7:1-10
Ordination Offering, 6:19-23	Ordination Offerings, 8:1-9:24 Priests and offerings, 10:1-20 ¹

The Law of Burnt Offerings (Leviticus 1:1-17)

The altar for the burnt offerings was of acacia wood, overlaid with bronze, being nearly 8 feet square and about 4 and half feet high. It was a very large altar indeed, but certainly not too large considering the large number of sacrifices and offerings which it was required to facilitate.

1. Observations Concerning the Burnt Offerings

(1) The burnt offering does not originate in Leviticus, but is found early in the Book of Genesis. The first “burnt offering” was that offered by Noah after the floodwaters had subsided, at which time he offered “burnt offerings” of all the clean animals (Gen. 8:20). God instructed Abraham to offer up Isaac as a “burnt offering” (Gen. 22:2ff.), and so the ram which God in Isaac’s place was offered by Abraham as a burnt offering (Gen. 22:13). When Moses told Pharaoh that Israel must take their cattle with them into the wilderness to worship their God, it was because they needed them to offer burnt offerings (Exodus. 10:25-26). Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, offered a burnt offering to God in Exodus chapter 18 (v. 12). The Israelites offered up burnt offerings in conjunction with their meeting with God and receiving His covenant on Mt. Sinai (Exodus. 20:24; 24:5, etc.). Unfortunately, when the Israelites worshipped the golden calf they offered up burnt offerings as a part of their false worship (Exodus. 32:6).

(2) The burnt offering regulated in Leviticus chapter 1 was viewed primarily a personal offerings, done voluntarily by the individual Israelite. The verse 2 reads, “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When any man of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of animals from the herd or the flock’” (Lev. 1:2). From here on, the personal pronoun “he” is employed, referring to this individual Israelite, who comes with the burnt offering. It is also apparent that it was only the males who could make these offerings to the Lord. It seems that they represented their families (Job 1:5).

(3) The burnt offering is one of the most common offerings, which is offered on a great variety of occasions, often in conjunction with another sacrifice or offering. There were the regularly scheduled times for the burnt offering. Burnt offerings were to be made every day, in the morning and the

evening (Exodus 29:38-42; Num. 28:3, 6, Chiron. 2:4, etc.). An additional burnt offering was to be offered up each Sabbath day (Num. 28:9-10). Also, at the beginning of each month (Num. 28:11), at the celebration of Passover on the 14th day of the 1st month (Num. 28:16), along with new grain offering at Feast of Weeks (Num. 28:27), at the feast of trumpets, on sacred day in the 7th month (Num. 29:1ff.), and for the celebration of the new moon (Num. 29:6). A burnt offering was often offered in conjunction with another sacrifice. Among these were the guilt offering (Lev. 5:7, 10, 17-18), the sin offering (Lev. 5:7; 6:25; 9:2-3, 7; 12:6, 8), the votive or freewill offering (Lev. 22:18), the sheaf offering (Lev. 23:12), and the new grain offering (Lev. 23:15-22, esp. v. 18). The burnt offering was required in the cleansing of a woman's uncleanness as a result of child-bearing (sin and burnt offering required, Lev. 12:6-8), of a leper (Lev. 14:19-20), of a man with a discharge (with a sin offering, Lev. 15:14-15), of a woman with an abnormal discharge (with a sin offering, Lev. 15:30), and of a Nazarite who was unintentionally defiled by contact with a dead body (Num. 6:11, 14). When the congregation unwittingly failed to observe one of God's commands, and was thereby defiled, a burnt offering was required for the purification of the congregation (Num. 15:22-26). A burnt offering was required for the purification and consecration of Aaron (Lev. 16:3, 5, 24), as well as the Levites (Num. 8:12).

(4) The burnt offering was a whole "burnt offering," which was totally consumed on the altar. Most of the sacrifices benefited the offerer and the priests, in addition to being pleasing to God. Sometimes, the offerer would eat some of the meat of the sacrificial animal, and most often the priest received a portion of it. Not so in the case of the burnt offering, however. Neither the offerer nor the priest partook of any of the meat, for it was all burned in the fire.

(5) There are three types of animals to sacrifice in the burnt offering. (1) Offerings from the herd (bull), vv. 3-9. (2) Offerings from the flock (a sheep or a goat), vv. 10-13. (3) Offerings of birds (turtledoves or pigeons), vv. 14-17. It would seem that the principal reason for providing several sacrificial animals is that the poor could not afford to sacrifice a bull (14:21-22, 31, where being poor is given as basis for reduction in sacrifice demanded by God).

(6) The animal to be offered in the burnt offering was always to be of the highest quality. The animal was to be young, not an old, unproductive.

(7) The purpose of the burnt offering was to make atonement for the sin of the offerer and thus to gain God's acceptance. The offerer laid his hands upon the animal, identifying with it. More specifically, he identified his sins with the animal. Thus, when the animal was slain (by the hand of the offerer) it died for the sins of the offerer. It is not so much for the offerer's specific sins (which are dealt with by other sacrifices), but rather for the offerer's general state of sinfulness. The burnt offering was required by, and served to remind the offerer of, his depravity. The burnt offering was thus not so much to gain forgiveness for a particular sin, but to make atonement for the offerer's sinfulness. It was not just a certain sin, which required men to remain separated from God, but the individual's sinful state. The burnt offering seems to provide a divine solution for man's fallen condition.

2. Burnt Offerings and the Ancient Israelite

I believe that the two major interpretive keys to the meaning of the burnt offering are to be found in the "burnt offerings" of Noah in Genesis 8 and of Abraham in Genesis 22.

In Genesis chapter 8, after the flood has destroyed all life on earth (except for what was in the ark), and after the water has subsided, we read: Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal

and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done. While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:20-22).

The relationship between this text and that of Leviticus can be seen by several lines of correspondence. First, the term "burnt offering" found in Genesis 8:20 is the same as that of Leviticus 1. Second, "clean" animals and birds are offered by Noah (Gen. 8:20). It is Leviticus, which defines the difference between what is clean and what is not. Third, the offering is said to be a "soothing aroma" to God (Gen. 8:21), which is an expression similar to that found frequently in Leviticus, and more specifically in Leviticus chapter 1 (vv. 9, 13, 17).

The sacrifice, which Noah offered, was the basis for the covenantal promise of God that He would never again destroy every living thing by a flood again (Gen. 8:21). This basis for God's covenant promise is the result of the burnt offering offered up by Noah. Thus, the Israelites saw that the burnt offering was a means of avoiding God's wrath and of obtaining God's favor. God's blessing was the result of a burnt offering, not of man's good deeds.

The second interpretive key is found in the burnt offering of Abraham in Genesis 22. God summoned Abraham with this command: "Taken now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you" (Gen. 22:2). We know from the account given by Moses that Abraham did as God commanded him. We know from the New Testament accounts that Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son because he believed that God would raise him from the dead (Rom. 4:19-21; Heb. 11:19). In God's grace, He stopped Abraham from slaying his son, and provided a ram in his place (Gen. 22:13). This taught them and us several important lessons. First, they could have seen that the promise of God's blessing to all the earth, the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3), involved the death and resurrection of Abraham's offspring. Secondly, the Israelites saw that in the "burnt offering" the sacrificial animal died in place of the man. Isaac didn't die because God provided an animal to take his place. So when the Israelite place his hand on the head of the sacrificial animal, he should have known that this animal was dying in his place, just as the ram died in the place of Isaac. He should also have seen that something must take place in the future, so that the death of Isaac, which was prevented by the sacrifice of the ram, could be carried out in some greater way, the death and resurrection of the **CHRIST**.

3. The Burnt Offering and the New Testament

The Israelite's worship often deteriorated to mere ritualism when the sacrifices were offered, but then the faith and obedience which they symbolized did not follow. When this happened, the prophets sternly rebuked the Israelites for their hypocrisy: With what shall I come to the LORD And bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves? Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my first-born for my rebellious acts, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:6-8).

The faith and obedience of the Israelite, which the sacrifice of the burnt offering symbolized, and which was required by God of the Israelites, is the same faith and obedience which the death of Christ is to produce in all who profess Him as Savior, and which God requires of us. These acts of faith and obedience

are described by the New Testament writers by the use of the same sacrificial terminology as is employed in the Old Testament. Christian service, in church and in the community, is compared to sacrifice: “Through him let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God. ... Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God” (Heb. 13:15-16; Phil. 4:18; 1 Pet. 2:5). In that the only burnt offering that can atone for sin has been made by Christ, Christians no longer have to bring their lambs to the altar to receive forgiveness of sins. But bringing a sacrifice involved praising God for his grace and declaring one’s intention to love God and keep his commandments. Now that animal sacrifice is obsolete, praise and good works by themselves constitute the proper sacrifices expected of a Christian. Thus far, we have seen that the burnt offering and the other Old Testament sacrifices apply in the fulfillment of Christ as the “once for all” sacrifice for sinners, and in the faith and obedience of the offerer which the sacrifices symbolized.

The Grain Offering (Leviticus 2:1-16; 6:14-18; 7:9-10; 10:12-13)

The grain offering can perhaps be understood in comparison and in contrast with the whole burnt offering, which we have already considered in Leviticus chapter 1. We will begin by noting the similarities of the two sacrifices. Next, we shall seek to note the distinctive of the grain offering, as opposed to the burnt offering. Finally, we shall make some other observations, which will help us to determine its meaning and application.

1. Similarities Between the Grain and Burnt Offerings:

(1) Both offerings required the highest quality offering to be sacrificed. In the case of the whole burnt offering, the animal, whether bull, goat, sheep, or bird (turtledove or pigeon), had to be young, male (except for birds), and without blemish. The grain to be offered had to be “fine.” The term “fine” could mean “fine quality.” Such “fine” flour was that which was fit for a king (1 Ki. 4:22).

(2) The Grain Offering was, like the Burnt Offering, an offering by fire. Both the Burnt Offering and the Grain Offering were offered to God by fire, on the altar of burnt offerings.

(3) The Grain Offering and the Burnt Offering produced a “soothing aroma to the Lord.” Only the Burnt, Grain, and Peace Offerings (3:5, 16) were said to produce a “soothing aroma to the Lord.”

(4) There is a close correspondence between the Burnt Offering and the Grain Offering because the two offerings are often carried out together. The Grain Offering was often an adjunct of another offering (Exodus. 29:38-46; Lev. 23:9ff. Num. 6:13; 7:13, 19, etc.; 8:8; 15:1-9). The 28th and 29th chapters of the Book of Numbers most dramatically demonstrate the association between the Grain and the other offerings. The Grain Offering was instructed by God to follow the Burnt Offering (Num. 28, also Josh. 22:23, 29; Judg. 13:19, 23).

2. Distinctive of the Grain Offering

(1) The Grain Offering is distinguished from the Burnt Offering by that which is being offered up to God. The Burnt Offering was an animal offering; the Grain offering was a vegetable offering. The Burnt Offering could either be a bull (Lev. 1:3-9), a male sheep or goat (Lev. 1:10-13), or a pigeon or turtledove of either sex (Lev. 1:14-17). The Grain Offering was just that, an offering of grain, which was most likely either wheat.

(2) The Grain Offering differed from the Burnt Offering in that the latter was a blood sacrifice, while the former was not. Since the Grain Offering was not an animal offering, there was no blood shed in

this offering. We know that apart from the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins (Heb. 9:22), and thus the Grain Offering did not make atonement for sin. Consequently, the offerer was not instructed to identify himself with the grain he was about to offer, as was the case with the Burnt Offering, with which the offerer identified himself by laying his hand on the head of the animal (Lev. 1:4). The purpose, then, of the Grain Offering was other than that of making atonement for sin.

(3) The Burnt Offerings and the Grain Offerings differed in that the animals for the Burnt Offerings were more accessible than the grain. Grain was common in the ancient Near East, but it was not a common commodity in the camp of the Israelites. Why, after all, was it necessary for God to provide manna for the Israelites to eat, if not because of the absence of grain? The Israelites could not raise wheat in the desert. It would not grow such a crop without rain, and the Israelites were just passing through this place anyway. The grain which the Israelites were to offer was, in my opinion, much more rare, much more precious a commodity than the cattle, which these shepherds had in abundance. Assuming that the Israelites had grain with them in the camp, grain, which they would not eat, but which could be offered to God, what would this grain have been for? I have come to the conclusion that this grain was taken with the Israelites for seed (cf. 2 Cor. 9:10). To sacrifice their seed to God was indeed an act of faith.

The “oil” which was used in this offering (vv. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, etc.) I would take to be olive oil. This would not have been readily available in the desert, either. The same could be said for frankincense, which was probably quite rare and expensive. Thus, the sacrificial materials, the grain, the oil, and the frankincense, were all difficult to obtain in the days of Moses. Once the people entered the land of Canaan, obtaining these goods would have depended upon the bounty of the harvest, for which the Israelites must look to God (Deut. 11:10-12).

(4) The Grain Offering was not a “whole burnt offering,” but only a portion of it was burned on the altar, while the rest was eaten by the priests. The Burnt Offering was totally consumed upon the altar, with the priests benefiting only from the hide (Lev. 1:5-9; 7:8). With the Grain Offering only a handful of the offering was burned on the altar, while the rest was given to the priests: ‘He shall then bring it to Aaron’s sons, the priests; and shall take from it his handful of its fine flour and of its oil with all its memorial portion on the altar, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD. And the remainder of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons: a thing most holy, of the offerings to the LORD by fire’ (Lev. 2:2-3).

(5) The Grain Offering was distinct from the Burnt Offering in that the Grain Offering allowed and even encouraged man’s contribution to the offering. The Burnt Offering allowed men to participate in the ceremony of the sacrifice, but not to add anything to the sacrifice. This can easily be understood in the light of the purpose of atonement and attaining divine favor. For sinful man to attempt to contribute to an atoning sacrifice would only defile that sacrifice. The Israelite could add nothing to that sacrifice which atoned for his sins, just as we can contribute nothing to the work of Christ, which atones for our sins.

The purpose of the Grain Offering is not atonement, but worship, acknowledgment of God’s divine provision of the needs of the Israelite for life itself. The Grain Offering praised God for His abundant supply of the “daily bread” of the Israelite. But while men do not contribute to their redemption, they do participate in the growing of the crops by which God sustains their life. Thus, the human element is present in the Grain Offering in a way that it is not in the Burnt Offering. For example, the kind of grain that can be offered to God seems to be a matter of choice. The grain could be offered to God cooked or uncooked, and if cooked in a variety of ways. Verses 1-3 of Leviticus 2 prescribe the offering of uncooked grain, while verses 4-10

regulate the offering of that grain which is cooked in an oven (v. 4), on a griddle (v. 5), or in a pan (v. 7). All of these options suggest freedom as to what form the offering can take, within the parameters God has set

(6) The Grain Offering was distinct in what additional ingredients were either prohibited or prescribed. Forbidden ingredients for the Grain Offering were leaven and honey. No specific reason for this prohibition is given. A key to the significance of leaven may be found in Exodus chapter 23: “You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor is the fat of My feast to remain overnight until morning” (Exodus. 23:18; also 34:25). The blood sacrifice cannot be associated with leaven or with “spoiling.” That is, the blood sacrifice cannot be associated with corruption, which leaven and leaving overnight both are known to produce. The absence of leaven in the sacrifice was also a reminder of God’s deliverance in the past: “You shall not eat leavened bread with it [the Passover lamb]; seven days you shall eat with it unleavened bread, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), in order that you may remember all the days of your life the day when you came out of the land of Egypt” (Deut. 16:4).

Not only are *leaven and honey* to be absent, but also *salt and frankincense* is to be present in the Grain Offering. Frankincense was a sweet-smelling fragrance available in the ancient Near East. I believe that it was a sensory symbol of the pleasure, which the offering was intended to bring God. The salt, which had to be offered with the Grain Offering, was understood, I believe, in contrast to the leaven and honey. While leaven corrupts, salt preserves and purifies. Salt was thus related to purification and preservation.

3. Principles Taught by the Grain Offering, and the Contemporary Christian:

(1) The Principle of Dependence Upon God for the Physical Necessities of Life. The Grain Offering was one means for the Israelite to be reminded, that it is God who is not only Israel’s Creator, but also the Sustainer. The great danger for the Israelite, once in the land of Canaan, enjoying the blessings from God’s hand, was to forget where they had come from, and why. Thus we read, “Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers ... to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you shall eat and be satisfied, then watch yourself, lest you forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Deut. 6:10-12).

The independent, self-sufficient attitude about which God warned the Israelites is that same spirit which James condemns in New Testament saints: Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that.” But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil (Jas. 4:13-16).

The problem for 20th century Christians in the Western World is that we have too many margins of safety, too many contingency plans, too much to rely on other than God. The farmer of Moses’ day had to look to God, day by day, for rain, for protection from predators like the grasshopper, and so on. We have crop insurance, bank accounts, and the like. In all honesty, we don’t trust in God because we don’t feel that we need to.

(2) The Principle of Dependence Upon God for the Spiritual Necessities of Life. The dependence which God wants to develop in His people is not just a dependence upon Him for physical

food, but it is a dependence upon God for guidance and direction, a dependence upon His word. Thus, even in the Old Testament, God stressed the importance of obedience to the Word of God: “And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD” (Deut. 8:3). You will remember that in our Lord’s testing in the wilderness, Satan sought to get Him to make a stone into bread. Our Lord’s response was to rebuke Satan, based upon the statement in Deuteronomy 8 that man shall not live by bread alone. Thus, in the fourth chapter of John’s gospel we find the disciples urging our Lord to eat, and perplexed when He responded to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” The disciples therefore were saying to one another, “No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work” (John 4:32-34).

When our Lord spoke of Himself as the “living water” in John chapter 4, He spoke of Himself as the Savior of men. Thus, those who drank of His “living water” never thirsted again. But our Lord not only referred to Himself as the “living water,” He also spoke of Himself as the “bread of life” (John 6). He, as the “true” bread, was like the manna which God gave the Israelites in the wilderness, which daily sustained their lives. There is a sense, then, that we must not only, once for all, look to our Lord as our Savior, but we must look to Him daily as our sustainer. In John chapter 15 this daily dependence is described as abiding in Him, as a branch abides in the vine. Just as the Israelites were constantly reminded of their dependence on God by the Grain Offering, so we must also be daily reminded of our dependence upon Christ. Much of our abiding in Him is that of abiding in His word, the bread of life (John 15:7; John 16:13-15; 17:17).

(3) The Principle of Sacrifice. While Christians today do not offer up Grain Offerings to God, we can offer up sacrifices by giving to others. St. Paul said, “But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God” (Phil. 4:18).

