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Leviticus Overview (Part 2)



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

In his overview of Leviticus, Steve Gregg highlights the book's emphasis on worship, submission to God's will, and love for one's neighbor. Leviticus covers the sacrificial system, consecration of priests, and building of the tabernacle, all of which foreshadow Christ's sacrifice and cleansing of believers. The book also outlines moral behavior, festivals in the Jewish calendar, and tithes and offerings dedicated to God. In all, Leviticus serves to instruct believers on honoring and submitting to God's will in all aspects of life.

Transcript

If you were watching the previous portion of this lecture about Leviticus, and it seemed to end abruptly, that was a mechanical thing or a technological thing. The streaming just kind of cut off rather suddenly. It was not really a bad place to cut off, except I was probably in the middle of a sentence at the time.

I was pointing out that one of the two great commandments that Jesus said all the law and the prophets are summarized by these two, one of them is found in Leviticus, which makes Leviticus a very important book. Even though the statement doesn't appear to be a real important statement in the book, I mean, it does to us. Because when you're reading Leviticus, a lot of it seems irrelevant.

Then you come to, you shall love your neighbors, yourself, saying, oh, I can relate to that. But the reason it stands out in your mind is because Jesus focused on it. It would have just been lost in all the verbiage with all the other laws, if not for the fact that Jesus selected that one, says now this is the great commandment.

All the law hangs on these. In fact, Jesus said it hangs on two commandments, the one in Deuteronomy, love God, and the one in Leviticus about love your neighbor. But when Paul speaks about it in Romans and in Galatians, he says all the law, if there's any commandment, it comes down to you shall love your neighbor, you shall love yourself.

And even James said that. He says, if you love your neighbors, you love yourself, you do well. So they didn't even mention the first commandment when they were summarizing

the law.

But they are, of course, summarizing the law of human relationships, which is what they were talking about in Romans 13 and in Galatians and James 2. Having said that, we will now kind of go through a survey of the book of Leviticus, what you'll find there if you read through it. By the way, I've given you a second handout, those of you who are in the room. There's still some advantage in coming to the meetings over watching it on Facebook because you on Facebook don't have the handouts.

But those of you who are here, there's a second sheet besides the introduction of Leviticus, there's one that's sort of an excursus about the sacrifices, the offerings. And in the first seven chapters, there are detailed instructions about the offering of five different offerings. The first is called the burnt offerings, the whole burnt offerings, where only a few parts of the animal were taken out of the animal, the rest was just burned up on the altar completely.

Another kind of offering was called the grain offerings, and these were often offered along with other offerings. You usually wouldn't offer a grain offering just by itself, but along with some other animal sacrifice, you would sometimes add flour or bread or something else, some kind of grain-based offering. Now why? Well, partly because the offerings became the food for the priests, and man shall not live by meat alone, man has to eat some bread too.

And so bread and meat were what the people would offer, and this became the food not just for the priests, but primarily for the priests. I mean, the tithes supported the Levites in general, and the tithe of the tithe was given to the priests, but the offerings became the food for the priests and for their families. So, along with animal sacrifices, there were grain offerings, and in a grain sacrifice, they wouldn't just burn the whole thing.

If someone brought some loaves of bread to offer to the Lord, they would take a portion of it. If they brought some flour, unbaked flour, and offered it, they'd take a handful of it and throw it on the altar, and then the rest the priest got to take home, and his wife could bake bread with it or whatever. Remember, these sacrifices, many of them, provided food for the priests.

Not the first one that we mentioned, the whole burnt offering, it was all burned up to the Lord, nothing was eaten by the priests from that. But most of these offerings, a portion of the animal, or of the flour, or the bread, was given to the priests to eat. And some of it was eaten by the worshipper himself, the person who brought the sacrifice to the temple, or the tabernacle in the case of Leviticus.

So you have the whole burnt offering, it is discussed in chapter 1, verses 1-17. And then after all five sacrifices are discussed, there's another discussion of all five of them, so it comes up for further discussion in chapter 6, verses 8-13. So there's two portions of

these first seven chapters that talk about the whole burnt offering.

And the grain offering is discussed in chapter 2, verses 1-16, but further detail is given in chapter 6, verses 14-23. Then there's what they call peace offerings. Some commentators or translations call them fellowship offerings.

