

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD – WEEK #9

OVERVIEW LEVITICUS CHAPTER 11 THROUGH CHAPTER 23

LEVITICUS CHAPTERS 11 THROUGH 16

In order to set Israel apart from other nations as well as to protect the people from diseases, God gives instructions in chapter 11 about which animals are acceptable to eat and which animals are not acceptable to eat, as well as dealing with dead carcasses. In chapters 11-16, God gives Israel instructions on hygiene and health. How can God's people live holy lives before God? By taking care of their bodies as well as their spirits. The body is the subject of this division. The body is to be kept clean and to be protected not only from disease and injury but from strain and stress as well (see 12:1-8). This is the purpose lying behind The Levitical Laws of Cleansing covered in this division. But note this fact: God had more than health in mind when He gave the cleansing laws. God had a spiritual purpose in mind.

The laws of cleanliness and defilement were symbolic of spiritual truth, of being spiritually clean and undefiled. The laws of cleanliness set God's people apart as a clean, holy people. God's people were to be distinct and different from the surrounding people and nations. The surrounding nations and people were living unholy lives, lives of immorality and lawlessness. But God's people were to be distinct and different in this very fact: they were to live holy lives. They were to bear a strong testimony that they followed God and obeyed His commandments. They ate only clean food and took care of their bodies, kept them clean and healthy—all in obedience to God's law governing cleanliness. Simply stated, holiness demands that God's people conform to the laws of God, the laws of cleanliness.

As believers must obey God. We must keep the rules, the laws, and the commandments of God. We must not defile ourselves; we must not pollute nor contaminate ourselves with anything that is unclean. We must not touch the unclean thing.

Romans 12:2 NKJV

[2] And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

2 Corinthians 6:17-18 NKJV

[17] Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." [18] "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty." ...

LEVITICUS CHAPTERS 17 THROUGH 20

We now arrive at the second section of instructions in Leviticus, a section designed to reveal the phonies. God's instruction to his people is unfolding great truths that will take on greater significance and clarity when we study the New Testament.

All the ceremonies and rituals were designed to prepare the world for the arrival of Jesus Christ, God's only Son. As we approach chapters 17–20, we begin to recognize what God's expectations will be for his people—expectations to reveal surrender. The only price for sin that God will accept is blood, for the blood is the life of the creature. The sacrifice of blood means one life given for another. We should respect all life and not treat the blood as something common. The Jews were not to bring sacrifices of game (v. 13), because those cost them nothing. (See 2 Sam. 24:24.) The animals shed their blood involuntarily, but Jesus gave His life willingly for the sins of the world. God could not accept the moral standards of either Egypt or Canaan, and the Jews were not to follow them. Instead, they were to obey the laws of God. “I am the LORD” appears twenty-one times in chapters 18 and 19, and the statement reminds us that we are under His authority. (See Rom. 12:2.)

The ominous phrase “put to death ” is found nine times in this chapter, for “the wages of sin is death ” (Rom. 6:23). But fear of death is not the highest motive for holy living. “I am the LORD who sanctifies you ” (v.20:8) ought to be motivation enough (Phil. 2:12–13).

LEVITICUS CHAPTERS 21 AND 22

Notice this fact: in chapters 11–20, God had given the laws that were to govern His people, the laws that showed His people how to live holy lives and build a strong society. Now, in chapters 21–22, God gives the laws that were to govern His priests or ministers, laws that would bring honor to God and to the office of the priesthood. The office of the priest was an official office, an office ordained by God to be holy. Therefore, the priest was to live a holy and pure life before God and the people. His office—the office of the priest—demanded a higher standard. The priest was to be more holy, more set apart to God, than other believers. He was to be more holy in word and behavior and in his witness for God. There was a very special reason for this: his holiness pointed to the perfect priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The holy character and behavior of the priest was a symbol or type of Christ, the coming Messiah and Savior of the world. This will be seen throughout the discussion of these chapters.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 23

In human history, God has one primary focus, that of salvation—the saving of people and their worship of Him. Holy Scripture tells us that God created man to live with Him, that God's great purpose is to reveal the riches of His grace to man throughout all eternity (Ep. 2:7). To get this point across to the people of ancient history, God set aside several religious holidays. Notice two striking points about the annual feasts or festivals: First, these holidays focused upon the salvation and redemption of man and the worship of God.

Second, the holidays painted the prophetic picture of salvation, the salvation that God was to bring to man through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God used the annual festivals to show a believer how he was to walk day by day throughout life. This is clearly seen as the feasts or festivals are studied.