(4) The Principle of Support. The Old Testament saints supported the priests by their sacrifices, and the Levites by their tithes. The sacrificial offering of grain (among others) was God’s means of providing for the needs of the priests. We might think that this matter of support is surely something put to rest in the New Testament, but Paul applies the principle of support, based upon the levitical offerings, to the support of those whose time is consumed by their ministry: “Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share with the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:13-14).

The Peace Offering (Leviticus 3:1-17; 7:11-34; 19:5-8; 22:29-30)

1. The Peace Offering

A Peace Offering was as an act of thanksgiving (Lev. 7:12; 22:29-30), or to fulfill a special vow (Lev. 7:16; 22:21), or as a freewill offering (Lev. 7:16; 22:18, 21, 23). Israelite would begin by selecting an animal without any defect, either male or female, from the herd or from the flock (Lev. 3:1, 6), bring this animal to the doorway of the tent of meeting, where he would lay his hand upon its head (3:2, 8, 13), thus identifying his sin with this animal, and himself with its death. When he has slain the animal, the priests will collect the blood, which is shed and sprinkle it around the altar (3:2, 8, 13). The animal would then be skinned and cut into pieces. The priests would then take the fat of the animal, along with the kidneys and the lobe of the liver, and burn it on the altar of burnt offering (3:3-5; 9-11; 14-16). God’s portion of the Peace Offering would be

the blood and the fat (Lev. 3:16-17; cf. 17:10-13). The priests would be given the breast and the right thigh of the animal (Exodus. 29:26-28; Lev. 7:30-34; 10:14-15). Aaron and his sons receive the breast (7:31), while the thigh goes to that priest who offers up the Peace Offering (7:33). The rest of the sacrificial animal is left for the offerer to eat.

2. Distinctives of the Peace Offering

There are several distinctives of the Peace Offering, as compared with the Burnt and Grain Offerings of chapters 1 and 2. It is these distinctives, which provide us with the key to the unique role of this offering.

First, the animal sacrificed in the Peace Offering could be from the herd or from the flock (but not a bird), whether male or female.

Second, the offering was shared by God, by the priests, and by the offerer. All of the Burnt Offering was the Lord's (except for the skin). Most of the Grain Offering was for the priests. But the Peace Offering was shared by all, each receiving their appointed portions.

Third, three of the occasions on which the Peace Offering was appropriate were for thanksgiving, for completing a vow, and for a freewill offering.

Fourth, the Peace Offering was unique in that there was a meal associated with this offering.

Fifth, the thanksgiving Peace Offering included leavened bread (Lev. 7:13).

3. The Peace Offering and the Contemporary Christian

(1) Christ is our Peace Offering. The primary significance of the Peace Offering of the Old Testament is to be found in its antitype, Jesus Christ. In the offering of the Peace Offering the Israelite was benefited by the peace of knowing and experiencing God's forgiveness. In fact, it was more than this. God's anger was not just appeased, God was no longer angry with the offerer, His favor was with him. There is the sense in which Christ's death appeased (propitiated) God's anger, but the "Peace Offering" aspect of Christ's work went beyond this. Because of Christ, God is no longer angry with the one who has identified with Him by faith; He is favorably disposed to Him. And because this is true, we can experience the inner peace that comes from knowing God's favor is directed toward us. Just as our love for God is reflected in a love for man, so our "peace with God" also manifests itself in a peace with men. This is the message, which Paul proclaimed: But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father (Eph. 2:13-18).

(2) The meaning of a meal. Here, the meal was a symbol of the peace, which the Israelite had with God and with men, through the sacrifice of the innocent victim. The Lord's Communion is, in large measure, the New Testament version of the Peace Offering festive meal. The Peace Offering sacrifice is not offered, for our Peace Offering is Christ, who died once for all, to make peace between men and God, and between men and men. The celebration goes on, however, and so in the communion service we are reminded of our unity with others, as well as our unity with God: "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the

blood of Christ? Is not the bread, which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

The Sin Offering (Leviticus 4:1–5:13; 6:24-30)

Text	Lev. 4:3-12	Lev. 4:13-21	Lev. 4:22-26	Lev. 4:27-35
Guilty	Anointed priest sins; Guilt on all (v 3)	The whole congregation (v 13)	One of Israel’s leaders (v 22)	One of the common people (v 27)
Sin		Unintentional (Num. 15:27-31)		
	(V 2)	(v.13)	(V 22)	(V 27)
Animal	Bull	Bull	Male Goat (v 23)	Female Goat or Female Sheep (v 32)
	Animal brought to the doorway of the tent of meeting. Hand(s) laid on the head of the animal. Animal is slain.			
	By priest (v 4)	By elders (v 15)	By leader (v 24)	By individual (vv 29, 33)
Blood	Some of the blood is taken into the tent of meeting and sprinkled seven times in front of the veil.			
	(vv 5-6)	(v 18)		
	Some blood put on horns of the altar of incense in the tent. The rest of the blood poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offering.			

	(v 7)	(v 18)		
			Some of the blood put on the horns of the altar of burnt offering. The rest of the blood poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offering.	
			(v 25)	(vv 30, 34)
Body	The fat of the sacrificial animal was burned on the altar to God.			
	(vv 8-10)	(vv 19-20)	(v 26)	(vv 31, 35)
	The remainder of the bull burned in a clean place outside the camp.		The priest who offered the animal ate it in the court of the tent of meeting.	
	(v 12)	(v 21)	(Lev. 6:24-30)	

The fourth chapter of the Book of Leviticus deals with the Sin Offering of four different categories of people: the high priest (vv. 3-12); the whole congregation of Israel (vv. 13-21); a leader (vv. 22-26); and a commoner (vv. 27-35). In the first 13 verses of chapter 5 the approach changes. In verses 1-6 the reader is given some examples, which serve to illustrate what sins are or are not included in the category of “unintentional.” In verse 1 we are given an example of a sin which is not unintentional. The one who gives false testimony and has done so under oath. Thus, the person must bear his sin. Verses 2 and 3 suggest how a person might inadvertently and unknowingly come into contact with something unclean, and thus become guilty and in need of a Sin Offering. Verse 4 includes a case of inadvertent sin in one’s speech. Verses 7-13 of chapter 5 are gracious in providing an exception for those who are poor. The one who cannot afford to sacrifice a lamb or a goat is allowed to sacrifice two turtledoves or two pigeons. The one who is so poor as not to be able to afford two birds is allowed, in verses 11-13, to offer a small quantity of grain. Thus, while not everyone could afford a Peace Offering, everyone was afforded the opportunity to make a Sin Offering. How gracious.

Note from the chart those items, which are common to all four categories of the Sin Offering. First, there is the common element of *sin and of guilt*. Regardless of the category, whether the high priest, the whole congregation, a leader, or a common citizen, *all are in a condition of guilt due to sin*. In all categories, *an animal is sacrificed and its blood is shed and applied for atonement*. Further, *the fat of the animal was burned on the altar of burnt offering and the offerer got none of the meat*. Also, note the unity of the first two categories, as well as that of the second two categories. In the first two divisions (vv. 3-12, 13-21) the whole nation is guilty, and a bull is required for the Sin Offering. The blood is likewise used in the same way in the first two categories. Some of the blood is taken into the tent of meeting, where it is sprinkled onto (or in front of) the veil. Finally, the bull in both instances is burned up outside the camp. Thus we see that the first two sections are quite similar in scope and function. So, too, with the second two categories (vv. 22-26, 27-35). In the case of the leader of Israel (vv. 22-26) or of a common Israelite (vv. 27-35), the sacrifice could be either a goat or a sheep, of either sex. The blood of this animal was not taken inside the tent of meeting, but was placed on the horns of the brazen altar of burnt offering, and the remainder

of the blood was poured out at the base of this altar. The meat of these sacrificial animals could be eaten in a holy place by the male priests (Lev. 6:24-30).

1. The Uniqueness of the Sin Offering

(1) **The Sin Offering is an offering for a specific sin.** All of the blood sacrifices are related to sin, but the Sin Offering of Leviticus 4 is an offering for a specific, defined sin. It is not an offering for sin in general, or for a general state of sinfulness (which I believe is the function of the Burnt Offering).

(2) **The Sin Offering was an offering for a known sin.** Especially in chapter 4 the sins, which are dealt with, are those which, for some reason, were not immediately apparent, but which, in the course of time, came to a conscious level. The impression, which we get, is that the Sin Offering was to be made immediately after the knowledge of sin was present.

(3) **The Sin Offering was a sacrifice for those sins, which were unintentional** (cf. 4:2, 13, 22, 27). The term “unintentional” is more carefully defined by God elsewhere: ‘Also if one person sins unintentionally, then he should offer a one-year-old female goat for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement before the LORD for the person who goes astray when he sins unintentionally, making atonement for him that he may be forgiven. You shall have one law for him who does anything unintentionally, for him who is native among the sons of Israel and for the alien who sojourns among them. But the person who does anything defiantly, whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the LORD and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt shall be on him’ (Num. 15:27-31).

(4) **The Sin Offering made a different use of the blood and the body of the animal which was offered.** In the case of a sin, which brought guilt on the entire congregation, some of the blood of the bull was to be taken into the tent and sprinkled on the veil and placed on the horn of the golden altar of incense. The rest was poured at the base of the altar of burnt offering. In previous blood sacrifices, the blood was to be “sprinkled around on” the altar (3:2).

2. Principles to Be Learned From the Sin Offering

It stands to reason that the Sin Offering should teach us something about sin. There are several important principles to learn which relate to sin, which are evident in the texts pertaining to the sin offering.

(1) **Sin is that which God defines as evil.** Sin is that which is inconsistent with the righteousness of God. Thus, it is only God, who alone is righteous, who can define sin. It is evident that our culture is not particularly interested in what God calls sin. So long as it is legal, it is possible. Sometimes even what isn't legal (e.g. smoking pot, dating, or cheating on income tax) is socially acceptable, but upon all of man's sins God's wrath will come.

(2) **Sin may be ignorant or willful; active or passive.** The guilt, which the Sin Offering atones for, is that from a sin, which was unintentional and unknown at the moment, the sin was committed. This means that **we can sin even when we don't intend to.** Our culture tends to condemn only those sins, which are intentional. God condemns all sin.

(3) **Sin results in defilement.** Repeatedly in the Old Testament we find that sin brings defilement, not only to the sinner, but also to others, and this even includes places. After a list of prohibitions, God said to the Israelites, ‘Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled. For the land has become defiled, therefore I have spewed out its

inhabitants ... Thus you are to keep My charge, that you do not practice any of the abominable customs which have been practiced before you, so as not to defile yourselves with them; I am the LORD your God' (Lev. 18:24-25, 30). It is most enlightening to take note of those sins which Israel committed which were said to defile the people, the land, and even the dwelling place of God: Sexual immorality (Lev. 18:24-30), Bloodshed (Num. 35:29-34), Occult practices (Lev. 19:31; 20:6), Infant sacrifice (Lev. 20:1-5), Divorce (Jer. 3:1), False worship (Jer. 16:18). Most of these defiling sins are summed up in the Book of Ezekiel (Ezek. 23:37-38).

(4) Sin is exceedingly costly. When you think of what it would cost an Israelite who wished to maintain his walk with God, it would have been a religion almost too costly to be able to afford. No wonder God promised to prosper this people greatly!

(5) The only solution for the guilt of sin is blood atonement. In chapter 4 there is a sequence of terms, which are repeated. In essence, the sequence is as follows: There is sin, resulting in guilt. There is a blood sacrifice, resulting in atonement and forgiveness.

(6) The death of Christ, who died once and for all, has made atonement for man's sin, and assures him of forgiveness. The Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah in chapter 53 spoke of the Messiah, whose shed blood would atone for men's sins: Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him (Isa. 53:4-6, also vv. 7-8, 10-12). And so it was that when John the Baptist saw our Lord he proclaimed to the nation Israel, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). The Book of Hebrews demonstrates that the Lord Jesus Christ was the sinless Lamb of God, whose death was vastly superior to that of bulls and goats, thus making atonement for men, once for all: But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb. 9:11-14).

The Guilt Offering (Leviticus 5:14-6:7; 7:1-6)

Guilt is universal. We have all felt guilty and have been guilty. If we examine the philosophies of the world, we find that, whereas many of them do not recognize the biblical concept of sin, they will invariably recognize the concept of guilt and try to deal with it. This includes not only many religions but also the fields of psychology and psychiatry.

Leviticus 5:5-6 When anyone is *guilty* in any of these ways, he must confess in what way he has sinned and, as a penalty for the sin he has committed, he must bring to the Lord a female lamb or goat from the flock as a *sin offering*; and the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin. Leviticus 5:15 When a person commits a violation and *sins* unintentionally in regard to any of the

Lord's holy things, he is to bring to the Lord as a penalty a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value in silver, according to the sanctuary shekel. It is a *guilt offering*.

The Bible describes a number of occasions when guilt offerings were made. A guilt offering was part of the ceremonial cleansing of a leper. A guilt offering was required when a man or woman, under a Nazarite vow, came in contact with a dead animal or person and unintentionally broke their vow.

1. The passages in Leviticus that concern the guilt offering have the following structure:

1. Leviticus 5:14-16 The Guilt Offering is required for violating the Lord's holy things.
2. Leviticus 5:17-19 The Guilt Offering is required when one sins without knowing it.
3. Leviticus 6:1-7 The Guilt Offering is required for extortion or robbery.
4. Leviticus 7:1-6: The details of the Guilt Offering.

2. The Lord's Holy Things

Leviticus 5:14-16 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "If a person acts unfaithfully and sins unintentionally against the LORD'S **holy** things, then he shall bring his guilt **offering** to the LORD: a ram without defect from the flock, according to your valuation in silver by shekels, in *terms of* the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt **offering**. He shall make restitution for that, which he has sinned against the **holy** thing, and shall add to it a fifth part of it and give it to the priest. The priest shall then make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt **offering**, and it will be forgiven him."

What are the Lord's holy things?

1. The Lord's name is holy.
2. The Sabbath was to be kept holy.
2. The offerings and the temple rites were holy.
4. National purity was holy.

What are some of the Lord's holy things for Christians?

1. **The Lord's Name.** Jesus taught us to pray, "Hallowed be Thy name."
2. **The Gospel.** Paul says in Galatians 1:8, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be **accursed!**"
3. **Our Bodies.** As Paul says again in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, "Or, do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own. For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body"
4. **The Lord's Supper.** In 1 Corinthians 10:14f, Paul associates the table of the Lord and partaking of it with the "most holy" offerings in Leviticus: Therefore, my dear friends flee from idolatry. I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of one loaf. Consider the people of Israel: do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar?

3. Guilt for Unknown Sin

Leviticus 5:17-19 Now if a person sins and does any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, though he was unaware, still he is guilty and shall bear his punishment. He is then to bring to the priest a ram without defect from the flock, according to your valuation, for a guilt offering. So the priest shall

make atonement for him concerning his error in which he sinned unintentionally and did not know *it*, and it will be forgiven him. It is a guilt offering; he was certainly guilty before the LORD.

Unknown sin is a class of unintentional sin. A sin can be unknown because you didn't know that an action violated the Lord's command. It could also be because circumstances hid from you the sinful nature of your actions. Here is an example: When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebecca. So Abimelech summoned Isaac and said, "She is really your wife! Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?" Isaac answered him, "Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her." Then Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? **One of the men might have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us**" (Genesis 26:8-10).

4. Extortion or Robbery

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "When a person sins and acts unfaithfully against the LORD, and deceives his companion in regard to a deposit or a security entrusted *to him*, or through robbery, or *if* he has extorted from his companion, or has found what was lost and lied about it and sworn falsely, so that he sins in regard to any one of the things a man may do; then it shall be, when he sins and becomes guilty, that he shall restore what he took by robbery or what he got by extortion, or the deposit which was entrusted to him or the lost thing which he found, or anything about which he swore falsely; he shall make restitution for it in full and add to it one-fifth more. He shall give it to the one to whom it belongs on the day *he presents* his guilt offering. Then he shall bring to the priest his guilt offering to the LORD, a ram without defect from the flock, according to your valuation, for a guilt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he will be forgiven for any one of the things which he may have done to incur guilt" (Leviticus 6:1-7)

According to Leviticus, if you cheat your neighbor, you need to bring a guilt offering. If you find property and do not return it, you need to bring a guilt offering. Along with the guilt offering, you also return what was stolen, plus 20 percent. I am immediately reminded of the words of Jesus: "Therefore if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23, 24). The gift Jesus is referring to may be a peace offering or a tithe. Regardless, it is made worthless by the offense someone has received from you.

5. Legal and Moral Debt—Handling Guilt Biblically

Here are some concrete ideas for handling guilt:

1. **Our conscience must be correctly trained.** It must alert us when we have failed to do, as we ought. This requires faithful teaching: 1 Timothy 1:3, 5 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer ... The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a *good conscience* and a sincere faith. Hebrews 5:11-12, 14. We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk not solid food! ... But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

2. **Not all of our sin will be known to us.** This is really an extension of the first point, but it also covers those times when we just feel unworthy. The sin nature is a deep, festering pool. Now that we know the

Lord instituted an offering for this, we may have confidence that this is normal and covered by the cross.

3. **Confession is better than denial.** First John 1:9 validates the role confession has in the life of the believer. It contains the promise of cleansing, and by faith, we know that our known failings will eventually be behind us, and our unknown failings brought to light and cleansed. Confessing unknown sinfulness is appropriate.

4. **When restitution is possible, make it.** When restitution is offered, accept it. Restitution is what uniquely distinguishes the guilt offering from the sin offering. Restitution brings healing, and cancels the legal and moral debt on the horizontal level between men.

5. **Learn the lesson, and leave it behind you.** For the believer, our guilt offering is Jesus Christ. Restitution is our responsibility, and confession and cleansing are offered to us. Even if it is a recurring sin, we need to confess it and leave the guilt behind us.

6. Christ Our Guilt Offering

We are guilty of violating the Lord's holy things. We are guilty of unknown sins, and we have wronged our neighbors. The good news comes from the prophet Isaiah who wrote: Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many and he will bear their iniquities (Isaiah 53:10-11). Messiah was prophesied to be our guilt offering. The word "justify" means to declare "not guilty." The moral and legal debt is canceled, but there is more. The author of Hebrews wrote: And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts; and I will write them on their minds." Then He adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10:10-18). Jesus Christ, our sin offering is the eternal solution to our guilt. He offered Himself for your guilt, but you must acknowledge your guilt and accept this guilt offering He made for you. Then you can rejoice in the knowledge that you will be made holy.