But these were offerings that were not to atone for sin, they were simply something you gave to God out of appreciation for something He had done for you. You're appreciating that He's kept you in peace, that things are going well in your family. And He's provided for you, and you're thankful, so you bring a peace offering to the Lord.

And this would be a bull or a lamb or a goat kid. And it would be, a portion of it would be offered on the altar, and portions of it would be eaten. And they are mentioned, the peace offerings in chapter 3, verses 1-17, and then further in chapter 7, verses 11-21.

The fourth kind of offering is called the sin offering. And it is offered when you've knowingly sinned, or when you've committed a sin that you know about, and you want to offer an atoning sacrifice for it. You bring an animal.

This would be a blood sacrifice, unlike the grain sacrifices, of course. Because God says that He's given them the blood for atonement for their sins. And the sin offering was specifically to atone for sins.

Not all the sacrifices were, but these ones were. And they are discussed in chapter 4, verse 1, through chapter 5, verse 13. There's a lengthy discussion of sin offerings.

And then they come up for conversation again in chapter 6, verse 24-30. The final, fifth kind of offering was called the trespass offering. And this appears, you might say, what's the difference between sin and a trespass? Well, this is when you've actually violated some holy thing, or some vowed thing.

Like, if you vowed at some point that you're going to give God, you know, something, when the harvest comes and you're going to give Him something extra besides the tithe or something. Or that you decide that since your cow is expecting a calf, that you're going to just give that calf to God as a special thing. People would take vows of things they intend to do for God.

Now, if they made a vow and then violated it, they would later realize, oh, I need to offer a trespass offering. I've trespassed against this vow. And they would have to offer the thing, the value of the thing itself, that they had not given, as they should, and add to that 20% penalty on themselves.

So if they were going to give God, you know, a ton of grain out of their harvest, well, they're going to have to add another 20% to that as a trespass offering. And there are animals that are offered that way, too. I must say that as we read these things, it's not

always clear the circumstances that distinguish between the appropriateness of one offering and another.

And what we have here is not a comprehensive exposition of everything that was known about these offerings. These are the manuals. This is a manual for the priest.

This is how you offer this offering. Here's how you offer this one. As far as when you offer one or the other, to a certain extent, this had to be communicated, apparently, orally to the people, probably by the priests, and not all of it is recorded for us in the manual for the priests.

And so sometimes when you're reading about these, you think, okay, so when do they offer a sin offering, and when do they offer a whole burnt offering? Well, apparently they knew from other instruction that's not recorded here for some of that stuff. But these are mainly telling the priest how to go about the protocol of offering these sacrifices. And the trespass offering is discussed in chapter 5, verse 14, through chapter 6, verse 7. But then it comes up for a second discussion in chapter 7, verses 1 through 7. So each of these five offerings, it goes through them first in the first five chapters, really, and then a couple chapters are given to a little more detail about each of the five.

And that's a very difficult part of Leviticus for most people to read because it's tedious, repetitious, and hard to know exactly how it relates. Although, in the New Testament, we have the motif of sacrifice introduced, both with reference to Christ offering Himself as a sacrifice, and we recognize that these animal sacrifices are types and shadows of Christ Himself, that He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, that He is the one who sheds His blood for the atonement of sin, that Christ dying on the cross is what these sacrifices, to a very large extent, were pointing forward to. But there's a second application of the whole motif of sacrifice that the New Testament makes, and that is that the believer, or the believers, the church, are a kingdom of priests, a royal priesthood, as it says in 1 Peter 1.5, and as it says in Revelation chapter 1, and we are referred to as a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood, and we are to offer up sacrifices.

Now, Christians offer sacrifices, but we don't offer actual animal sacrifices or even grain offerings. We offer up spiritual sacrifices because our priesthood is spiritual. And, therefore, the New Testament describes the Christian duty as to present to God spiritual sacrifices, for example, in Romans 12, verse 1, it says, I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship or reasonable service.

Offering your body is a spiritual sacrifice. You might say, but my body's not spiritual, it's physical. It's a physical sacrifice.

