

# **Read the Bible in a Year**

Week 9 – August 2nd, 2021

**Read on Your Own this Week:**

*Psalm 25-27*

Mark 5-8

**Readings in Class:**

Leviticus 5-21

## **A Brief Overview of Leviticus**

Leviticus has a bad reputation in the Church. It certainly is not the most engaging reading in the Bible. But it provides some of the most important imagery that is used in the rest of the Scripture concerning God, worship, and relating to God. In fact, this is the problem at the end of Exodus that Leviticus resolves. In Exodus 40, God comes down to dwell but no one can come near him. So how can people dwell with God? Leviticus is how God solves the problem with sin and uncleanness.

Leviticus also provides much of the imagery that comes from the ideas of worship. And the themes that are given—such as sacrifice, atonement, holiness, clean and unclean, the Priesthood, and the like— are themes and motifs that dominate the Scriptures and illustrate the work of Christ. Understanding Leviticus opens the Gospels and the love of Christ. In fact, one of the most quoted verses comes from Leviticus, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” 19:18

Leviticus also gives us a foreshadowing to the work of Christ upon the Cross. God is paving the way for the work of his Son. In Chapter 16, and the talk of the Day of Atonement provides us with a way of understanding what Christ has come to do. The Day of Jubilee described in Chapter 25, for another example, is used by the Prophets and Jesus to describe the work of setting people free.

Leviticus is a book still relevant today in a world dominated by concepts such as polluted and clean. In a time of pandemic, some of the words and concepts in Leviticus will come alive. The theme of Leviticus can be summed up as follows: “Be Holy for I the Lord your God am Holy.”

Here is a basic rundown of the flow of the Book:

1. The Lord’s Service Chapters 1-15
  - a. Manual of Sacrifice 1-7
  - b. Inauguration of Service 8-10
  - c. Holiness Code 11-15
2. Day of Atonement Chapter 16
3. How God’s People Participate in God’s Holiness
  - a. Reverence for Sanctuary 17-22
  - b. Observance of the Sabbaths 23-25
  - c. Promises and Warnings 26
  - d. Laws concerning Vows

**Sacrifices:** As modern people, the amount of blood in Leviticus is perhaps shocking. Perhaps even cruel in some of its descriptions. But this is a reminder of the terrible price and cost of sin. This tells us that sin must be overcome and at a terrible price. Sin is an affront to God and must be dealt with. "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." Hebrews 9:22.

Already even in Genesis 3, God made Adam and Eve garments made from animal skins to show the cost of their rebellion. Because of Sin, someone must die before someone else can come into the presence of God. The book of Hebrews plays frequently on the book of Leviticus by pointing how the blood of Christ seals what all the blood of beasts and bulls could not. In Christ is now the final and full offering and sacrifice to God.

**Nadab and Abihu:** We read about the fate of Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10. It is unsettling and even puzzling to understand why God lashes out. But their actions suggests irreverence toward God. Especially because God just got finished laying out how to proceed with the burning of incense and fire and missing a proper step in the worship demonstrated a lack care of handling God's Word.

The command to not get drunk immediately following in verse 9 might suggest that Nadab and Abihu were serving drunk as priests! This does cause some hesitation by the remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar when they also misstep later on, when inquiring though on why, Moses learns that Aaron acted with caution and fear of God's response which causes Moses to approve. The multi-step process makes us realize how much goes into the Priests work and how much a Priesthood in Christ is needed!

**Holiness:** God's Holiness is perhaps the key, if not defining, theme and Word in the book of Leviticus. It is hard to make something Holy and when it is Holy it needs to be treated that way. Something that is unclean ruins that which is Holy. Thanks be to God that Christ is not Holy like this. When he touches something unclean, it is made Holy! This teaches us of the finite and temporary nature of the Old Covenant and the need to see Christ. To be holy is to be set apart and used for the purpose of God.