Principles of Priesthood (Leviticus 8-10)

1. A Survey of the History of the Priesthood in the Pentateuch

The Aaronic Priesthood is just being formally established in Leviticus chapter 8, but the concept of priesthood is not new to the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, written by Moses. In a curious incident in the life of Abraham, a priest-king by the name of Melchizedek is introduced: And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand" (Gen. 14:18-20). Not until Psalm 110 is

Melchizedek referred to again, and much is made of this order of priesthood in the Book of Hebrews (chaps. 5-7).

Joseph's wife was the daughter of an Egyptian priest (Gen. 41:45, 50; 46:20), and Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, was known as "the priest of Midian" (Exodus. 2:16; 3:1; 18:1). At Mt. Sinai God proclaimed that He had delivered Israel from bondage and set her apart to be a "kingdom of priests" (Exodus. 19:6). Most interesting is the fact that there was some order of priests before the Aaronic Priesthood was officially instituted. When God first appeared from Mt. Sinai, but before instructions concerning the priesthood had been given (Exodus 28, 29), God gave this warning: "And also let *the priests* who come near to the LORD consecrate themselves, lest the LORD break out against them." And Moses said to the LORD, "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for Thou didst warn us, saying, 'Set bounds about the mountain and consecrate it.'" Then the LORD said to him, "Go down and come up again, you and Aaron with you; but do not let **the priests** and the people break through to come up to the LORD, lest He break forth upon them" (Exodus. 19:22-24, emphasis mine).

In Exodus chapter 28 God instructed Moses concerning the priestly garments, which would set Aaron and his sons apart. In chapter 29 instructions for the consecration and ordination of Aaron and his sons are meticulously outlined. It is this chapter, which is virtually mirrored by the account of the ordination of Aaron and his sons in Leviticus chapter 8. A brief summary of these two chapters will show the close relationship they have with each other:

Command (Exodus 29)	Fulfillment (Leviticus 8)
Present one bull, two rams, unleavened bread, cakes, oil (vv. 1-4)	One bull, two rams, basket of unleavened bread brought to tent of meeting (vv. 1-5).
Aaron and sons to be washed, clothed with priestly garments (vv. 4-9)	Aaron and sons washed and clothed with priestly garments (vv. 6-9)
Bull to be offered as a sin offering (vv. 10-14)	Bull offered as sin offering (vv. 14-17)
First ram to be offered as burnt offering (vv. 15-18)	First ram offered as burnt offering (vv. 18-21)
Second ram to be offered as an ordination offering (vv. 19-28)	Second ram offered as an ordination offering (vv. 22-29)
Moses to anoint Aaron and sons (vv. 29-30)	Aaron and sons anointed (v. 30)
Commands related to the eating of the ram of ordination (vv. 31-34)	Moses instructs Aaron and sons concerning the eating of the ordination ram (vv. 31-36)

2. An Overview of Leviticus 8-10

Chapters 8-10 of the Book of Leviticus describe the origin and the ordination of the Aaronic priesthood. Let me briefly summarize the major contribution of each chapter.

Leviticus 8 portrays the fulfillment of God’s commands pertaining to the ordination of Aaron and his sons, as detailed in Exodus chapter 29. This chapter highlights Moses, who, until after the ordination of Aaron and his sons, functions as Israel’s priest.

Leviticus 9 changes the focus from Moses to Aaron. Aaron and his sons are now commanded to offer sacrifices, first for their own sins, and then for the sins of the nation. A Sin Offering, Burnt Offering, Peace Offering, and Grain Offering were offered for Aaron and his sons (vv. 1-17), and also for the people (with the exception of the Grain Offering, vv. 18-22). The purpose of these offerings is to make preparations for the revelation of the glory of God to the people: And Moses said, “This is the thing which the LORD has commanded you to do, *that the glory of the LORD may appear to you*” (Lev. 9:6).

Leviticus 10 begins with another account of fire descending from heaven, but this time it is God’s judgment in response to the “strange fire” which is offered up by Nadab and Abihu, the two oldest sons of Aaron. Immediately thereafter, God gave Aaron instructions concerning drinking while on duty (vv. 8-11), and then Moses gave further instructions about the eating of the sacrifices (vv. 12-15). The chapter concludes with a very interesting account of Moses’ protest concerning the uneaten goat of the sin offering, which was successfully answered by Aaron.

The death of Nadab and Abihu is the most striking incident in chapters 8-10, and serves to dramatically convey some important principles related to the priesthood. Nadab and Abihu were the oldest of Aaron’s four sons (Exodus 6:23). These men were privileged to accompany Moses and their father, along with others, to Mount Sinai, where they participated in the covenant meal with God (Exodus 24:1, 9). They had just recently been ordained and begun to assume their duties as priests. We do not know how long they had been serving in this capacity when they were put to death, but the inference is that this incident came close on the heels of their ordination. The text does not inform us as to the precise nature of the sin of these two priests. They sinned, we are told, by “offering strange fire before the LORD” (v. 1). It was, however, clearly designated as an act of direct disobedience to God’s commands. They did that “... which He had not commanded them” (v. 1). My understanding is that God has declined from giving a precise description of their sin so as to underscore the more general nature of the sin—disobedience. They were in some way carrying out their priestly duties in a way that disobeyed some of God’s exacting requirements.

This disaster had a very beneficial effect on at least one of the other sons of Aaron, Eleazar. Verses 8-11 seem to be a direct outgrowth of the death of Nadab and Abihu. God instructed Aaron that alcohol was not to be mixed with priestly duties. It would be easy to infer that Nadab and Abihu may have both been drinking before or on duty, and that alcohol had diminished their capacity to carry out their duties in a way that was honoring to God. Verses 12-15 are instructions to Aaron and the priests, which are conveyed through Moses.

3. Lessons for Ancient Israel

First, the ancient Israelites would have been impressed with the prominence of the priesthood in God’s order, and with Aaron, as their first high priest. At the beginning of our text, in chapter 8,

Moses was the prominent figure, as he has been throughout the account of the exodus. In chapter 10, however, Aaron is installed as the high priest, and he very much comes “into his own.” Moses’ provisional priestly role seems to come to an end here. He is the great prophet, like unto whom the Messiah will be (Deut. 18:15), but Aaron is the great priest, who is the foreshadow of Christ, our Great High Priest.

Second, the Israelites would have been impressed with the grace of God in the appointment of Aaron as Israel’s high priest. This Aaron, who is now honored by being appointed as Israel’s first high priest, is the same man who seemed to be, at best, a sort of tag along helper of Moses. More than this, this is the man who was instrumental in leading Israel in false worship of the golden calf (Exodus. 32). Now, this same Aaron is Israel’s high priest.

Third, the Israelites would be reminded of the holiness of God, and of the dangers faced by those who would draw near to Him in service. The priesthood was an exceedingly dangerous job, for those who drew near to Him in service dare not do so casually or carelessly, as did Nadab and Abihu.

Fourth, Israel would be painfully aware of the limitations of this Aaronic Priesthood. Thus they would be prepared for and looking forward to a “better Priest and priesthood” which would be the result of the New Covenant and of the coming of the Christ.

4. Lessons for New Testament Christians

There are a number of principles of priesthood to be found in the Book of Leviticus which apply to both Old and New Testament priests. Before we consider these there are several New Testament principles which will guide us in differentiating between the Aaronic priesthood of Leviticus and the priesthood which is described in the New Testament.

Principle 1: The Old Testament Aaronic priesthood has been fulfilled and rendered obsolete by Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest. The Book of Hebrews has much to say about Christ as our great High Priest, and of His superiority to the Aaronic order. In chapters 7-10, the writer to the Hebrews reaches the climax of his arguments for the superiority of the priesthood of Christ. He provides the following lines of evidence:

- A better priesthood—7:1-10
- A better covenant—7:11-28
- A better ministry—8:1-13
- A better tabernacle and a better sacrifice—9:1-28
- A better sanctification—10:1-18

The **conclusion to the argument** of these chapters in Hebrews is found in verses 19-25 of chapter 10: Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near (Heb. 10:19-25).

Principle 2: The Book of Hebrews, in particular, uses the inferiority of the Aaronic Priesthood as an argument for not being tempted to go back to the old order, which prefers law to grace, and Moses to Christ. The strong emphasis on the superiority of Christ’s priesthood to that of Aaron is for a

very specific purpose in the Book of Hebrews. There were apparently those who were tempted (by Jewish persecution) to fall away from their faith and to return to the practice of Judaism.

The Clean and Unclean—Part I (Leviticus 11)

Leviticus 11 is dealing with the subject of cleanness and uncleanness—specifically, with the subject of clean and unclean foods. The word **unclean** and its cognates occurs 132 times in the Old Testament; over 50 percent of these are Leviticus. So the sense of uncleanness is a predominate theme, and the word **clean**, along with its related terms, occurs 74 times in Leviticus, which is over one-third of the uses found in the Old Testament. When we leave the Old Testament and come to the New Testament, we once again find that the definition of clean and unclean is critical to our understanding. We find these issues discussed and debated heatedly between the scribes and the Pharisees, and our Lord had to do with cleanness and uncleanness—particularly the area of ceremonial uncleanness as defined by Jewish tradition, not so much as defined by Old Testament revelation. If we are going to understand how our Lord differed from the scribes and the Pharisees, if we are going to understand how Judaism “went to seed” on the area of clean and unclean, we must first understand the backdrop teaching of cleanness and uncleanness as it is introduced in Leviticus chapter 11. We must also observe that cleanness and uncleanness is related to holiness. Certainly, this is so in Leviticus. We should note that clean and unclean was the great issue dividing Jews and Gentiles. Clean and unclean was the critical issue that had to be met head on and solved in Acts 10 and 11 before the church could become a church where the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles was torn down.

When we come to Leviticus 11, we come to the third major section of Leviticus. In chapters 1-7, we had the offerings and the sacrifices that the Israelites could bring. Chapters 8-10 dealt with the priesthood—the actual ordination of Aaron and his sons which culminated in the death of two of Aaron’s oldest sons—and the instructions which come to Israel and to us from that. There were the offerings, the priesthood. Now chapters 11-15 deal with those things, which are clean and unclean. Chapter 11 begins by talking about clean and unclean food, and then in chapter 12, the uncleanness that is the result of a woman bearing a child. I’m sure all of us want to know why that is so. And then there is uncleanness that is the result of issues that come forth from an individual. So there are a number of areas in which we find uncleanness.

1. Categories of Cleanness and Uncleanness

When we come to chapter 11, we find that we are dealing with three different categories of creatures, first the land creatures, the animals that roam about through the earth (vv. 1-8); then we find in verses 9-12 the water creatures, those that live under water or in the water, and finally we have the flying creatures. Verses 24-47, basically the last half of the chapter, deal with the cure, the solution for the problem of uncleanness. Let’s go through the categories of cleanness and uncleanness as they are defined by God in these verses

First, there are the land animals. There are two basic stipulations, which must be met before an animal that dwells on the land can be considered clean and therefore can be eaten by the Israelite. It must be split-hoofed, and it must be a cud-chewer. It cannot be just one of those; it must be both of those.

Second, the sea creatures. They must meet two qualifications as well—they must have fins and scales. It must have both of those in order to qualify. That would mean that creatures that live in the sea, like shrimp, lobster, and those kinds of creatures, would not fit.

Third, those creatures that is in the air. It seems as though, essentially, no qualifications are given. That is, it doesn't have to have two wings, but rather it seems as though those creatures in the air are creatures that are non-vulture like. That is, they are not sitting around waiting for something to die so they can go pick it up and eat it. It doesn't look as though these are meat eaters or those that feed off of the dead carcasses of other creatures. Then we have flying insects that are described. Here all flying insects are called unclean, with the exception of those that have a set of jumper legs, which propel them so they can leap through the air and thus propel themselves through the air. Jumping, flying insects are edible; all the rest are not.

Fourth, there is the category of dead animals, which are unclean. Essentially, any dead animal other than an animal, which has been killed through the sacrificial process in the front of the door of the tent of meeting, is unclean.

Fifth, swarming animals. These are a bit of a puzzle, but this category includes things like mice, lizards, and most all of those things that I can readily pass up, so I can easily and readily identify them. Apparently they are called swarming because they go about together in groups, and they seem to have an erratic, unpredictable manner of movement.

2. Reasons for Cleanness or Uncleanness

Why is one kind of food clean and another kind of food unclean?

First, the cultic explanation says that certain kinds of creatures were used in pagan ritual and worship. Because of those animals's association with paganism, God could not allow them to be brought into the Israelite's worship of the True God. For example, pig bones were found all over the Near East, and they were involved in pagan sacrificial rituals.

The second view suggests is the symbolic interpretation. In those things man eats, or does not eat, he is an imitator of God—that is, there are only certain things which God allows to be offered up as burnt offerings to Him. So if God is selective about what is sacrificed to Him, the Israelites ought to also be choosy about what they eat. Many of the creatures that are unclean are those creatures, which may live on meat and may therefore be blood-shedders. So man only eats creatures, which are themselves free from contamination by death, by not shedding blood in a sacrificial way. It is possible that there is a great deal of symbolic information that ought to be seen here.

The third answer is the arbitrary definition. It was just God's choice. God said He chose Jacob, and He rejected Esau. Why? Because sovereign choices are sovereign choices, and they don't have reasons. Election is the point we see in the clean and the unclean, as well as in the salvation of Israel.

3. Cleanness or Uncleanness in the Old Testament

If we were to look at the words **cleanness** or **uncleanness**, we would discover that clean and unclean are found only in Genesis 7 and 8—with Noah. And it is only found with respect to those animals that were brought onto the ark. The distinction between clean and unclean is much older than in Moses' day; it goes clear back to Noah's day. Noah didn't say to God, "Clean? Unclean? What is that?" Noah knew what a clean creature was, and he knew what an unclean creature was, and he brought seven of the clean ones so that he could sacrifice them to God. Cures for uncleanness are spelled out in Leviticus and on through the Old Testament. In the period of the prophets, they begin to talk about cleanness and uncleanness as something **internal** rather than something merely external. David says in Psalms 51:10:

“Create in me a clean heart, O God.” Now cleanness becomes something that is more **internal** than **external**.

4. Cleanness or Uncleanness in the New Testament

When we come to the New Testament, we discover immediately that our Lord begins to talk in terms of **clean** and **unclean**, and particularly as the scribes and Pharisees are disputing with Him. In Mark 7, for example, they debate about whether Jesus and His disciples can come in from outside and then begin to eat dinner, and they have not ceremonially (ritually) washed their hands. This is something the Jews added to the interpretation and the meaning of the Old Testament. They had more emphasis on cleanliness that was by their tradition than it was by Scripture. And our Lord says, “Don’t you understand that it is not that which comes from without that defiles a man, but that which comes from within that defiles a man.” Then, Mark says parenthetically, “Thus He declared all things to be clean.” No one really understood the implications of that until after the death of Jesus Christ.

Cleanness and uncleanness in terms of food was what distinguished a Jew and a Gentile. That is, a Jew, in order not to eat of the kinds of food God had prohibited, could not eat in a Gentile home because undoubtedly there was going to be contamination there. That built up a great wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles. That distinction was designed in the Old Testament, but it had to be set aside in the New Testament. The Book of Ephesians says the middle wall of partition has been torn down—the enmity that existed there has been taken away, and the Jews and Gentiles have been brought together in one new body—the church. The distinctions therefore that separate Jews and Gentiles have to be set aside. In the incident of Cornelius, St. Peter has to remind the church which was mostly from Jews that God no longer has distinguished between Jews and Gentiles. We saw what happened in Act 2—the Spirit came down on the Jews. Now when the gospel was preached to this Gentile group, the Spirit came upon them in exactly the same way. God doesn’t distinguish Jewish Christians from Gentile Christians. They are **one body**!

Offending God: The Clean and the Unclean—Part II (Leviticus 12-15)

Chapters 12 and 15 deal with the uncleanness related to sexual reproduction, and the process of purification. Chapters 13 and 14 define unclean “skin” ailments, and the process of purification.

1. Uncleanness Resulting From Skin Disorders (Leviticus 13 & 14)

Chapters 13 and 14 declare serious skin ailments to render the individual unclean, and pronounce the process by which such ailments are identified, as well as how the recovered Israelite may be pronounced clean.

2. Characteristics of the Unclean Skin Disorders

There are 21 different cases of skin disease in chapter 13, along with 3 different cases of diseased garments. We will not attempt to deal with each of these, but we should note some of the common characteristics of these maladies:

- (1) They are all visible, external (not any internal diseases).
- (2) By and large, the ailments were not fatal, not as serious as we might have expected.
- (3) These ailments affected only a part of the body, not all of it.
- (4) The skin diseases are all chronic (persistent, serious), contagious, and/or contaminating.

(5) Only the priest could declare a skin condition to be clean or unclean, which sometimes required him to go “outside the camp” (Lev. 14:3).

(6) The primary concern is not curing the individual, nor protecting the public health, but of protecting the sanctity of the dwelling of God in the midst of the camp: “ ... so that they will not defile their camp where I dwell in their midst” (Num. 5:3; cf. Lev. 15:31-33).

3. The Consequences of Being Declared Unclean

Things which were declared unclean in chapters 11-15 either had to be purified or destroyed: (a) Washed with water (Lev. 11:32; 15:6). (b) Burned with fire (Lev. 13:52, 55, 57). (c) Broken (Lev. 11:33, 35). (d) Torn down and demolished (Lev. 14:40-41, 45). People who were declared unclean by the priests suffered the humiliation of being declared unclean, and then the resulting isolation from the presence of God and from association with the people of God “... send away from the camp ...” (Num. 5:2).

4. The Cleansing Process

Once the individual recovered from his or her unclean malady, there was carefully prescribed ritual of cleansing and, at times, a sacrificial ritual, which was required before the person could approach the dwelling of God, the tabernacle. These rituals include: (a) “Wash and wait” (e.g. Lev. 15:7-11, 17, 18, 22). (b) Atonement for cleansing (Lev. 14:20, 31; 15:14-15). (c) The cleansing ritual, with the string, the cedar, and the birds (e.g. cleansing of house, Lev. 14:49-53). Ultimately, for the Israelite, there was the annual day of atonement (16:16, 30).