Yeah, but you're not physically putting it on a physical altar. You're not really doing a physical act of offering a sacrifice. Your submission of your body, your submission of

your life to God is a spiritual response to God.

You see, you could offer an animal on the altar at the tabernacle, whether your heart was in it or not. It was a mere physical ritual. But it's a spiritual thing when you present yourself to God, even if what you're presenting is your physical body, that's a physical thing, but the action is coming from your heart.

It's got to be or else it's not acceptable. It's a spiritual sacrifice you make. And another sacrifice we make, according to Philippians 4, is, verse 18, says that the Philippians had sent Paul a financial gift when he was in prison.

He said, I've received that, and it's an offering of a sweet sacrifice acceptable to God. The surrender of, is really a spiritual thing on their part to care about Paul when he's in prison and to want to help take care of his needs. This is seen as a spiritual sacrifice.

In Hebrews chapter 13, verse 15 and 16, it says that we offer up the fruit of our lips, the sacrifice of praise. That's obviously a spiritual kind of sacrifice. And so, the New Testament sees the church as a priesthood.

The book of Leviticus is a manual for priests. Of course, it's a manual for priests of a physical ritual system. We are a priesthood of a spiritual system.

And physical sacrifices offered by the priests now are replaced in the new covenant with spiritual sacrifices. We don't offer animal sacrifices. We don't go to a temple.

There's not an altar somewhere that we burn things on as an act of worship. Instead, we surrender our bodies. We surrender our possessions.

We surrender our praise to God from our heart. It's got to be spiritual worship. Paul said in Philippians 3. We are the true circumcision who rejoice in Christ Jesus, who worship God in the spirit and place no confidence in the flesh.

Worshiping God means offering sacrifices. And we do it in the spirit by offering spiritual sacrifices. Every society, Jewish and pagan, worshipped by offering sacrifices to their gods.

Israel offered sacrifices to Yahweh. The pagans offered sacrifices to their various deities. That's what worship was regarded to be.

The offering up of a sacrifice to your deity was worship. Our spiritual worship is the offering of spiritual sacrifices. Jesus said those who worship God must worship Him in spirit.

And in truth. He said that in a context where the woman of Samaria was saying, I want to offer a sacrifice to God, but I'm aware of a controversy here. You Jews say that the temple in Jerusalem is where you offer these sacrifices.

My people, the Samaritans, say that this Mount Gerizim, this temple here is where we're supposed to do it. I want to worship God. I want to offer a sacrifice.

Which altar am I supposed to sacrifice on? That's where Jesus said, woman, the time is coming and now is. When they will neither worship God, that is, offer sacrifices, in this mountain or in Jerusalem. But those who worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

So spiritual worship is spiritual sacrifices being offered. And so, as we read about the sacrificial system, the Holy Spirit is capable of illuminating us to see things in the sacrificial system, especially animal sacrifices, that foreshadow Christ, and which the Bible encourages us to see as a foreshadowing of Christ. But also, in the priestly duties of being holy to the Lord and offering sacrifices, there's a type and a shadow there of the spiritual functions of sacrifice and worship, of the spiritual priesthood, which is us, all of us.

All Christians are a royal priesthood. And so we have the first seven chapters devoted to sacrifices and offerings. But after that, chapters 8 through 10 really just describe the clothing of the priests and the consecration ceremony.

It involved killing some animals. You put a little bit of blood from the animal on the right ear and the right thumb and the right big toe of the priests. And then you do the same thing with oil.

You have a certain holy oil that has a certain recipe that God gave, not allowed to be used for anything else. And after you put the blood on the priest's ear and thumb and toe, you put the oil there. Now, I think a Christian can, without much difficulty, see that the ear represents listening.

The thumb or the hand represents your actions. The toe represents your walking, your going. And that your walk and your actions and your hearing and thinking has got to be sanctified, has to be cleansed.

The blood first, then the oil. That is, the blood of Christ cleanses and the oil, the Holy Spirit, fills us, enables us, and sanctifies us, causes us to live holy lives. And therefore, the priests who represent us to a certain extent, they must be cleansed by blood and anointed with oil.

Their hearing or their thoughts, their actions, their thumbs, their walk. We have to walk worthy of God. It says in Ephesians 4.1 and other places.