5. Uncleanness Resulting From “Dishonorable Discharges” (Leviticus 12 & 15)

Chapter 12 describes the uncleanness which a woman acquires as the result of the birth of a child. The uncleanness is the result of the “flow of blood” following the birth of a child. Chapter 15 declares certain discharges as unclean. Two of the ailments pertain to men; the other two to women. Both the men and the women have what might be called normal discharges (men, 15:16-18; women, vv. 19-24), and abnormal (men, vv. 2-15; women, vv. 25-30). I think that it is safe to conclude that these chapters generally are referring to those discharges which are relative to sex and the sexual organs. In chapter 12 the woman who is unclean due to bearing a child must offer sacrifices, including a sin offering. The inference is clearly made that there is some kind of sin to be atoned for. In chapter 15 the unusual discharges of men and women also require a sin offering, among other things. Why is there the suggestion that sin is related to reproduction?

This is not a new concept to the Israelite. In Genesis 3 Adam and Eve were said to be ashamed, due to nakedness (3:7), even when they made coverings for themselves, they were still ashamed and hid from God (3:10). In Exodus 19, God gave these instructions to the people through Moses: “So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people, and they washed their garments. And he said to the people, ‘Be ready for the third day; *do not go near a woman*’” (Exod. 19:14-15). In Exodus 20, God told Moses to tell these words to the people: “‘And you shall not go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it’” (Exod. 20:26). Again, when Moses was given instructions on Mt. Sinai concerning the garments worn by Aaron, God said, “And you shall make for them linen breeches to cover their bare flesh; they shall reach from the loins even to the thighs. And they shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they enter the tent of meeting, or when they approach the altar to minister in the holy place, so that they do not incur guilt and die. It shall be a statute forever to him and to his descendants after him” (Exod. 28:42-43). Thus, when we read in Leviticus chapters 12 and 15 that discharges related to sex and reproduction cause a man and/or his wife to be unclean, this should not take us totally by surprise.

The regulations of Leviticus concerning sex-related uncleanness served one very important purpose—it clearly separated sex from religious worship. If one had sexual relations with his wife this rendered both unclean until evening. This meant that the Israelites could not have sexual relations during the Sabbath, since this would cause both to be unclean, thus prohibiting their participation in worship. The effect was to encourage the Israelites to keep their minds devoted to worship. Ideally, both sexual intimacy and spiritual intimacy require the undistracted involvement of body, soul, and spirit. This means that either activity should be engaged in apart from the competition of the other. One can see a similar theme in Paul's practical instructions to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 7). The separation of sexual activity and worship was particularly important to the Israelites because of the pagan worship rituals of the Canaanites, whose fertility cult engaged in carnal sexual union as an act of worship (Num. 25:1-9), a practice into which the Israelites had already once fallen (Exod. 32:6). If the clean/unclean legislation did no more than to create a wide gap between sex and worship it did the Israelites a great favor. It distinguished their worship from that of their pagan neighbors.

The question remains, "But why was the Israelite woman punished two-fold for bearing a girl child?" I have only one explanation, which is similar in nature to the reason for separating sex from worship. The reason is not to be found as much in the cause of the uncleanness as it is in the result this uncleanness will have in the life of the Israelite woman. In my opinion, the two-fold period of uncleanness will cause the Israelite mother of a girl child to ponder the reasons for her plight. Why is a woman singled out for uncleanness in the birth of the child, and especially so when the child is a female, like her? In other words, what is that about womanhood that merits this "curse"? This long period of isolation should have given the Israelite mothers a fair period of time to ponder why women should be cursed as they were. I believe that Genesis chapter 3 supplies her with a good part of the reason. This chapter could have provided her with ample food for thought, and taught her not only the way in which a woman participated (even led) in the fall of man, but also the ways (especially involving childbirth) in which she has been cursed, due to the fall.

6. Jesus, the One Who Makes Men Clean

The Old Testament Law required that the unclean could never come into the presence of the Holy God, and yet the Holy One, the Messiah, Jesus Christ took upon Himself human flesh, and He dwelt in the midst of men. In His ministry he avoided the self-righteous, who thought themselves clean, and He sought out those who were regarded unclean. The barrier that the Old Testament Law and its sacrificial system could not break down, the New Covenant in the person of Jesus Christ did. The cleansing which the Law could not perform, but could only pronounce, was done, once and for all by the atoning death of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. Repeatedly, the New Testament writers speak of the cleansing which the Christian has received: Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11). The death of Christ provides the solution for both of the sin problems of the Old and New Testament saint. As the second Adam, Jesus Christ reversed the effect of Adam's sin, thus removing the guilt and sinful state inherited from Adam (Rom. 5:12-21). By faith in Christ's death, men are declared clean, and thus look forward to dwelling in God's presence forever—heaven. It is certain, accomplished through the atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.

The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16)

1. The Structure of Leviticus 16

Verses	Content
1-2	Introduction
3-5	Animals and priestly dress needed for the ceremonies
6-10	Outline of the ceremonies
11-28	Detailed description of the ceremonies
11-19	the blood-sprinkling rites
20-22	the scapegoat
23-28	cleansing of the participants
29-34	The people's duty

2. A Background and An Overview of the Day of Atonement (Exodus 30:1-10)

The first reference to the Day of Atonement comes in the Book of Exodus, chapter 30. "You shall not offer any strange incense on this altar, or burnt offering or meal offering; and you shall not pour out a libation on it. And Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year; he shall make atonement on it with the blood of the sin offering of atonement once a year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD" (Exodus 30:9-10).

The day would seem to begin as usual with the offering of the morning sacrifice, the burnt offering of a one year old lamb (Exodus 29:38-42; Num. 28:3-6). After these duties were performed, the High Priest would commence the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement:

(1) Aaron was to take off his normal priestly garments, wash, and then put on the special garments which were prescribed for the sacrifices which took him into the holy of holies (v. 4; Exodus 28; 39).

(2) Aaron secured the necessary sacrificial animals: a bull for his own sin offering and two male goats for the people's sin offering; two rams, one for Aaron's and the other for the people's burnt offering (vv. 3, 5).

(3) Aaron slaughtered the bull for his own sin offering (vv. 6, 11).

(4) Before entering into the Holy of Holies with the blood of the bull, Aaron had to create a "cloud" of incense in the Holy of Holies, covering the mercy seat, to "veil" the glory of God so that he could enter in (vv. 12-13) and sparing his life.

(5) Aaron then took some of the blood of the bull and sprinkled it on the mercy seat seven times (v. 14).

(6) Lots were then cast for the two goats, to determine which would be slaughtered and which would be driven away (vv. 7-8).

(7) The goat for slaughter, the goat of the people's sin offering, was sacrificed, and its blood was taken into the Holy of Holies and applied to the mercy seat, as the bull's blood had been (v. 15).

(8) Cleansing was then made for the holy place (v. 16), seemingly by the sprinkling of the blood of both the bull and the goat. The atonement of the holy place is done alone, without anyone present to help, or to watch (v. 17).

(9) Next, outside the tent, Aaron was to make atonement for the altar of burnt offering, using, it would seem, the blood of both the bull and the goat (vv. 18-19).

(10) Now the second goat, the one which was kept alive, had the sins of the nation symbolically laid on its head, and was driven from the camp to a desolate place, from which it must never return (vv. 20-22).

(11) Aaron then entered the tent of meeting, removed his linen garments, washed, and put on his normal priestly garments

(12) The burnt offerings of rams, one for Aaron and his family and the other for the people, was now offered (v. 24)

(13) The earlier sacrifices of the bull and the goat were completed. The fat of the sin offering was burned on the altar (v. 25), and the remains of the bull and the goat were taken outside the camp, where they were burned (v. 27).

(14) Those who had been rendered unclean by handling the animals on which the sins of Aaron or the people were laid were to wash themselves and then return to camp (vv. 26, 28).

3. The People's Role in the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29-31)

The people were not to be passive in the Day of Atonement, although they (and those dwelling in their midst) were to observe a Sabbath rest. They were commanded to remember this ordinance as a permanent statute, by "humbling their souls" (v. 29).

4. Observations Concerning the Day of Atonement

There are several features of the Day of Atonement, which are worthy of our attention:

(1) God's instructions to Aaron concerning the offerings of the Day of Atonement begins with a reminder of the death of his two sons, as recorded in chapter 10. This note thus serves to underscore the importance of Aaron's very meticulous obedience to these instructions.

(2) The priestly garb, which Aaron was to wear on this one occasion, was very different from that which he normally wore in the course of his duties. Beautiful colored materials; intricate embroidery, gold and jewelry made him look like a king. On the Day of Atonement he looked more like a slave. His outfit consisted of four simple garments in white linen, even plainer than the vestments of the ordinary priest (Exodus. 39:27-29). On this one day the high priest enters the 'other world,' into the very presence of God. In the presence of God even the high priest is stripped of all honor: he becomes simply the servant of the King of kings, whose true status is portrayed in the simplicity of his dress. Ezekiel (9:2-3, 11; 10:2, 6-7) and Daniel (10:5; 12:6-7) describe angels as dressed in linen, while Rev. 19:8 portrays the saints in heaven as wearing similar clothes.

(3) The ceremony of Aaron's offering the bull for his sins and his family (especially among whom were the priests) is similar to that described in 4:3-12, but is also different. In both offerings, a bull is sacrificed, and in the same way. In chapter 4, the blood of the bull is sprinkled only on the horns of the

altar of incense, but in chapter 16 the blood is also sprinkled on the mercy seat itself. The offering of the Day of Atonement is more extensive than the normal offering of the priest.

(4) The ceremony of offering the bull in chapter 16 is also similar to, yet different from, the offering of the bull, which was a part of the ordination of Aaron and his sons. In this case, too, the offering on the Day of Atonement was similar to the former offering, but was greater in that there was an entrance into the Holy of Holies.

(5) The sin offering for the people is both unique and compound. With the exception of the two birds (Lev. 14:3-9, 49-53), there is no other sacrifice quite like this, which involves both a dying and a living animal.

(6) The Day of Atonement is the cleansing of a place and of a people. God said, “For it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you; you shall be clean from all your sins before the LORD” (Lev. 16:30). “And he shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the impurities of the sons of Israel, and because of their transgressions, in regard to all their sins; and thus he shall do for the tent of meeting which abides with them in the midst of their impurities” (Lev. 16:16). So the priest who is anointed and ordained to serve as priest in his father’s place shall make atonement: he shall thus put on the linen garments, the holy garments, and make atonement for the holy sanctuary; and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar. He shall also make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly (Lev. 16:32-33).

(7) The Day of Atonement foreshadowed and anticipated a greater, permanent cleansing of God’s people and of His dwelling place, which was to be accomplished by a better priest, who offered a better sacrifice. The New Testament, particularly the Book of Hebrews, stresses the superiority of the death of our Lord, in contrast to the Old Testament sacrifices, of which those of the Day of Atonement are most prominent. “For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever (Heb. 7:26-28)”. Further, Aaron died, but Christ lives forever (Heb. 7:15-25). Christ is vastly superior to Aaron, and to all the high priests of Israel. **The sacrifice of Christ was superior to those offered by Aaron.** Aaron and all the other priests could but offer the blood of bulls and goats, but Christ offered His own precious blood: “And not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption (Heb. 9:11-12, also vv. 13-14).

(8) The Day of Atonement was a time for the priest to confess before God the sins of the nation. It is a lesson for all of us to practice the **sacrament of confession**.

The Preciousness of Blood (Leviticus 17)

1. A Preview of Leviticus 17

After a characteristic introduction in verses 1 and 2, the chapter itself divides into **four sections**:

- (1) Regulations concerning the slaughter of sacrificial animals, vv. 3-7.
- (2) Regulations concerning other sacrifices, vv. 8-9.

(3) Regulations concerning the eating of blood, vv. 10-13.

(4) Regulations concerning one who eats an animal that has died or been killed by another animal, vv. 14-16.

2. The Slaughter of Sacrificial Animals (17:3-7)

The command given in Leviticus 17:3-7 had some immediate and evident implications:

(1) No Israelite could eat the meat of one of his flock or herd unless he first offered it as a sacrifice.

(2) Sacrificial animals could only be killed according to the sacrificial rituals prescribed previously in Leviticus.

(3) This assured that the priests would be provided for.

The primary concern behind this regulation is not to see to it that the priests were kept busy or even fed. Neither was the great danger that the Israelite might slaughter his cattle in some irreligious way. The great danger was that the Israelite would slaughter his beast in a way that would be an act of pagan sacrifice and worship: “The reason is so that the sons of Israel may bring their sacrifices **which they were sacrificing** in the open field, that they may bring them in to the LORD, at the doorway of the tent of meeting to the priest, and sacrifice them as sacrifices of peace offerings to the LORD. ... And they shall **no longer** sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat demons² with which **they play** the harlot” (Lev. 17:5, 7).

3. The Offering of All Other Sacrifices (17:8-9)

The previous command specifically related to the “peace offering,” for this was the only offering which enabled the offered to partake of the meat of his sacrifice. What of sacrifices other than the “peace” offering? The regulation of verses 8 and 9 plugs any “loophole” which might be abused by some. No other offering or sacrifice could be made which is not made at the tent of meeting. This assures that the priests will offer the people’s sacrifices according to God’s instructions, already laid down in previous chapters. In the light of the Israelites’ pagan sacrificial practices, no sacrificial act was left to occur outside the camp, away from the scrutinizing eye of the priests.

4. The Consumption of Blood (17:10-13)

The regulation of verses 10-13 forbids both the Israelite and the alien to eat the blood of any animal. The reasons for this prohibition are given as well: (1) “the life of the flesh is in the blood,” and (2) the function of shed blood is divinely appointed for the atonement of man (v. 11). Thus, anyone who eats the blood of an animal will be “cut off” from his people.

5. Animals Not Slain by Human Hands (17:14-17)

In verse 15 it is made clear that such an animal, which has died apart from the hand of man, may be eaten, but since the blood could not be poured out as per the instructions given, the individual who thus eats of this animal’s flesh will be unclean, and must therefore wash his clothes and bathe himself in water, and at evening time he will be clean. This is essentially a repetition of what God had previously said in Leviticus: ‘Also if one of the animals dies which you have for food, the one who touches its carcass becomes unclean until evening. He, too, who eats some of its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening; and the one who picks up its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening’ (Lev. 11:39-40).

6. Implications to Our Christian Life

I believe that this chapter underscores several principles which are vital to the spiritual life of every man, woman, and child. Let us prayerfully consider each of these principles and the practical way in which they should intersect our lives.

(1) The principle of progressive revelation. God has chosen to reveal His truths to mankind sequentially. Thus, the great doctrines of the faith are generally introduced early in the Old Testament, later developed more fully by the prophets, and then by our Lord Jesus in His earthly ministry, and finally seen in their fullest form in the New Testament, in the light of the interpretation and teaching of the apostles. While the importance of shed blood was once only to be learned by inference, now the principle of the preciousness of blood is stated more clearly than ever before (Lev. 17:11, 14). The Old Testament will continue to clarify and expand on the value of shed blood for atonement (Isa. 53), and in the New Testament the matter will come into full focus, in the light of the atonement, which God has provided for man in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. As St. Peter put it, “Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Also, in book of Revelation “Worthy are Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev. 5:6-9).

(2) The preciousness of blood in God’s sight. The Israelite of old learned from Leviticus, as nowhere else up to that point in time, the preciousness of blood to God. How much greater value does blood take on for the New Testament saint, whose blessings are all a result of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. The blood is the life of the flesh (Lev. 17:11), and it is through the atoning blood of Christ that the believer receives redemption (1 Pet. 1:18-19), forgiveness (Eph. 1:7), justification (Rom. 5:9), spiritual peace (Col. 1:20), and sanctification (Heb. 13:12). Blood is not precious in its own right, but because it is equated with life, then there are several areas of application. **The first application is that God values all life, God values your life,** and knowing the value, which God has assigned to life, enables us to **better grasp the evil of sin, which seeks to destroy life by producing death.**

(3) If we truly treasure the blood of Christ, we will not defile it. The preciousness of the blood of Christ is a very pertinent factor in the life of the Christian. St. Peter maintains that the preciousness of the blood is to be the Christian’s motivation for purity—for avoiding profaning the price of our redemption. Listen to these most sobering words from the Book of Hebrews: How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? ... It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:29, 31).

(4) The value which we place on the blood of Christ is not proven as much by what we profess, as by what we practice. It is not enough to assent to the preciousness of the blood of Christ as a fact. It is not even enough to believe in the blood of Christ for one's salvation. There must be some practical way in which we prove our regard for Christ's blood by the way we act.

Obedience (Leviticus 18)

1. The Premise: "I am the LORD" (18:1-2)

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'I am the LORD your God.'" The expression, "I am the LORD your God," is the fundamental truth on which the following verses, and on which the following chapters must stand. We can discern several facets to its intended meaning: **First, the expression is intended to recall the deliverance of Israel from her bondage in Egypt.** **Second, the expression is one that declares God's sovereignty.** **Third, the exodus event made God Israel's King.** **Fourth, the expression is also a claim of divine ownership.** To draw all of these various factors together into one central thought we can conclude that the expression, "I am the LORD your God," teaches the **principle of possession.** To put the matter pointedly, **God has the right to rule over His people.** If God has the right to rule then He also **has the right to make the rules.** So it is that this statement, "I am the LORD your God," precedes the regulations which God gave His people.

2. The Practical Outworking of God's Rules (18:3-4)

God has the right to rule, and thus the right to make the rules. "'You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan These where I am bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes'" (Lev. 18:3). Broadly speaking, I think that two major areas are in view in this prohibition: **First, God's prohibition includes not only the lifestyle of the Egyptians and the Canaanites; it also includes their laws.** **Second, the Israelites were to live in accordance with God's statutes:** "'You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the LORD your God'" (Lev. 18:4).

3. Blessings for Keeping God's Rules (18:5)

(1) To live means the preservation of one's life, and the avoidance of death.

(2) To live is to be the recipient of divine blessings. 'If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out, then I shall give you rains in their season, so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will bear their fruit. Indeed, your threshing will last for you until grape gathering, and grape gathering will last until sowing time. You will thus eat your food to the full and **live securely** in your land' (Lev. 26:3-5.). The promise of God's blessing for obedience continues through verse 13, and then the promises of God's cursing are detailed as the consequence for disobeying God's laws (vv. 14-39). To "live," then, means to enjoy the covenant blessings of God, and to "die" means to suffer the curses of the covenant, which come upon God's people as the consequence of their disobedience.

God has introduced the regulations which are to follow by (1) **establishing His right to rule**, and thus to make the rules; (2) spelling out in broad terms, negatively and positively, **what these rules require**; and, (3) **promising to bless His people** when they faithfully live by His rules.

4. Implications for the Christians

(1) Those who have submitted to Christ as Lord will see that the slave-master relationship is appropriate in the light of who God is and who we are.

(2) Second, those who have submitted to Christ as the Lord and King will pray for His kingdom to come to earth, as the Book of Revelation describes it in its full and final form. Our Lord taught His disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10).

(3) Third, the Lord’s slave will not be as interested in his own concerns as with those of his Master. “So you too, when you do all things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done’” (Luke 17:10).

(4) Fourth, the slave should be marked by his or her obedience to the Master.

(5) Fifth, the slave will find his identity in his master, and will look to Him for provision, protection, and praise.

5. The Boundaries of Godly Sexuality (Leviticus 18:6-29)

Leviticus 18:6-29 has a very simple structure and message. Its intent is to define the boundaries of godly human sexual relationships. Verses 6 through 18 define the prohibiting sexual relationships with close relatives. Verses 19 and 20 define the limits of sexual relations within marriage and prohibit them outside marriage. Verses 21 through 23 define the prohibiting of unnatural sexual relations. Verses 24 through 29 tell us about God’s judgment upon a nation that crosses these boundaries. They clearly tell us that God’s judgment for sexual sin is all nations, not just the covenant nation of Israel.

The Inner Boundary of Godly Sexuality

By understanding the close association between sexual intercourse and marriage, the diverse and complex family make-ups, and the principle of “one flesh,” we can better understand Leviticus 18. The first section prohibits sexual intercourse with “close relatives.” The modern word for this is incest. The second section warns the Israelites of the consequences of disobeying these prohibitions.

What follows is a table that I created to help you understand the relationships the Lord makes off limits to family members. It includes the verse, a modern wording for the relationship described in Leviticus, and the penalty for violating the command, as found later in Leviticus 20.

Verse	Relationship	Penalty
7	Mother and son	Death, 20:11
8	Step-mother and son	Death, 20:11
9	Brother and sister	Cut off, 20:17

	Brother and maternal half-sister	
10	Father and granddaughter	Burned, 20:14
11	Brother and paternal half-sister	Cut off, 20:17
12	Nephew and aunt (father’s sister)	Barrenness, 20:20
13	Nephew and aunt (mother’s sister)	Barrenness, 20:20
14	Nephew and aunt (wife of father’s brother)	Barrenness, 20:20
15	Father and daughter-in-law	Death, 20:12
16	Brother and sister-in-law	Barrenness, 20:21
17	Father and step-daughter Father and step-granddaughter Husband and mother-in-law	Burned, 20:14
18	Husband and sister-in-law	None

I want to pause here before continuing on, in order to present some other observations and some reflections. *First*, the “close relative” laws here are the most detailed and severely punished of all similar laws in ancient times. This is significant because, *a nation’s laws will protect what its people consider important*. The law of the Lord tells us, by its exactness and severity, what He considers most important, and from this section we must conclude that the Lord values the family and the “one flesh” principle of legal marriage very highly. *Second*, nowhere in the Bible is compatibility ever a criterion for a relationship. This is somewhat off the main subject of the text, but it is illustrated by the fact, mentioned earlier, that Israel had no such thing as premarital sex. Once you had sexual relations with someone, he or she became your spouse. In the illustration of Isaac and Rebekah, Abraham sent his servant off to find a wife for Isaac. Isaac had no choice in the matter. He was expected to marry Rebekah and live with her and love her. The brother who must marry his dead brother’s wife and the wife who must marry her dead husband’s brother also illustrate it. This was an obligation that they were to fulfill whether they liked each other or not. The Lord expects us to get along with each other, and to compensate in love for differences and conflicts.

The Middle Boundary of Godly Sexuality

Verses 19 and 20 limits when you may have sexual intercourse with your wife, and they also prohibit adultery. I refer to these laws as the “Middle Boundary of Godly Sexuality.” Verse 19 prohibits having intercourse with your wife during the uncleanness of her monthly period. All discharges from the body are considered ceremonially unclean, and the woman’s monthly flow is no exception. Obedience to this law relates specifically to holy living within the Mosaic covenant. There are two ways a man can violate this: one is accidentally in which case he is unclean for seven days as is the woman, and the other is the deliberate act of sexual intercourse during her period, and this is to be punished by death. The issue here is fundamentally one of holiness. The Lord has said the woman is ceremonially unclean and to purposely come in contact with an unclean woman was to violate the holiness of God. Therefore, it was strictly forbidden.

Verse 20 prohibits having intercourse with your neighbor's wife and is an important transitional verse, because *a change in a person's concept of sexuality must occur before he can imagine and commit adultery*. The change is this: adultery denies the concept of "one flesh." It is failing to recognize that the person you are committing adultery with is "one flesh" with another person. Adultery divorces sexual intercourse from marriage and elevates it to an independent status. It focuses on sexual fulfillment as a goal rather than a byproduct of a relationship. It is important to also note that children, produced by an adulterous union, are quite frankly a grievous nuisance.

The Outer Boundary of Godly Sexuality

Towards the beginning of the century American nation, following the lead of Europe, adopted the doctrines of higher criticism that began to tear away at the Bible. Science adopted the theory of evolution and turned away from God. The church, caught by surprise, retreated and disconnected itself from the culture as an active force. People were set free from God, and shortly thereafter, sexual intercourse was set free from marriage. Sex became autonomous. Somewhere, someone got the idea that romantic attraction was the proper foundation for a lasting relationship and sold it to us. The movie entertainers and artists, the purveyors of this message, were the first to suffer a string of divorces and remarriages. The middle boundary began to collapse.

The sexual revolution of the 1960s marked the near total destruction of the middle boundary of godly sexuality. Sex became completely autonomous. People began to live together without long-term commitment. Masters and Johnson studied human sexual response using the real thing as well as some artificial machines to let them observe what otherwise could not be observed. Marriages began to fail by the score. Unwed teenagers became pregnant. Children became a nuisance. Then *The Joy of Sex* appeared in the bookstores. Sex became so explicit, so open; such a good seller of merchandise, that society maintained a constant low-level state of sexual arousal. The outer and inner boundaries began to fall.

Outer Boundary Stage 1—The killing of unwanted children

"Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD" (Leviticus 18:21).

Outer Boundary Stage 2—Homosexuality

"Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable" (Leviticus 18:22). *The Joy of Gay Sex* and *The Joy of Lesbian Sex*. As the outer boundary began to crumble with the destruction of children, as sex became autonomous, sexual experience between members of the same sex is unavoidable. Here is why: if your sexual goal is pleasure independent of marriage, and your sexual freedom comes from denying its wrongness, there is no foundation left to judge an alternate practice. Consequently, many homosexuals are begging for us to be compassionate and accepting.

Outer Boundary Stage 3—Bestiality

"Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion" (Leviticus 18:23). If the nation accepts homosexuality as it has accepted adultery and abortion, bestiality will be next.

6. God's Coming Judgment

“Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants” (Leviticus 18:24-29). As we read Romans 1:18 “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” and in 1: 26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; 32 and, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.” May God have mercy on us.

7. The Christian and the Church's Response

The spread of adultery, pre-marital and casual sex, abortion and homosexuality is the result of our nation turning from the Lord. He has given us as a nation over to the sinful desires of our hearts. It is very hard for us as individuals and as a church to remain pure in such a society, as the problems in the Corinthian church demonstrate. It is hard, but not impossible. We must examine our own attitudes toward sexuality. We are confronted by spiritual warfare on three fronts in the area of sexuality. First, there is our flesh, which is all too willing to have autonomous sex. Second, there is Satan, who through humanism and other philosophies promotes an intellectual system antagonistic to God's righteousness. Humanism tells us that autonomous sex is okay. It tells us that homosexual sex is okay. It tells us that killing our children is okay. This is the work of Satan through humanist leaders in our country. Third, there is the world, which is the alliance of Satan and corporate flesh which either ignores or directly confronts the church to maintain societies' perversions.

If you are losing the battle with your flesh, whether it craves heterosexual or homosexual experiences outside the three boundaries of godly sexuality, you can overcome through living by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). You are not promised liberation from the flesh's desire, but you are promised that the Spirit will provide you with self-control. Another key aspect of living by the Spirit is love for the brethren, the kind of love that considers all others more important than yourself. Against Satan, we have the truth of the Scriptures and the gospel. If we are faithful and true to our message, we will be heard. Against the world, we need a pure and obedient church. We must build strong families based on the principle of “one flesh.” To you I say this: Look at the love with which Jesus favored the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). Look at how He dealt with the woman caught in adultery (John 8). Remember how He turned His back to the dinner host and his guests to affirm a prostitute who honored Him by anointed His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair (Luke 7). Let your past be past. Receive His love and His words, “Go and sin no more.” But also, through Him and His grace and love, let your sense of shame fall away. You are clean and pure, because He has cleansed you.

How to Spell ‘Holy’ (Leviticus 19:1-37)

1. The Necessity of Holiness

The necessity of holiness is found in the first primary commandment: “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy” (Lev. 19:2). Note the following factors relative to this command.

- (1) The necessity of holiness is seen by the fact that the entire nation of Israelites is commanded to be holy. Thus, holiness is not an option, but an imperative.
- (2) The command also provides a motivation for holiness.
- (3) There is also a provision for the holiness which God required of His people.
- (4) Finally, God Himself provided the pattern for holiness. God is holy, which is the basis for Israel’s holiness.

2. The Nature of Holiness

- (1) Holiness involved obedience to the commandments of God.
- (2) Holiness involved sacrifice. Holiness entails sacrifice. But more than this, every act of obedience to the commandments of God was a sacrificial act.
- (3) Holiness was more than a matter of observing religious rituals—it was intensely practical piety, involving a wide variety of actions as a part of one’s everyday life.
- (4) Holiness is the imitation of God

(6) Finally (and, most emphatically in Leviticus 19), holiness is practiced by loving one’s neighbor as one’s self (v. 18). There are, as I have suggested, two primary commands in chapter 19: (1) the command to be holy, and (2) to love one’s neighbor as one’s self. There is a direct relationship between these two commands as I understand the chapter. The holiness of God is demonstrated by His people as they love their neighbor. The term “neighbor,” has a wide range of meaning in this chapter:

- One’s neighbor is one’s fellow-countryman (v. 11, 17)
- One’s neighbor is alien, foreigner (v. 10, 32-33, 34)
- One’s neighbor is those who are weak and vulnerable (v. 10, 14)
- One’s neighbor is one’s enemy (v. 17-18)

3. Holiness in the New Testament

Our Lord, referring to the command of Leviticus 19:2, said, “Therefore, you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). Other commands from Leviticus 19 are also taken up by our Lord as well: “But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44). In Leviticus 19:17 the people of God were taught: “You shall not hate your fellow-countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him.” So also, in the Lord’s teaching in Matthew 5:21-26 and 18:15-17 the individual who has been wronged must seek to bring reconciliation (and thus to restore love and harmony) with his neighbor. The Lord Jesus taught that the command to love one’s neighbor as himself summarized half of the law (Matt. 22:39-40). With this St. Paul agreed (Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14). The apostle Peter also referred to Leviticus 19:2 as the foundation for his call to holy living: “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your

ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Pet. 1:14-16).

4. Perversions of Holiness

The scriptures, along with the history of the church, have recorded a number of ways in which holiness has been distorted.

(1) Stained Glass Holiness. Stained glass holiness is the view that restricts holiness to the realm of the ceremonial. It is “Sunday go to meeting holiness.” Ceremonial holiness thinks of holiness only in terms of special days, of special “holy” places, and of special “holy” activities. It tends to divorce righteousness in everyday living from religious activities and ceremonies. For example, the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ day fell into the same error. They were meticulous about ceremonial holiness, and yet they did not love their neighbors. They did not preserve justice and they did not protect the widows and orphans. They had the appearance of ceremonial righteousness, but they lacked practical holiness: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows’ houses, even while for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you shall receive greater condemnation” (Matt. 23:14).

(2) Positional Holiness. Positional holiness is that holiness which is supposed to accompany a certain office or position. For example, the Jews of Jesus’ day would have assumed that a priest (and especially the high priest) was holy. Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying, “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them. And they tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries, and lengthen the tassels of their garments. And they love the place of honor at banquets, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called by men, Rabbi” (Matt. 23:1-7).

(3) Equating Holiness With the Miraculous. Here is one of the subtlest and dangerous errors of all—assuming that wherever miracles are performed, God must be present and the person must be holy. “‘But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.’ And you may say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’ When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing, which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him” (Deut. 18:20-22). The Lord’s words in the New Testament seem to go even farther: “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits ... So then, you will know them by their fruits. Not every one who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who do the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’ Therefore every one who hears these words of Mine and acts upon them may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock” (Matt. 7:15-16a, 20-24).

(4) Isolation Holiness. Over the centuries, men have tended to equate holiness with separation. One’s holiness could be measured in terms of the distance between the “saint” and the “sinner.” No wonder the scribes and Pharisees were shocked by the fact that Jesus spent time with “sinners” rather than with them: “And when the scribes and the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax-gatherers, they

began saying to His disciples, ‘Why is He eating and drinking with tax-gatherers and sinners?’” (Mark 2:16). Jesus answer was that He came to save sinners. He who was holy was not defiled by being in the presence of sinners. It was His intrinsic holiness and the holiness of His actions, which proved Him to be the Holy One of Israel.

(5) Holiness by Redefinition. The scribes and Pharisees were ingenious at getting around the Word of God. Thus, they re-defined the Law to conform to their own sinfulness. If holiness was manifested by loving one’s neighbor, they re-defined “neighbor” to be their friends and fellow-countrymen. Furthermore, in Jesus’ requirement a person’s neighbor is not limited to members of his own people (Luke 10:29-37), and pre-Christian Judaism was never able to ascend to this thought. The hypocrisy of Judaism is seen in Luke chapter 10, where our Lord has summarized the teaching of the Old Testament law: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27). To this, the Israelite lawyer sought to defend himself by responding, “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29). In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord exposed this error: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:43-48).

Capital Crimes (Leviticus 20)

1. The structure of the chapter can be seen as outlined below:

- Prohibition: Molech and Mediums (vv. 1-6)
- Exhortation to be holy: Obey God’s Statutes (vv. 7-8)
- Prohibition: Sins against the Family (vv. 9-21)
- Exhortation to holiness: Keep God’s Ordinances (vv. 22-26)
- Prohibition of Mediums: Must be executed (v. 27)

2. Observations of Leviticus 20

- (1) The chapter prescribes capital punishment for some of the sins forbidden in chapters 18 & 19.
- (2) Not all capital crimes are listed here, but only selected capital crimes.
- (3) The capital crimes mentioned here are not those, which we would have expected, those which governments generally condemn, such as “murder,” “kidnapping,” and “rape.”
- (4) The capital crimes of this chapter are not those, which are universal, applicable in all dispensations, and would thus be directly applicable to or binding upon the 21st Century Christian.
- (5) Quite frankly, some of these capital crimes are offenses, which we might doubt as worthy of the death penalty. For example, one finds it difficult to conceive of a man having sexual relations with his wife during her monthly period as being a crime on a par with murder, adultery, or incest.

3. God’s Values, as Seen in Leviticus 20

There are several principles evident in our text, which explain why the crimes listed are capital offenses, worthy of death. Let us consider these principles very carefully.

PRINCIPLE ONE: GOD VIEWS EVERY SIN AS A CAPITAL CRIME, WORTHY OF DEATH. Since all sins are capital sins, worthy of death, all men desperately need to experience God's provision for sinners—forgiveness through the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, who died on the cross, bearing the (capital) punishment which we deserve. The fact that all sins are capital crimes means that no sinner should feel more righteous than another. There is no room for self-righteousness if God views all sins as capital offenses. The scribes and Pharisees looked down their noses at the “sinners,” who were guilty of those offenses which the religious leaders had considered greater than their own. If we are not guilty of one form of sin, we are surely guilty of another, and seen from God's point of view, the kind of sin of which we are guilty matters little. Thus, no sinner should feel more righteous than another. As St. James has put the matter, to be found guilty of offense at one point is to fall short in all points (James 2:1-13, esp. v. 10).

PRINCIPLE TWO: GOD'S LAW REFUSED TO DISTINGUISHES BETWEEN SINS AND CRIMES. The issue here is the difference between legality, or between crime (that which men declare to be a punishable social evil) and sin (that which God declares to be evil, and thus worthy of death). God is especially emphasizing the punishment for those sins. God's people are especially vulnerable to sins which are not crimes, for two reasons. First, the sins which are not crimes are acts which our culture will encourage us to commit. Secondly, the sins which are not crimes do not seem to have immediate consequences. And so we are more naturally inclined to follow the speed limit than we are to shun covetousness.

PRINCIPLE THREE: THE CAPITAL CRIMES OF LEVITICUS 20 ARE VIOLATIONS OF GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL. The crimes in Leviticus for which death is prescribed are all crimes against God's covenant given Israel from Mt. Sinai. The purpose of the covenant, God continually emphasized, was to set Israel apart from the surrounding nations, to distinguish them by means of holiness, as His people (Exodus 19:5-6). The Mosaic Covenant was the definition of the holiness which God required in order for Him to dwell among this people and for them to be His holy nation. Thus, to violate that covenant was to seek to thwart the purposes of God for His people. The crimes which God punished by death were those against His covenant.

4. Capital Punishment in the New Testament

In the New Testament God is seen to exercise capital punishment on those who disregard His new covenant. This same principles which we have found in Leviticus chapter 20 are found demonstrated in the New Testament, where God is shown to exercise capital punishment in several instances. Ananias and Sapphira were “cut off” for lying to the Holy Spirit regarding their gift (Acts 5:1-11). The Galatian legalists who perverted the gospel were pronounced “accursed” by the apostle Paul (Gal. 1:6-9). While they were not put to death, they were pronounced worthy of death. The saints in Corinth who inappropriately observed the Lord's Communion suffered sickness and death for their disregard (1 Cor. 11:17-34). So, too, the one who would willfully disregard rebuke and persist in his sin was turned over to Satan, which, apart from repentance, would have led to his death (1 Cor. 5:1-5).

5. Our Century Dangers

(1) The danger of rejecting Christ, through whose shed blood the New Covenant has been established.

(2) Christians disdain and disregard the New Covenant when they persist in sin.

(3) Christians disdain and disobey the New Covenant when they refuse to initiate or participate in the discipline of a wayward saint.

(4) We disregard God’s covenant when we disdain or disregard the New Testament “sign of the covenant”—the Lord’s Communion (Luke 22:14-23; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).