And so, these rituals, they seem goofy to us. How weird, putting animal blood on someone's ear and thumb and big toe and then doing the same thing with oil. What's the point? That just seems silly.

It seems weird. Nothing is silly in there. Everything is symbolic.

And the challenge to the Christian reading this is to discover or to contemplate what the New Testament spiritual application is to these ritual things. Sometimes it's not that easy. The example I just gave you is pretty easy, it seems to me.

But in chapters 8 through 10, we have the actual consecration of the priest. Now, what's interesting is back in Leviticus, excuse me, back in Exodus, chapters 28 and 29, the priest's garments and the ritual of consecration of the priest was all ordained there. All the same details are given.

It's just that in Exodus, it's commanded to be done. And in Leviticus, it's described as being done with the same details. It's like Leviticus has one group of instructions about building the tabernacle.

Then there's another group of chapters. They did build the tabernacle, but all the same details are given. They're repetitions.

But the consecration and the clothing of the priests in Leviticus 8 through 9 especially resembles Exodus 28 and 29. But chapter 10 is rather unique because it begins with the first day that the temple is open for business, if we could say. It shouldn't be called business.

For service, we should say. The tabernacle. I said the temple, but we're still talking about a tent here, a tabernacle.

There was one high priest, Aaron, and he had four sons who were the priests. These five men, especially the four sons, had to offer animal sacrifices to cover all the needs for three million people. Each family had to offer sacrifices from time to time.

There's a lot of work to be done, and there were only four priests. To make matters worse, after the priests were consecrated and they were now qualified to start working, they opened the doors of the tabernacle for the first time to start offering sacrifices, and the very first day, two of the priests die, leaving only two. It's a very poor economy, it would seem, on God's part, to take out two of the priests when the four were already overworked.

And yet, it's clear that God thought, well, inconvenient as it may be, and severe as it may be, I've got to get a point across here. Now, what was going on there? It seems like a minor thing, really, because the priests were supposed... At the end of chapter 9 of Leviticus, they were supposed to pile up a bunch of wood and animal, you know, body on the brazen altar, the bronze altar, out in the courtyard of the tabernacle. And when they did that, supernatural fire came from the presence of the Lord and ignited it.

Now, we don't know where the presence of the Lord was from which this fire came. We

might think heaven, like when we think of Elijah calling down fire from heaven. However, the presence of the Lord was mainly associated with the Holy of Holies.

It's possible the fire came out of the Holy of Holies, but wherever it came from, it was from God. It was a supernatural fire that ignited the fire on the altar for the first time. That fire was to be kept burning perpetually.

It was not allowed to go out. Therefore, even a hundred years later, that fire was supposed to be the same fire that God ignited on the first day. And that fire was holy fire.

And the priests were supposed to take some of that fire, coals from that altar, in their incense burners, and take that fire into the holy place, not the Holy of Holies, but what's called the holy place, and burn incense on the golden altar. Now, what they did was something only slightly different. Nadab and Abihu, two of the priests, they did burn incense in the holy place, but they used what the Bible calls in the King James Version, strange fire or foreign fire, fire from a different source.

They didn't take fire from the bronze altar. They took it from somewhere else. We're not told where else, but just an ordinary fire.

In other words, they didn't use the holy fire that God had provided. They used some man-made fire. And they offered incense, which is a picture of worship and prayer.

In the book of Revelation, incense is an image of prayer. You find it in Revelation 5, 8, and in Revelation 8, I forget which first number, 3, I think. But you see, incense is offered up in heaven in Revelation, which is the prayers of the saints.

One passage says the incense is the prayers of the saints. The other one says it's offered up with the prayers of the saints. Even in the Psalms, it says, may my prayer ascend unto you as incense, David said.

And so, incense burned in the temple is a picture, a ritualistic picture, of something spiritual, which is prayer and worship. Approaching God in a way that's supposed to be pleasing to Him, like incense is pleasing to the nostrils. At least some people think so.

The hippies liked it. And some other people liked it too. I'm not real fond of incense, but it's by definition something that's supposed to be good smelling.

And so the idea was that worship of God is to be offered up through that fire of which God is the source. Man can't worship God from his own fleshly innovations and from his own fleshly motivations. God has to inspire.