(5) We disregard the New Covenant when we pervert the terms of the covenant—when we distort the gospel (Gal. 1:6-8) and (Rom. 6:1; 1 Cor. 8:10; 1 Pet. 2:16; 2 Pet. 2), thus disdain the covenant as God has established it. Such are those who are in great danger of divine judgment.

(6) We disregard the New Covenant when we fail to live a life on a higher standard than that of our society. We must live distinct lives to be “salt” and “light” in our world, and may very well suffer persecution for so doing (Matt. 5:10-16; cf. 1 Pet. 4). We disregard the New Covenant when we refuse to mortify (“put to death”) the flesh. God has, in Christ, condemned sin in the flesh. We are to mortify our members, to put sin to death in our lives. This is the outcome of the work of Christ, and of walking in His Spirit (Rom. 6-8). To fail to mortify the flesh is to choose to follow Satan and to pursue sin to its logical and ultimate outcome—death (Rom. 8:5-8).

Holiness: The False and the True (Leviticus 21 & 22)

1. The Structure of Leviticus 21 and 22

Chapters 21 and 22 divide into six sections, with each chapter having three sections. Each section is marked off by the statement, in slightly modified forms, “I am the LORD, who sanctifies you” (21:8, 15, 23; 22:9, 16, 32). The sections and their major topics are as follows:

- How the priests are to avoid being profaned (21:1-9)
- How the high priest avoids being profaned (21:10-15)
- Physical imperfections that profane priests (21:16-24)
- Defilement and the eating of priest’s food (22:1-9)
- Those who are entitled to eat the priest’s food (22:10-16)
- Acceptable offerings (22:17-33)

2. Observation of Leviticus 21 and 22

(1) These chapters are addressed to the Aaronic priests (cf. 21:1; 22:1-2) **and to the high priest** (21:10-15). Since this text was addressed to the priests of Israel, the priests of Jesus’ day would have understood its teaching to apply directly to them.

(2) These chapters require a higher standard of separation from defilement for the priests. If there is a high standard for the priests (21:1-9), there is an even higher standard for the high priest (21:10-15). The higher the office, the higher the standard.

(3) The nature of the defilement is not that of immoral behavior or of specific sin, but of external ceremonial defilement. The defilement which must be avoided by the priests is not what we would have expected: lying, stealing, idolatry, or murder. Rather, the defilement involves such things as contact with the dead, other forms of ceremonial uncleanness, contamination by marriage, and having some physical defect—all matters which are not what we would call sin. Ceremonial defilement is allowed for the priests, under certain circumstances (21:2-3), but in every case of forbidden defilement, it is not a matter of sin, but of ceremonial contamination. This fact is a significant element in the error of the scribes and Pharisees.

3. The Error of the Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' Day

Error 1: Elitism

The scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day had a distinctly "holier than thou" attitude. They viewed themselves as a spiritual elite, and they looked down upon the masses as inferior. This is particularly evident in: And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get'" (Luke 18:9-11). While our Lord was amazingly gentle to those who knew and admitted that they were sinners (such as the "woman at the well" in John 4 and the "woman taken in adultery" in John 8), He was vehement in His attack upon the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees. The attack began openly with the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). At the outset of the sermon, Jesus pronounced those to be blessed were the opposite of the scribes and Pharisees—the poor, the meek, those who hungered and thirsted for righteousness (Matt. 5:3-9). He also warned the people that their righteousness would have to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees if they would enter into the kingdom of heaven (5:20). And then He set out to show that the interpretation of the Old Testament Law of the scribes and Pharisees was wrong ("You have heard ... but I say," 5:21ff.). When Jesus finished this sermon, the people got the idea. They recognized that "... He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt. 7:29).

Error 2: Externalism (Ceremonialism)

We noted previously that the things which contaminated the priests and thus which were to be avoided, were not flaws of character, or even of conduct (sins, such as lying, idolatry, murder, stealing), but were ceremonial defilements, such as contact with the dead, marriage to one who was not a virgin, or having some physical defect. In other words, it would be easy to falsely equate piety (holiness) with ritual cleanness. The scribes and Pharisees thought that holiness was primarily a matter of external, ceremonial cleanness. Thus, for the scribes and Pharisees holiness was largely a matter of keeping one's distance from defilement, and especially from "sinners." Jesus finally had to confront the issue directly. He did so by teaching that defilement does not come from without (the external), but from within (the heart): "Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside the man which going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man ... That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts and fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man" (Mark 7:14b-15, 20-23).

Error 3: Legalism (Works Righteousness)

One might conclude, as the scribes and Pharisees did, that if one was able to avoid the defilements defined in chapters 21 and 22 that he would be holy. Having come to this false conclusion, one would then be able to reason, as the scribes and Pharisees, that it was his works that made him righteous. It is this attitude which our Lord said characterized His opponents, the scribes and Pharisees: And He also told this parable to certain ones **who trusted in themselves that they were righteous**, and viewed others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people:

swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get” (Luke 18:9-11).

God commanded the priests to avoid outward defilement because they were already holy, by God’s sanctification. They were to avoid the things prohibited because these things would make them unclean, not because avoiding them would make them clean. There is a world of difference between avoiding something to keep yourself from defilement and avoiding something to make yourself holy. Here is a key to the error of the scribes and Pharisees. They confused the cause with the effect. The cause is the holiness, the sanctification, which God has already accomplished (which is primarily inner—a matter of the heart). The effect is separation of the priests from that, which defiles, so as not to contaminate and defile that which God has sanctified. This explains why our Lord persisted, in His earthly teaching, to carefully distinguish between cause and effect.

Salvation—making men clean—is our Lord’s work alone. Keeping ourselves pure is our duty (enabled by the Holy Spirit), so that we do not defile what God has cleansed. We ought to keep ourselves clean, but we can never make ourselves clean. We seek to stay clean (effect) because God has made us clean (cause). The priests should avoid defilement (effect) because God had already set them apart (cause).

The Lord’s Appointed Times (Leviticus 23)

“Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘The LORD’s appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations—My appointed times are these:’” (Leviticus 23:2).

1. The Jewish calendar

Our calendar, known officially as the Gregorian calendar, is based on the relative motion of the sun through the heavens. For this reason, it is sometimes called a solar calendar. It takes 365.2524 days to complete the year. To keep the start of spring from shifting into February and then January, we insert a leap day every four years. This keeps the calendar and the seasons together. Consequently, the vernal and autumnal equinoxes always occur in March and September respectively.

The Jewish calendar, however, is based on the relative motion of both the moon and the sun. It is, therefore, called a luni-solar calendar. Since it is based on the moon, the first of every month coincides with a new moon and the fifteenth of every month coincides with a full moon. The Jewish calendar keeps the months and their respective seasons together by the insertion of leap months. This means that most years have twelve months, but some have thirteen. The whole system has a nineteen-year cycle. It is more accurate than our solar calendar, but it’s more difficult to follow. The Jewish calendar does not mark the first day of spring, summer, fall, or winter. The primary markers in the Jewish calendar are the holidays.

The modern Jewish calendar has its secular and religious forms. The secular calendar begins with the month of Ethanim. The religious calendar begins with the month of Abib. The Bible consistently uses the religious form; i.e., the first month is always Abib. Ethanim and Abib are ancient Canaanite names for the first and seventh months respectively. However, beginning with the Babylonian exile, the Jews began using the Babylonian names for the months. Consequently, the post-exilic Biblical authors, Nehemiah and the author of Esther, used the Babylonian names. Today’s Jewish calendar also uses the Babylonian names.

The following table presents these essential ideas:

Religious Month	Canaanite Name	Babylonian Name	Gregorian Placement	Leviticus 23 Holiday
First	Abib	Nisan	March or April	Passover; Feast of Unleavened Bread; Wave Offering of First Fruits
Second	Ziv	Iyyar	April or May	
Third		Sivan ³	May or June	Pentecost
Fourth		Tammuz	June or July	
Fifth		Ab	July or August	
Sixth		Elul	August or September	
Seventh	Ethanim	Tishri	September or October	Trumpets; Day of Atonement; Feast of Tabernacles
Eighth	Bul	Cheshvan	October or November	
Ninth		Chislev	November or December	
Tenth		Tebeth	December or January	
Eleventh		Shebat	January or February	
Twelfth		Adar	February or March	
Thirteenth		Adar II	March	This is the leap month

2. The Weekly Holy Day

Sabbath (Shabbat)

“For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a Sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation. You shall not do any work; it is a Sabbath to the LORD in all your dwellings” (Leviticus 23:3). Sabbath means “rest.” The Sabbath celebration, spoken of in Leviticus 23, has its roots in the very creation of the world. God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. That is, he separated it from the others in kind and character. He made it holy. Because He rested after six days of labor, He enjoins His people to do likewise. Thus, the Sabbath becomes a weekly reminder that God is the creator of all things. The Jewish Sabbath liturgy invokes images of not only the creation, but also the moment by moment sustaining of it by God’s almighty hand “in Him all things hold together.” For Christians, the Sabbath also speaks of our future rest in the LORD: Hebrews 4:9-11 So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through *following* the same example of disobedience.

In Jesus’ days, a distorted view of the Sabbath, held firmly by the Jewish leadership, inhibited them from recognizing Him as the Messiah. Sabbath controversies occupy all four of the gospels. In each, the controversy hinges on Jesus’ practice of healing on the Sabbath. To the Jewish leadership, healing was work and should not take place on the Sabbath. Besides, the joy expressed by those Jesus healed “disrupted” the sanctity of the Sabbath. Jesus’ comments about the Sabbath : “But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,’ you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is LORD of the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:6-8). “How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:12). Jesus said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27).

3. The Spring Holy Days

A. Passover (Pesach)

“In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight is the LORD’s Passover” (Leviticus 23:5). The first month is Abib. In Hebrew, “abib” means green. It suggests the singular expression of spring: the re-greening, or re-birth, of the earth. For Israel, Passover means their birth as a nation. For this reason, although Leviticus gives only a few words to this holy day, Passover is the king of them all. It is by reason of Passover that Abib marks the beginning of the sacred Jewish Calendar. As the LORD told Moses, “This month ... is to be the first month of the year to you.” This is fitting, because Passover marks the beginning of the nation of Israel. When Moses commanded the congregation of Israel concerning this first Passover, they were still the slaves of the Egyptians. The day following this Passover meal, they were free.

Unleavened Bread

In the Exodus story, there was no time to let the bread rise before the Israelites had to leave Egypt. Unleavened bread represents the speed of their salvation. It also speaks of sinlessness. One interesting practice during the Passover celebration is the breaking of one of three pieces of unleavened bread. The first half is used immediately, but the second is wrapped in a cloth and hidden until after the meal. This is the bread that Jesus broke during the Last Supper. It speaks of His sinless perfection. The second piece

wrapped, hidden, and resurrected speaks of Jesus death, burial, and resurrection.

Bitter Herbs

Tasting the bitter herbs, i.e. horseradish, is an experience to bring tears to the eyes and a dramatic reminder of the bitterness of slavery. It was eaten on the broken unleavened bread, so it can also speak of the bitter tears of Jesus in Gethsemane and the bitterness of His coming death for mankind's sin.

Lamb

Since the destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 AD, the Jews do not eat roasted lamb during Passover. Instead they commemorate the lamb with the roasted shank-bone of a lamb. The lamb represents protection against the last plague that befell the Egyptians. It seems that the Angel of Death would also have slain the first born of the Israelites, were it not for the blood of the Passover lamb on the doorposts. On seeing the blood, the Angel of Death passed over the house. From this the celebration gets its name.

Other Things

There are other elements in the Passover celebration. There is a mixture of apples, 4 cups of wine, nuts, and honey called "Charoseth." The apples are grated and left exposed to turn brown. Consequently the mixture looks a little bit like the mud the Israelites used to make bricks. There is some green vegetable like parsley or celery to speak of spring and hope. There is salt water to represent tears. There are 10 drops of wine dripped from the second cup to represent the 10 plagues on the Egyptians. The 10 drops lower the volume of wine in the cups and indicate that the suffering of the Egyptians reduces our joy.

Jesus and Passover

During the Last Supper, Jesus appropriated elements of the Jewish Passover. That is, He endowed them with new meaning, and that meaning was tied to Himself. Instead of having meaning restricted to God's past redemption, these elements now symbolize the redemption of Jesus Christ as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" by His death at Calvary. At Passover, the Old and New Covenants meet. He is the lamb without defect. He is the broken bread. He is the cup of Redemption. As He said in Luke, He will not partake of Passover again, until He can share it with us in the coming Kingdom. The hand of God delivered from slavery in the past. On the cross, He delivered us from slavery to sin. The early church clearly identified Jesus with Passover. St. Paul says, Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

B. Feast of Unleavened Bread

"Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work. But for seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work" (Leviticus 23:6-8).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is an extension of Passover. The celebration is simple. Before it begins, you pass through your entire house to clear out all leavening agents and foods made with leaven. Leavening agents are things like yeast, baking powder, baking soda, and sour dough. Leaven makes bread and rolls

rise and become soft and fluffy. For the next seven days, all food is unleavened. Unleavened bread relates two aspects of God's deliverance. The first is the simple fact that the Israelites left Egypt in such a hurry that they did not have time to let their bread rise. The second is that the first several days saw them hurrying away, so that there still was not enough time to let bread rise. There would be no safety until there was enough distance between them and those who would come after them. Then they came to the Red Sea. In this sense the Feast of Unleavened Bread marks the very first stage of the journey. It was a time of hurry and danger, and then the trap.

Given that leaven also symbolizes sin, this feast is an object lesson in righteousness. As the family cleans the house and searches for all leaven, they play out the process of sanctification. It is a reminder of God's righteousness. For those of us who are Christians, this Feast of Unleavened Bread reminds us of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit as He searches out and frees us from the sin that inhabits our house. As Psalm 139 says, Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way (Psalm 139:23-24).

C. Wave Offering of First Fruits

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. Now on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb one year old without defect for a burnt offering to the LORD. Its grain offering shall then be two-tenths *of an ephah* of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire to the LORD *for* a soothing aroma, with its drink offering, a fourth of a hin of wine. Until this same day, until you have brought in the offering of your God, you shall eat neither bread nor roasted grain nor new growth. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places'" (Leviticus 23:9-14).

One of the days during the Feast of Unleavened Bread will be a Sabbath. The day following this Sabbath is the celebration of First Fruits. On this day, the first sheaf of harvested barley is brought to the Lord and waved before Him. The grain is then left for the priest and for the poor. This is an act of thanksgiving for the Lord's provision and bounty. No one is to eat from the new harvest until the wave offering is made. There is no direct Jewish Celebration of this today. However, given its placement between Passover and Pentecost and its emphasis on the Lord's provision, I see it as a reminder of the manna in the desert, which began shortly after the crossing of the Red Sea.

In terms of Christianity, it is worth noting that the resurrection of Jesus Christ occurred the day following the Sabbath. His resurrection corresponds to this wave offering. He is, Himself, a first fruits offering. As St. Paul says, But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death (1 Corinthians 15:20-26). Jesus' resurrection is the assurance of our resurrection. It is the promise that we will not see eternal death, but share in eternal life. When He rose from the dead, we became able to share in the new harvest, which I believe is the Holy Spirit.

D. Pentecost (Shavuot)

‘You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete Sabbaths⁴. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the LORD. You shall bring in from your dwelling places two *loaves* of bread for a wave offering made of two-tenths *of an ephah*; they shall be of a fine flour, baked with leaven as first fruits to the LORD. Along with the bread you shall present seven one year old male lambs without defect, and a bull of the herd and two rams; they are to be a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD. You shall also offer one male goat for a sin offering and two male lambs one-year-old for a sacrifice of peace offerings. The priest shall then wave them with the bread of the first fruits for a wave offering with two lambs before the LORD; they are to be holy to the LORD for the priest. On this same day you shall make a proclamation as well; you are to have a holy convocation. You shall do no laborious work. It is to be a perpetual statute in all your dwelling places throughout your generations. When you reap the harvest of your land, moreover, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field nor gather the gleaning of your harvest; you are to leave them for the needy and the alien. I am the LORD your God’ (Leviticus 23:15-22).

Pentecost gets its name from the counting of fifty days from the Sabbath following Passover. This places the holiday in the third month (Sivan) of the Jewish Calendar. It coincides with the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, which is what the holiday celebrates. The most unique aspect of this celebration in the temple was the waving of two **leavened** loaves of bread before the Lord. This was the only leavened offering made in the temple! These loaves, like the earlier wave offering, are also declared to be a First Fruits offering. Perhaps the loaves were to look like the two tablets of the Law. The Jewish celebration of Pentecost often begins by staying up all night to read Torah. They emphasize the Ten Commandments. In this way they remember the events that took place at Mount Sinai. Also, because of its association with the spring harvest, the Jews will read the Book of Ruth. And because Mount Sinai also looks forward to the time when Israel would enter the “land flowing with milk and honey,” the foods of Pentecost are rich with milk, cream, and honey. I should add that the honey also speaks of the sweetness of God’s word. Pentecost completes the Exodus story. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread tell of the escape from Egypt. The First Fruits speaks of manna and God’s provision in the desert. Pentecost speaks of the giving of the Law, which in some respects became the Constitution for Israel, the nation.

In Christianity, Pentecost marks the giving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1). Perhaps St. Paul was even thinking of the wave offering of the two loaves when he wrote, For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having **the first fruits of the Spirit**, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body (Romans 8:19-23).

Today’s Messianic Jews have an interesting view of the two **leavened** loaves of bread offered in the temple during Pentecost. Since leaven is a symbol for sin, why is this offering different from all other grain offerings by specifying the inclusion of leaven? It is this: Because of the atonement brought about by Jesus, the Holy Spirit can indwell us and we are able to “draw near with confidence to the throne of grace.” Though we still contain leaven, we can get help in time of need. They see in the loaves the Jewish and Gentile

believers offered before the Lord as first fruits of what is to come. The Church is not complete without the Jews and the Gentiles. In this light, the practice of reading Ruth also foreshadowed the unity of the Jewish and Gentile believers.