Paul says we need to pray in the Holy Spirit. We need to be filled with the Spirit so that what comes out from us to God is offered from what He has provided. That God only

accepts worship and service to Himself, which He Himself has provided.

And that fire they were supposed to use was fire that God had provided, but they didn't use that. They had some human-sourced fire. And they burned incense to God.

This was not acceptable. It seems a small thing to us. Certainly with all the horrible atrocities that some later priests did and God didn't do anything to them, why did He eliminate these two guys when they did nothing more than burn the wrong incense with the wrong fire? After all, any fire will do, won't it? Any fire burns incense all the same just like the Holy Fire or ordinary fire.

What's the problem? The problem was that the priests were not regarding God as the one that has to be obeyed to the letter. They were assuming that the worship of God they could innovate. As if man has some innate right to come to God and can choose how he wishes to do it.

God said use this, but I think we'll just use this. It's just as good. You see, the idea that God wants to get across is you, sinful man, do not have an intrinsic right to come into my presence, to come into my house, to worship me.

You are a sinner. You can't just come strutting in here on your merits. I will let you worship me, but on my terms, not yours.

And you better follow my terms. And if you don't, I'm going to let you know I don't approve. In a very graphic way in this case.

A very severe way. And as you look at Leviticus 10, you read about the death of Nadab and Abihu in this manner in the opening verses. And after God burned them up, in verse 3 it says, Moses said to Aaron, this is what the Lord spoke, saying, By those who come near me, I must be regarded as holy, and before all the people I must be glorified.

This is what God was getting across. You come before me, you come and worship me, you be my priest, you offer sacrifice, you worship me, you've got to regard me as holy. I'm not such a one as you.

I'm different. And I'm going to let you come on my terms, not yours. You have to elevate me in your thinking.

Now this is one of the things a lot of people who read the Old Testament don't like. God's always saying, sacrifice to me, praise me, glorify me. And they say, why is God such an egotist? Actually, the truth is, nobody who loves God ever thinks that's excessive or inappropriate.

Anybody who loves God knows that God is glorious, that God is holy, that God is wonderful, that anyone who does not glorify him is simply not living in the real world. It's

the truth that will set you free. In our sinful natural state, we tend to not give God his proper place.

That's what destroys us. That's what destroys our society. Our society is barreling over the waterfalls at this very moment as we speak, partly because it does not give God his proper place.

It's bad for people not to glorify God, because we were made for his glory. We function best when we do. We run on the fuel of worshiping God.

And if a manufacturer says, put premium gasoline in the car and you pour lemonade in the tank, the car's not going to run. You need to follow the instructions because he knows how it's supposed to run. We were not made to be independent of God.

We were made to be in fellowship with God, and that fellowship requires our submission to him and recognition of his glory and lordship. And when we're not putting him ahead of ourselves, it's not that his ego is hurt. It's that we're hurt.

We're drifting out of touch with reality, and that lack of being in touch with reality is what destroys civilizations and destroys souls. God is not... It is its own punishment. It's not that God is hung up.

And by the way, when people say, how come God is always saying, praise me, praise me, praise me? God almost never says anything remotely like, praise me. When you read, praise the Lord, it's usually somebody else saying that you should praise the Lord. It's David saying, praise the Lord, or some other writer.

And of course, that's not unnatural. When you're totally enamored with something, you praise it and tell others to appreciate it too. If you fall in love with a wonderful man or woman, you want to praise that person and you want other people to appreciate that person too.

If you get a new house or something wonderful that you think is great, you want everyone to praise it. You want them to enjoy it like you do. There's nothing egotistical about God who is the meaning of everything.

Saying, okay, everything I created is to be in harmony with the meaning of everything, which is me. And anyone who's not recognizing me for who I am is not in harmony with reality. And the world is out of kilter.

For God to require, listen, you don't treat me like somebody else because I'm not somebody else. I'm not just another person like your friends or your father or your earthly king. I am unique.

I am holy. I'm set apart. You've got to regard me that way or you can't come before me.

And although he killed those two priests, he did not kill any other priests who did far more heinous things in later history. I mean, Samuel's sons, who were priests, were actually fornicating with the women who came to bring sacrifices to the altar. That sounds worse than offering strange fire to me.

But, you see, something similar exists in the New Testament, in the book of Acts. At the beginning of the church history, two people sold a piece of property and pretended to be giving all to God. And they weren't.

They were holding back some for themselves. And they gave the impression that they were giving everything to God but they were not. And they dropped dead.

God struck them dead. And Peter said, You've been lying to the Holy Spirit. Peter didn't strike them dead.

God struck them dead. And yet, how many Christians have done far worse than what Ananias and Sapphira did in that story? And God hasn't struck them dead. What's up with that? I mean, yeah, they did a bad thing.

But is it really all that bad compared to some of the things the popes have done? And other, you know, Christians have done who have sinned great heinous things. Women killing their children in the name of God because they think God told them to do it. There's horrible things people have done for religion.

Religious wars. Why did God kill these people? The answer seems to be that this was opening day of the tabernacle. And Ananias and Sapphira were at the very beginning of the church and God said, I'm going to set an example.

There's things I'm requiring to be done here in this system. And I'm going to set an example of these people who are violating it so that the rest of you will know that even though I'm not striking everyone dead after this, this is how I feel about it. This is... If I don't judge everyone who does these things, that doesn't mean they don't deserve it.

It doesn't mean that that's not what I think about it. And so God sets an example of Nadab and Abihu in the Old Testament and of Ananias and Sapphira in the New Testament, the beginning of the Old Testament worship and the New Testament worship. To basically say, okay, now you know how I feel about this stuff.

I may not demonstrate it so graphically and so dramatically every time but I still feel this way. Put that in your consciousness. Let that be in your mental furniture.

This is how God feels about this kind of stuff. And so in chapter 10 we have this, one of the few things in Leviticus that's actually a historical story as opposed to just rules and rituals and things like that. And then chapters 11 through 15 are all about the kind of unclean things that would debar somebody from the sanctuary.

That is, keep them from being able to worship in the tabernacle. The first of those chapters, 11, is about unclean animals. It defines what animals are clean and what ones are unclean.

Now the animals that are clean are fewer in number than those who are unclean. There are millions of species of animals of course. And there are many different families of animals.

There's reptiles and there's amphibians and there's birds and there's fish and there's crustaceans and there's mammals. Among mammals only a certain limited number were clean. All the others were unclean.

The ones that were clean had to have two traits. They had to have a cloven hoof and they had to chew the cud or what we would today say they'd be ruminants. These are animals like cows which eat grass.

They chew it up, they swallow it, they regurgitate it, chew it some more, regurgitate it, they swallow and regurgitate the same food over and over again to get more out of it. And they have four stomachs and so forth. These are called ruminants.

There's a certain class of animals that chew the cud. Sheep, goats, cows, deer, gazelles, certain animals like that are ruminants. Now if those animals that are ruminants also had a cloven hoof then they were clean and you could eat them.

But they had to have both traits. A pig has a cloven hoof but it doesn't chew the cud so it was an unclean animal. A camel chews the cud but it doesn't have a cloven hoof so it's an unclean animal.

But an animal that had both traits, cows, sheep, goats, deer, they have cloven hooves and they chew the cud. That's what qualified them to be clean. Now among the birds basically he just gave a list of the birds that are unclean.

Largely scavengers and meat eating birds. Most birds were clean. They could eat most birds but there were certain birds that have rather disgusting habits and disgusting diets.

And they were listed as unclean. Among the animals in the sea you could eat an animal in the ocean or in a lake if it had fins and scales. In other words, what we call an ordinary fish.

If it didn't have fins and scales it could not be eaten so they couldn't eat crustaceans. They couldn't eat lobster or crab. They couldn't eat oysters and things like that.

Those were not. They didn't have fins or scales. They couldn't eat jellyfish or squid.

So among the sea creatures they had to have fins and scales. Among land mammals they had to chew the cud and have a cloven hoof. And among birds they simply had to

not have disgusting habits and diets.

So there was a list of the birds that were not acceptable. That's what chapter 11 has. Now, clean and unclean animals.

Some people say the reason God made some animals clean and others unclean is because we now know that hygienically there are some animals that are not really very healthy to eat. Pigs, obviously. If you don't cook them well you can get some kind of parasitical thing that'll kill you.