E. Jesus and the Spring Holy Days

In fact, the older meanings are essential to the new meanings. In any case, the following table succinctly shows the relationships:

	Old Covenant (Shadow)	New covenant (Substance)
Passover	Moses the mediator Lamb’s blood Unleavened Bread Wine	Jesus the mediator Messiah’s blood His body His blood
Feast of Unleavened Bread	Removing leaven Redemption from slavery in Egypt	Sanctification Redemption from slavery to sin
Wave Offering of First Fruits	Waving of the sheaf Manna	Jesus’ resurrection Bread of life
Pentecost	Fire on the mountain Giving of the Law Law written on stone Two leavened loaves Birth of a nation	Fire on the believers Giving of the Holy Spirit Law written in the heart Jews and Gentiles Birth of the Church

4. The Fall Holy Days

A. Feast of Trumpets (Yom Teruah; Rosh Hashannah)

Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘In the seventh month on the first of the month you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall not do any laborious work, but you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD’” (Leviticus 23:23-25). The trumpets remind the Jews of at least eight things:

1. To prepare for the coming Day of Atonement by examining the life you have lived this past year.
2. To celebrate the creation with God as its King. This is because, according to Jewish tradition, creation began on the first day of the seventh month.
3. To remember that the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai with the loud blast of a shofar (Exodus 19:16-19).
4. To imagine the sound of the heavenly shepherd recalling those who have strayed from Israel’s fold.

5. To rejoice in freedom from slavery. In the past, slaves were freed at the blast of a shofar.
6. To rejoice in restoration. Property was returned at the blast of the shofar at the Jubilee Year (Leviticus 25:9).
7. To remember Abraham's obedience when he offered his son Isaac. When Abraham sacrificed Isaac, a ram was caught in the thicket by its horns.
8. To look forward to the coming of Messiah's kingdom, which the blast of the shofar will bring in.

As the spring holy days spoke of the first coming of Messiah, so we can begin to see that the fall holidays speak of His return. This is seen by the consistent imagery of trumpets in the New Testament: And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other (Matthew 24:31). "... in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed (1 Corinthians 15:52)". "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first (1 Thessalonians 4:16)". "And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them (Revelation 8:6)". In short, the trumpets announce the coming of the King. As such, they call for the people of God to prepare their hearts for His coming. As Jesus has said, He wants to come and find us at our posts. For the lost, the trumpets call for repentance. Failing repentance, the trumpets announce the coming Judgment of God. Consequently, the next holy day will be, for each person, either a Day of Atonement or the Day of Judgment.

B. Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "On exactly the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls and present an offering by fire to the LORD. You shall not do any work on this same day, for it is a Day of Atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before the LORD your God. If there is any person who will not humble himself on this same day, he shall be cut off from his people. As for any person who does any work on this same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall do no work at all. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. It is to be a Sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall humble your souls; on the ninth of the month at evening, from evening until evening you shall keep your Sabbath" (Leviticus 23:26-32).

The Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur, represents the day when the priest puts on special clothes and makes offerings to atone, or cleanse, the holy sanctuary, the temple, and the altar. He then makes atonement for the priests and the people. The day is solemn and serious. It is a day of complete rest and fasting with a goal of humbling the soul. As a holy day, it serves to remind us of the gravity and offense of sin. The eve of the Day of Atonement begins with the blast of a shofar. Afterwards, the shofars are silent until next year. Yom Kippur begins in the evening of the ninth day of the seventh month. In modern Judaism there is an important liturgical chant sung on this evening. It is called Kol Nidre, which in Hebrew means "All Vows." It is a rescinding of vows: a cleansing of vows that were made, but remain unfulfilled and un-fulfillable. Before the destruction of the temple, the atonement of the people involved two goats. By casting lots the priest chose between the goats. One was chosen for the Lord, the other was chosen for Azazel (usually translated as scapegoat). The priest transferred the sins of the people onto the scapegoat and then it was driven into the wilderness. The first goat paid the penalty of the people's sin, the second took the sin away. The ancient

Jews considered the two goats to be two halves of a single sacrifice. Therefore, they would select two goats that very closely resembled each other. Although the Day of Atonement is about the payment and removal of the sins of the nation for a year, it also looks forward to the day of Israel’s salvation. BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen (Revelation 1:7).

C. Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth)

Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the Feast of Booths for seven days to the LORD. On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work of any kind. For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the LORD; it is an assembly. You shall do no laborious work. These are the appointed times of the LORD which you shall proclaim as holy convocations, to present offerings by fire to the LORD—burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, *each day’s matter on its own day—besides those of the Sabbaths of the LORD, and besides your gifts and besides all your vows and freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD. On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the crops of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD for seven days, with a rest on the first day and a rest on the eighth day. Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. You shall thus celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths, so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God*” (Leviticus 23:33-43).

Five days after the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles) begins. The principle element of this celebration is “living in booths” for a week. And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one. ... Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths. And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them. If the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no *rain will fall* on them; it will be the plague with which the LORD smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths. This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths (Zechariah 14:9, 16-19).

		Old Covenant (Shadow)	New Covenant (Substance)
Blowing of Trumpets	of	Trumpets announce the coming Day of Atonement.	A series of plagues announce the coming Day of the Lord.
Day of Atonement		Annual atonement and removal of sin from Israel.	The return of Jesus.
Feast	of	Remembering the wilderness	The reign of Jesus Christ over

Tabernacles	travels with the presence of God in the camp.	ALL
-------------	---	-----

The Lamp, the Loaves, and the Loudmouth (Leviticus 24)

The structure of our chapter is composed of three distinct sections:

- The lamp-stand (vv. 1-4)
- The showbread (vv. 5-9)
- The blasphemer (vv. 10-23)

1. “Give Me Oil in My Lamp” (24:1-4)

The golden lamp-stand has already appeared in the Pentateuch several times (Exodus 25:31-40; 27:20-21; 37:17-24; 40:25-26), and it will occur again (Num. 8:1-4; 1 Sam. 3:3). It was placed in the holy place to provide light in the darkness of the tabernacle, the flames in this lamp must never go out. The key term in verses 1-4 is “continually,” found three times (vv. 2, 3, 4). The Israelites were to provide a constant supply of beaten olive oil, which was to be brought to Moses (v. 2). Aaron was given the task of keeping the lamp(s) burning, especially during the night hours (“from evening till morning,” v. 3), and thus this task would be inherited by the sons of Aaron (vv. 3-4). Without this light, Aaron and the priests could not see sufficiently to carry out their tasks. Worse yet, they might make some mistake in the darkness (for example, stumble into the holy of holies!), which could prove fatal. Such a small thing as this lamp was vital to the tremendously important sacrificial process, some of which took place inside the tabernacle.

2. Israel’s Weekly Bread (24:5-9)

In ancient Israel, there was a weekly ceremony of the “changing of the loaves.” It took place once a week on the Sabbath. Twelve large loaves (each loaf took about 6 1/2 pounds of flour) were baked, and on the Sabbath these were exchanged, replacing the old loaves with the new, which were arranged on the golden table. This “week old” bread was part of the “holy food” eaten by the priests. It is clear that this exchange of loaves is to happen regularly, consistently, and without any interruption.

There are at least two reasons why the continual changing of the loaves was important. First, these loaves were a part of the sacrificial offerings. Only a part of the loaves was offered, and this portion, which would be offered up by fire, would be accompanied by frankincense (v. 7). To fail to provide these loaves would hinder the sacrificial process, which was symbolic of an “everlasting covenant” (v. 8). Secondly, these loaves (or, more accurately, what remained of them) were a part of the food of the priests (v. 9).

The importance of maintaining the light in the lamp and the loaves on the table underscores a very important principle, one which is found in both the Old and the New Testaments: **SPIRITUAL MINISTRY REQUIRES PHYSICAL SUPPORT.**

3. The Loudmouth (24:10-23)

Here, we are dealing with an individual who blasphemes, using the name of God, which ultimately results in action being taken “outside the camp,” with the execution of a blasphemer. A young man, whose father was an Egyptian and whose mother was an Israelite, became involved in a disagreement, which led to blows. We are not told who started the fight, or who won. Sometime during the exchange of blows the young half-Israelite uttered the name of God as a curse against his foe. There is an obvious note of disdain for this

half-breed boy. His father's name is not given, nor is his lineage given. The mother's name is given, however, along with the information about her lineage.

There is no question about the fact that blasphemy was already forbidden. The prohibitions which the Israelites have already been given are: "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain" (Exodus. 20:7). "You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people" (Exodus. 22:28). The decision from God given here clarified the law pertaining to blasphemy. The specific answer was that this young man must be stoned to death. All of the witnesses—those who overheard the blasphemy—were to lay their hands on the head of the one who was to be put to death. Thus, every Israelite identified with God and His law in the execution of the blasphemer.

4. Principles of Justice

In addition to the specific revelation concerning the fate of the blasphemer, God laid down two general principles of punishment, which were evident in this case, but which also were to govern punishment in a much broader class of offenses.

(1) The punishment shall be equal to the crime. The standard, "an eye for an eye," expresses this principle.

(2) Punishment shall be equally administered, regardless of the race, social, or economic status of the person.

In the New Testament the person who sees a brother "overtaken in a fault" is to take the initiative process of witness (Matt. 18:15-20; Gal. 6:1-2). If the guilty party refuses to repent, then the entire church is to "put the offender out," in a way not unlike the Israelites took the offender "outside the camp" (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5). As I understand the Scriptures, if the New Testament rebel refuses to repent, the death penalty may be executed by God, perhaps using Satan as an instrument of punishment (1 Cor. 5:5; 11:30; 1 Tim. 1:20; James 5:14-16).

In conclusion, blasphemy is defaming God's name, and God's character and reputation are reflected by His name(s). The Bible informs us that there are a number of ways in which we can blaspheme. Among these are:

- Willful disobedience—Num. 15:30
- Rejecting God's Word—2 Ki. 18:17-25 (Isa. 37:1-7, 23)
- Acting treacherously against God—Ezek. 20:27; 36:20-32
- Failing to give God the glory He deserves—Rom. 1:18; Rev. 16:9, 11
- Rejection of the gospel—Acts 13:45; 1 Tim. 1:13

Those who take the name of the Lord in vain, who blaspheme His name, will someday have to kneel before Him and, as it were, eat their words, acknowledging His lordship, His holiness, and His majesty. What an awful thing for one to do who has not received Him as Savior and Lord. For those who have trusted in Him, the name of God is the object of our praise, which will be our eternal occupation in heaven (cf. Rev. 4 and 5).

Super-Sabbath: Israel's Land and Its Lord (Leviticus 25:1-34)

1. Overview:

The entire chapter deals with the Sabbath year and the super-Sabbath, the year of Jubilee, which comes every 50th year. The two events are very much inter-related, and are thus both dealt with at the same time. Verses 1-34 lay down God's law pertaining to the land, while verses 35-55 prescribe the application of the Sabbath to the people.

According to the instructions God gave in Leviticus 25 the observance of the Sabbath year involved several things. First, the land must lie fallow and given its rest (v. 2). The seventh year, crops could not be planted, and those crops which were permanent (e.g. grapes, olive trees) were not to be pruned or cared for as they were the other six years (v. 3). The annual crops would re-seed themselves and thus there would be grain, and the perennial plants would continue to bear fruit. No harvests were allowed during the Sabbath year (v. 5). By this, I understand that the crops were not to be harvested for sale. This did not prohibit the people from eating the crops, however. In fact, all the people, especially the poor (and even the animals) could eat in the fields (vv. 6-7). Rather than having the corners of the fields in which to glean, the poor could eat from any portion of the field. Elsewhere the Israelites were instructed to forgive debts, which were owed them and unpaid by their Israelite brethren (Deut. 15:1ff.). Also in Deuteronomy 31 we learn that the Sabbath year was to begin at the Feast of Booths (31:10) and that the law was read at this time as well (31:13).

There was a great deal of faith required of the Israelites to follow these commandments pertaining to the Sabbath year. After all, letting the fields lie fallow for a whole year seemed like a waste, and put the Israelite in the position of having to trust God for his daily bread. In verses 18-22 of Leviticus 25 God assumed that some would have their doubts about the Sabbath year observance, and thus He assured the Israelites of His provision. In addition, let it be kept in mind that in Exodus chapter 16 God instituted the Sabbath day observance with regard to the gathering of the manna. For some time, then, the people had been experiencing God's faithfulness in this matter. God gave the people a small test of faith before He gave a larger one. Israel was thus prepared for what God commanded here.

The super-Sabbath was similar to, but not identical with, the Sabbath year. The year of Jubilee commenced with the sounding of the ram's horn on the annual Day of Atonement (on the tenth day of the seventh month). It would seem that the land had to lie fallow for 2 years since the year of Jubilee was the 50th year, following on the heels of the 7th (49th) year. On the Sabbath year the all debts were canceled, but in the year of Jubilee the Israelite who has sold himself to another is released, and the land which has been leased (since it cannot be sold, v. 23) to another is restored to its original owner. Only houses, which were in walled cities, were exempt, and after a redemption period of one year, it became the permanent possession of its purchaser. There is an interesting and very obvious contrast between loans, which were made to a needy Israelite, and the lease of an Israelite's land, until the year of Jubilee. Loans were to be made without any consideration of how many years were left to repay the loan (Deut. 15:7-11). Leases, however, must be made by calculating the number of years remaining until the Jubilee (Lev. 25:14-16; cf. 26-28).

2. The Purpose of the Sabbath and Super-Sabbath

- (1) The Sabbath and super-Sabbath was a reminder of the fact that God owned the land (v. 23).
- (2) It made it possible for the people of Israel to become the recipients of divine blessing.
- (3) The commands related to the observance of the Sabbath and Jubilee years were tests of the Israelite's faith and obedience, and the basis for God's blessings or discipline.

(4) The regulations regarding the use of the land were a provision for the poor, providing them with food in times of need and with the possibility of a new beginning.

(5) The “laws of the land” were designed to hinder materialism and to keep in check those who would try to accumulate vast land holdings, at the expense of others. If these land laws were followed, there would be little incentive for one to lease the land of another, since the land would ultimately be returned to its owner, and since the price of the lease was directly tied to the value of its crops.

3. The “Laws of the Land” and the Messiah

The ideals established by the “laws of the land” prepared the way for the Messiah who was to come, and through whom both men and the land would be brought to full restoration (Rom. 8:18-25). It is not surprising, then, that when our Lord appeared as Israel’s Messiah, He spoke of Himself and His ministry in “jubilee” terms and imagery. In the fourth chapter of Luke’s gospel our Lord read from Isaiah 61:1-2a in the synagogue and said that these words had been fulfilled in the hearing of His audience (Luke 4:21). I believe that our Lord was claiming to be the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, as well as to being the antitype of the year of jubilee. In Is. 61:1, from which Jesus was quoting, the word used for “release” ... is the same as that found in Lev. 25:10. It seems quite likely, therefore, that the prophetic description of the “acceptable year of the Lord” was partly inspired by the idea of the jubilee year. The messianic age brings liberty to the oppressed and release to the captives. This age was inaugurated with Christ’s first coming (Luke 4:21). It will be completed by his second coming (Jas. 5:1-8; Luke 16:19-31). The jubilee, then, not only looks back to God’s first redemption of his people from Egypt (Lev. 25:38, 55), but forward to the “restitution of all things,” “for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (Acts 3:31; 2 Pet. 3:13).

Taking Interest in Your Neighbor (Leviticus 25:35-55)

1. An Overview of the Text

There are three levels of poverty, which are dealt with in the last half of Leviticus chapter 25. The three sections of this passage deal with each level of poverty, prescribe certain obligations with regard to the poor, inform the reader of God’s purpose for requiring these obligations, and give a reason, which should motivate the Israelite to obey. We can summarize the last part of chapter 25 in this way:

Verses:	35-38	39-46	47-55
Problem:	Cash flow shortage	Poverty	Dire Poverty
Solution:	Loan	Slave of Israelite	Slave of Stranger
Conditions/ Obligations:	No interest to be charged	No harsh treatment A day laborer Released (Jubilee)	Right of Redemption Not deal harshly Release (Jubilee)
Goal/Purpose:	So he can dwell in the land	So he can dwell in the land	So he can dwell in the land (implied)

Motivation:	God's deliverance from Egypt	They are God's servants	They are God's servants
-------------	------------------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------

2. Temporary Poverty and Its Obligations (25:35-38)

The first type of poverty, addressed in verses 35-38, is a temporary and less serious one. Today we would call this a "cash flow problem." In farming terms, it would be the result of a bad year, or at least of a bad crop. The Israelite is short of funds and may not have the means to provide for his family, to "tide them over" until the next crop can be harvested. Also, he may not have the means to purchase seed so that he can sow his fields. What is needed, then, is enough food and provisions to get by until the next crop or the next season, and perhaps the capital to plant the next season's crop. God's solution is a "no-interest loan." This solves the present shortfall, provides for future income, and does so in a way that does not penalize the individual.

An interest bearing loan is considerably undesirable, and for good reason. First, it is not good for the recipient of the loan. To charge him interest in his hour of need is to further handicap him. It tends to create a greater gap between the poor and the rich. Interest, in such a case, tends to promote and perpetuate poverty, not solve it. Secondly, loaning money at interest is not good for the lender, either. Loaning money to a brother in distress is not showing him compassion, but is taking advantage of his weakness and vulnerability. It is not an act of charity, but a business activity. And, the lender does not manifest the grace of God, of which he is the recipient. For these reasons, interest cannot be charged on a loan made to a brother in distress. In Deut. 15:1-2, God instructed the Israelites that they must cancel all unpaid debts on the seventh year. Further, when loaning brother money, no consideration was to be made as to how soon the cancellation year was (Deut. 15:9-10). Thus, not only was the generous Israelite not able to make money on the loan, he was not even assured that he would be paid back. This kind of loan was an act of charity, not a business venture. For these reasons, the temporarily distressed Israelite brother should be aided toward recovery and the possession of his land by being given a no-interest loan, which enables him to get back on his feet, and avoids placing him in greater bondage.

3. On Being Your Brother's (Slave) Keeper (25:39-46)

The next two categories of poverty are much more serious and long-term. Rather than the temporary "cash flow" problem of the first category, this is a matter of real financial disaster. To put the matter in farming terms, if the first category is the result of a bad crop, the second two categories are the result of several disastrous years. The result was that the debtor would be forced to sell himself, either to a fellow-Israelite (vv. 39-46) or to a stranger (vv. 47-55). We see a few instances in the Old Testament where this kind of slavery occurred or was threatened. One is found in the Book of 2 Kings, where we read, "Now a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, 'Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD; and the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves'" (2 Ki. 4:1). This sad story ends well, for Elisha had the woman and her sons gather vessels, into which he had her pour from her little jar of oil. These filled containers of oil paid her debt and provided means for income (vv. 2-7). In verses 39-46, God gave instructions to the Israelites as to how they should deal with an Israelite brother who became their slave due to dire poverty. God's instruction to the Israelite who would have attained such a "slave" was that his brother should not be treated as a slave. When the year of Jubilee arrived (or, more commonly, the sabbath year, Exodus. 21:2-4), the slave was to be

released, so that he could return to the property of his forefathers (Lev. 25:41). The reason for this is that the Israelites (including the distressed one who became the slave of his brother) became God's servants (slaves) at the exodus, and no slave can have two masters. Revering God required obedience to this command (Lev. 25:43). To further clarify the commandment of verses 39-43, God indicated that this did not prohibit slavery altogether (vv. 44-46). An Israelite could not be made a slave since he already was God's slave (vv. 39-43), but since non-Israelites were not God's slaves, they could become the possession of the Israelites. Later on, in Deuteronomy, God will specifically say that even non-Israelite slaves cannot be harshly treated (Deut. 24:14-15).

4. Treatment of Israelite Slaves by Strangers (25:47-55)

To my knowledge, this is the only place where the possibility of an Israelite becoming the slave of a sojourner is mentioned. While a fellow Israelite did not redeem this slave, the nation is responsible to see to it that their brother is dealt with as God's servant. He is not to be dealt with harshly (v. 53), and in the year of Jubilee he is to be released (v. 54). Beyond this, he has the guarantee of the right of redemption at any time, either by a relative or by himself (vv. 47-52). The basis for this command is the same as it was in the previous circumstance (vv. 42-43): the sons of Israel became God's servants, and thus they cannot become the slave of any man (v. 55).

5. Overall Observations

First, we find that there is great continuity in the teaching of Leviticus and that of Exodus and Deuteronomy. All three books (of Moses) deal with the subject of the Israelite overtaken by poverty. There is further development and clarification, just as we would expect, consistent with the concept of progressive revelation.

Second, Israel is to show compassion to the poor and the oppressed in order to imitate God. In Exodus and Leviticus, the strongest incentive for obeying God's instructions concerning the poor is the kindness and grace of God in delivering His oppressed people, who were slaves of Pharaoh (Lev. 25:38, 42, 55), and the blessing of God in the land (Deut. 15: 4, 6, 10, 14).

Third, the poor who are primarily in view here are Israelites. The Israelites have a primary obligation to their brethren, who are distressed by poverty.

Fourth, the poverty of a fellow Israelite is presented as something, which is to be expected, even though God had promised to prosper His people. "If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks" (Deut. 15:7-8). "You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings. For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying. 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land'" (Deut. 15:10-11).

Fifth, while sin and sluggardliness is elsewhere identified as one cause of poverty, this is not viewed as the cause of poverty here (Prov. 24:30-34).

Sixth, grace is both the motive and the manifestation when it comes to the care of the poor in the Pentateuch.

Seventh, one of the reasons why the poor must be generously helped is to enable him to be able to dwell with his fellow-Israelites.

6. The Christian Interpretation and Contemporary Application of Leviticus 25

(1) The duty of God's people is to imitate God, so as to manifest His character to men by our actions. "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil. 2:3-8)". In encouraging the Macedonian Christians to fulfill that which they had committed to do, St. Paul used our Lord's example as a motivation for giving to the poor: "I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich (2 Cor. 8:8-9)". The practice of the early church and the precepts laid down by our Lord's apostles make this abundantly clear: For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, and lay them at the apostles' feet ... (Acts 4:34-35a; 6:1-7).

It is readily apparent that the collection which was taken in the early church was not primarily for the pastor's salary, nor for the physical facilities of the church, nor for the program of the church, but for the care of the poor. Also, the poor "brethren" included those of another race and culture, and of another country. Today, on the other hand, we find it hard to help the poor among us, whom we can see, and we hardly think of helping our brothers and sisters in the third world who are "dirt poor." The New Testament does not restrict our obligation to merely the sharing of money or material goods. Those who are "strong" are repeatedly instructed to help the "weak": Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME." (Rom. 15:1-3). "And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men (1 Thes. 5:14)". In addition to viewing "giving" as the imitation of Christ, we should, I believe, include as well the matter of "forgiving," which I think is often more difficult. Old Testament charity often involved the forgiving of debts, but charity (especially, but not exclusively in the New Testament) includes forgiving other "debts," which are referred to in our Lord's prayer, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt. 6:12).

(2) The duty of the Christian is to love his neighbor as himself, and thus to minister to him in time of need.

(3) The key to obeying our obligation to God and to our neighbor by ministering out of our strength to the weakness of others is to be properly motivated. Proper motivation is probably the most important single factor in our obedience to God. It is my experience that those who sincerely desire to obey God and to help others in need will find a way of doing so. Look, for example, at the Macedonians, who gave out of their poverty, not out of wealth (2 Cor. 8:1-5). On the other hand, those who are selfish will find a way not to share, even though they have an abundance.

(4) Finally, redemption is the goal of charity. Our ultimate goal as well, while we must be concerned with the poverty of our brother, we must be even more intent upon the spiritual deliverance of men and women from their debt of sin and from their bondage to Satan. The goal of New Testament ministry is redemptive, just as was the goal of helping the poor in the Old Testament.

A Welcome Warning (Leviticus 26)

1. The Structure of Our Text

- Preface—Summary of the Mosaic Covenant (vv. 1-2)
- Promised blessings for keeping the Mosaic Covenant (vv. 3-13)
- Promised penalties for disobeying the Mosaic Covenant (vv. 14-39)
- Promised fulfillment of Abrahamic Covenant (vv. 40-45)
- Conclusion—Summary (v. 46)

2. Divine Blessing: Its Causes and Characteristics (26:1-13)

God's blessings on Israel are conditioned by Israel's keeping of the Mosaic Covenant: "If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out, then I shall give you ..." (Lev. 26:3-4a). The blessings which God promised Israel are directly related to the possession of the land of Canaan. They can be summed up in three categories: (1) PEACE; (2) PROSPERITY; (3) THE PRESENCE OF GOD. **Peace can be seen in several areas.** First, there is **peace from Israel's enemies.** Second, **peace with respect to the wild animals.** **Prosperity is principally material.** **Agriculturally and great fertility to the Israelites and to their cattle** to enjoy the "good life." **Finally, Israel was blessed by the presence of God in their midst** (Lev. 26:11-12).

3. The Consequences of Israel's Disobedience

- (1) FROM PROSPERITY TO POVERTY
- (2) FROM PEACE TO PERIL;
- (3) FROM GOD'S PRESENCE TO HIS ABSENCE⁵

Instead of prosperity, disobedience will bring poverty. Initially, Israel's crops will be consumed by raiding enemies (26:16). If Israel's disobedience persists, as it surely will, the rains will cease, Israel's crops will fail, and thus a famine will result (26:26). It is not stated but is likely implied that fertility will also cease. Not only will new life be limited by infertility, but men will be killed by hostile animals (26:22). Pestilence will kill many (26:21, 25), and eventually this people will turn against one another, resorting to cannibalism (26:29).

Instead of peace and security, disobedience will bring about insecurity, and fear. Initially, Israel will suffer from the raiding attacks of some of their neighbors, who will steal their crops (26:16). Then, Israel will be defeated by the enemies and delivered into their hands, so that they are ruled by them (26:17, 25). Finally, the Israelites will be driven from the land and will live, dispersed and scattered, in the land of their conquerors (26:31-32, 36, 38). The remnant who remain in the land will suffer as much as those who are taken away (26:39). The peace and security which they could have known is traded for insecurity, fear, and constant apprehension (26:36-37).

In place of the presence of God in the midst of His people, Israel will experience a growing separation from Him. He will first set His face against His people (v. 17). Then, because His people have been hostile against Him (26:21, 23), He will become their enemy (26:24, 28). He will drive them from His

sanctuary (which they have not revered) to the land of their enemies, far from His (perceived) presence. In their absence, the land will enjoy the Sabbaths which the Israelites never observed (26:34-35).

4. Characteristics of the Chapter

(1) The rules which God has laid down for Israel, as well as the results of obedience or disobedience, are clearly defined.

(2) God's standards for Israel's conduct and the consequences for obedience or disobedience are given well in advance of punishment or blessing.

(3) The motivation of Leviticus 26 is both negative and positive. The purpose of this chapter is to motivate Israel to keep God's covenant, and the best motivation, as is illustrated here, is both positive (blessings/rewards) and negative (cursing/discipline).

(4) The purpose is always positive, as is the motivation of the God who prescribes these blessings and cursing. First, God's response to Israel's sins is to discipline His people, to bring them to repentance. At every stage of increasing penalty, it is due to the fact that the Israelites have not repented and turned from their disobedience (vv. 18, 21, 23, 27). And, in the final outcome, God assures Israel that He will restore them, not based on their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, but on the basis of His faithfulness to His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (vv. 40-45). Israel is always assured of God's love and of His good intentions and purposes for His people.

(5) The consequences of Israel's disobedience are sequentially and more progressively painful. This progression of painfulness can be seen in two ways in this chapter. First, it can be seen in the sequence of penalties outlined:

- First stage (vv. 14-17)
- Second stage (vv. 18-20)
- Third stage (vv. 21-22)
- Fourth stage (vv. 23-26)
- Fifth stage (vv. 27-33)
- Results of this last stage (vv. 34-39)
- Land gets Sabbaths (vv. 34-35)
- People fear, flee, perish (vv. 36-39)

Also, when one considers the three areas of blessing and cursing, peace, prosperity, and the presence of God, the punishment for Israel's disobedience and rebellion gets progressively worse. The repeated expression, "seven times" (vv. 18, 21, 24, 28) further emphasizes this progression. Note the intensification of divine discipline in the three areas of blessing or cursing:

- Prosperity:
 - Crops stolen
 - No rain, crops fail, famine
 - Cattle die by wild beasts
 - Health progressively fails, finally death for many (cannibalism)
- Peace:
 - Israel first attacked, raided by enemies
 - Then ruled by enemies
 - Then scattered to live in enemy's land

- Presence of God:
- God with them
- God sets face against them
- God “abandons” them—expels from His land, His dwelling place

(6) **Finally, God dealt with Israel’s sin and with repentance at its roots, at the level of motivation.** Israel’s disobedience is seen to be the result of abhorrence of God’s laws (v. 15). God reaffirms His love for Israel, which is intended to encourage and stimulate Israel’s love for Him. God assures Israel of her ultimate hope, which encourages repentance and obedience. It is not mere mechanical compliance which God desires of His people, but obedience, rooted in love.

The Value of a Vow (Leviticus 27)

1. The Structure of Leviticus 27

- Vows of people—vv. 1-8
- Vows of animals—vv. 9-13
- Vowed houses—vv. 14-15
- Vowed inheritance (family land) vv. 16-21
- Vowed (non-family) land—vv. 22-25
- Illicit vows—vv. 26-33
- Conclusion—v. 34

2. The Definition of a Vow

It is a promise to worship God with a certain offering in the future, motivated by gratitude for God’s grace in the life of the offerer. The reason for the delay in making the offering was that the offerer was not able, at that moment to make the offering. The vow was made, promising to offer something to God if God would intervene on behalf of the individual, making the offering possible. In many instances, the vow was made in a time of great danger or need. Numerous examples of vows similar to those of Leviticus 27 can be found in the Bible. Jacob vowed to pay a tithe if God would bless and keep him (Gen. 28:20-22). The Nazarite vow is defined in Numbers chapter 6 and Samson (Judg. 13) is the most famous Old Testament example. When the Israelites fought the Canaanite king of Arad, they vowed to utterly destroy their cities if God gave them victory (Num. 21:1-3). The most tragic vow is that of Jephthah, who vowed to offer to God the first thing to come from his tent to greet him, which proved to be his only daughter (Judges 11:29-40). Hannah vowed that if God gave her a son she would give him to the Lord all his life (1 Sam. 1:10-11). Jonah’s vow was made from the belly of the great fish that had swallowed him (Jonah 2:9). Vows were also made by the heathen (Jonah 1:16). In the New Testament, we find that St. Paul continued to make vows and fulfill them (Acts 18:18; cf. 21:23).

3. The Gift of Persons (vv. 1-8)

Persons and well as property could be devoted to God, thus the first section of the chapter deals with the various categories of persons who might be vowed as an offering to God. It is assumed that these persons would either serve in ministry related to the tabernacle, or would at least serve the priests. The value of such persons is to be determined by the category into which they fall, corresponding to their age and sex. Their worth seems to be their “market value,” what the person would bring in the market place. There is therefore no demeaning of women here, or of the young or elderly, but only a recognition of what value this person had in the market place. While a 20% penalty is paid by those who would redeem various other

possessions devoted to God, no such penalty is named here. The value that is set on each person seems to be the price which would have to be paid to redeem that person. The price was high enough that no additional penalty needed to be assessed. There is a gracious provision here, for if a person was overtaken by poverty, the priests could determine a lower redemption price (27:8).

4. The Gift of Animals (vv. 9-13)

Verses 9-13 lay down regulations regarding the gift of animals, both the clean animals, which could be offered to God (vv. 9-10), and the unclean (vv. 11-13), which could be used by the priests or sold. No animal which could be an offering could be redeemed, nor could it be exchanged for another. To preclude this from happening, if a substitution were made, both animals are now holy, and will be used for sacrifices. To put the matter in more contemporary terms, if a man vowed to give God his Rolls Royce, and then attempted to substitute a Mercedes Benz in its place, both automobiles would become God's. Unclean animals, animals which could not be offered as a sacrifice, could be redeemed. The value of the animal would be set by the priest, and a 20% penalty would be added if the offerer wished to buy this animal back.

5. The Gift of a House (vv. 14-15)

It is not stated as such, but the house which is given here may be that which is not a part of the family estate, but another piece of property, which would not revert to the owner in the year of jubilee. The value of the house would be established by the priest, and the house may be redeemed by the payment of that value, plus a 20% penalty.

6. The Gift of Fields of One's Family Inheritance (vv. 16-21)

One might also dedicate a portion of his family inheritance, that property which would revert to the owner or his heirs in the year of jubilee. The value of this property was to be determined by the amount of seed it took to plant the field. To redeem the field, the donor would be required to pay 50 shekels of silver for every homer of barley seed required for planting. It would seem that this was 50 shekels for the 50 years till jubilee, and thus one shekel per year, per homer of barley seed used. The number of years remaining till jubilee would determine the value of the gift, as well as the price required to redeem it (plus the 20% penalty fee, v. 19). If the man who dedicated this field attempts to negate his vow by selling this property to another (apparently without the knowledge of the purchaser), the property would then revert to the Lord in the jubilee, and not to the original owner who devoted it to God by a vow. The property would then become the possession of the priest.

7. The Gift of Purchased Fields (vv. 22-25)

A man might purchase the fields of a fellow-Israelite and then devote these to God as an offering. If so, the priest would determine the value of this property, taking into account the number of years till the jubilee. It seems that payment of the cash value of the property was to be made in advance in this case ("on that day," v. 23). When the year of jubilee arrived, the land would revert to its original owner and not to the donor (v. 24). The monetary standard when establishing the value of property was the "shekel of the sanctuary" (v. 25; Exodus 30:13; Num. 3:47; 18:16). No doubt some devious Israelite may have tried to pay off his debt to the Lord according to some other monetary standard, which was of a lesser value. The shekel was to be twenty gerahs. No room for monetary manipulation here.

8. Prohibited Gifts (vv. 26-34)

Not only might some be tempted to pay their obligation to the Lord with money of a lesser value, but some would even be so bold as to devote something to God by a vow which was already His. These prohibited gifts are enumerated in the final verses of the chapter. The **first born** among the animals already belonged to God (Exodus 13:2), and thus could not be vowed to Him as a dedicated gift (vv. 26-27). Any unclean first-born animal could be redeemed by paying its value, plus 20%.

Any “proscribed thing,” that which was already devoted to the Lord, could not be vowed as a gift to the Lord, nor could it be redeemed (vv. 28-29). The person who was under the ban could not be redeemed, but must be put to death. The tenths which already belonged to the Lord could not be dedicated to the Lord as a vow, either (vv. 30-33). If a man wished to redeem any of his produce from the land, he would have to pay the 20% penalty. The tenths of the flock, however, could not be redeemed, and the selection of the tenth animal must not in any way be manipulated. To attempt to exchange an animal in place of the 10th animal constituted both animals to be an offering to the Lord.

9. Vows in the New Testament

The first statement concerning vows in the New Testament, to which we have already referred, came from the lips of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount: “Again, you have heard that the ancients were, told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.’ But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING” (Matt. 5:33-35). Matters were even worse, for later in Matthew we find that there were certain oaths which were thought not to be binding, while only very technically worded oaths were binding: “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obligated’” (Matt. 23:16). Jesus broadened the requirement of truthfulness to every affirmation, to every commitment which men might make: “But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’” (Matt. 5:37). In other words, the Law called upon men to be truthful in every statement, in every affirmation, not just with regard to oaths or vows. Thus, we can say that every commitment, every promise is as good as a vow, and should be spoken with all due consideration, with truthfulness, and then should be kept.

In Mark 7:9-13 our Lord condemned the Pharisees and the scribes for the misuse of the vow, which used the “corban” to avoid their responsibilities. Thus, by dedicating their goods to God, they avoided meeting their obligations to the parents. This would have been an especially tempting evil for the priests, for the vowed gifts were both appraised by the priests and used by them. When a priest vowed something to God as a “corban” gift, he got the use of that gift, yet it was technically his, so he could not give of it to his parents. Sin always finds a convenient and pious-sounding way to use what is good to accomplish what is evil (Rom. 7). In the gospel of Luke (14:28-33) our Lord instructed men to “count the cost” before they made the commitment to a given course of action. Because of this, Jesus did not readily accept volunteers to be His disciples, but He spelled out the cost of discipleship and urged them to think about it before promising to follow Him (cf. Luke 9:57-62).

In his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul encouraged the Corinthian saints to follow through with the gift which they had previously committed to send to Jerusalem (2 Cor. 9:5, 7). He granted that those whose means had changed for the worse since their commitment need not feel guilty about giving less than they committed (2 Cor. 8:12). The important thing was for people to keep their promise, to give what they had committed, and to do so cheerfully and gratefully (9:7). In his first epistle to Timothy, St. Paul encouraged

women not to make a hasty commitment to remain single, but rather to remarry, lest at some later time they might meet “Mr. Wonderful” and be tempted to violate their vow (1 Tim. 5:11-15). In the final chapter of his epistle, St. James concludes, “But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but let your yes be yes, and your no, no; so that you may not fall under judgment” (Jas. 5:12).

The teaching of the Old Testament is thus carried through in the New, with added emphasis that every commitment must be carried through, just as the vow should be.