So some people say God forbade certain foods because they were unhealthy and therefore people shouldn't eat them even now. And there may be some truth in this question of the healthiness or unhealthiness of some of these foods. But that is not the reason that I think is given.

These qualifications, a cloven hoof and chewing the cud, I believe they are symbolic of spiritual things. And unclean animals represent symbolically unclean people. How do we know that? Well, for one thing, when God wanted to through Peter's mind to accept Gentiles who are uncircumcised and unclean to the Jew he gave them a vision of a sheet of animals, unclean animals, coming down and said, arise Peter, kill and eat these animals.

I can't eat unclean foods, Lord. I've never eaten anything that's unclean. And God says, what I've cleansed, don't you call unclean.

And this happened three times and Peter was puzzling over it and then when the Gentiles came and said go to our house, he said oh, I get it. These animals that God is saying are clean, they're like Gentiles who I thought were unclean but God is saying they're clean. When Paul said you should not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, he is, I think, reflecting on the law in Deuteronomy that says you don't plow with an ox and an ass together.

An ass is an unclean animal. An ox is a clean animal. You don't yoke them together.

Why? Paul says because you don't want to yoke a believer and an unbeliever together, clean and unclean. When Jesus said don't cast pearls before swine or give what is holy to dogs, well dogs and swine are unclean animals but of course he's not talking about the real animals, he's talking about people of a certain sort. There's certain attitudes and conditions of people that render them unclean like pigs and dogs, apparently.

The unclean animals represent unclean people. Again, everything in the ritual law is symbolic of something spiritual. Chewing the cud, what does that represent? Chewing the cud is like meditating on the word of God.

The word meditate and chewing the cud are actually similar words in some languages

and it has to do with how you meditate day and night on the word of God. That is your mind and thoughts are continually digesting the word of God. The clove and hoof is a unique kind of foot and therefore speaks of a unique kind of walk.

How you think and how you walk. That is how you what you're thinking about is the word of God, meditating on it day and night and you're walking or living differently than other people. These are the things that distinguish Christians from non-Christians.

This is how the clean and unclean thing works out. With the fish, I'm not really sure why the fins and the scales except as far as scales go, it's interesting that scales might be seen as a form of barrier between the outward salt water and the flesh of the fish inside. That is, it's in an environment but it has this protection around it from the environment.

I don't know if this is what the scales represent or not, but Christians live in the world and have to have sort of a thick skin of sorts that the world doesn't penetrate and corrupt us. But that may be irrelevant to that. I don't really have any particular insight into the fish part.

But I do believe that still, animals that are clean or unclean, if you ate them under the law, you would be forbidden to go into the tabernacle for a period of time. You'd be unclean. But of course, the ritual points to spiritual things, to human things, actually.

Now, Chapter 12 talks about the ritual uncleanness of a woman after a child is born. It turns out to be 40 days after the birth of a son and 80 days after the birth of a daughter. Some people think that's discriminatory.

Well, I don't really even know why there's a difference between those two. Some commentators say because the daughter, it is assumed, will become a mother and bring more children into the world and humans are unclean, they're sinners and therefore the birth of a new sinner is commemorated by the mother who brought her into the world being ceremonially unclean. But I need to make very clear that ceremonial uncleanness is not sin.

People were not forbidden to have babies and they weren't considered to be on bad terms with God during the time of their uncleanness. It is symbolic. The uncleanness is a ritual condition, not a moral condition.

And we see that especially when you get to Chapters 13 and 14 which talk about leprosy. Certainly having leprosy is not a moral condition. Most people would prefer not to have leprosy.

No one chose it. Leprosy is an unfortunate condition and a person was nonetheless unclean when they were a leper until their leprosy was gone. And the rituals associated with it, both with its diagnosis in Chapter 13 and with its cleansing in Chapter 14 all have symbolic elements that we don't have time tonight to go into.

But leprosy in a man is a type and a shadow of a spiritual condition of sin I believe. Leprosy affects the body in some specific ways that one could argue sin affects a person's life or soul. It's interesting, there's a story in 2 Kings, I think it's in Chapter 5, where Naaman the Syrian, who's a leper, comes to Elisha and he's heard that Elisha could cure him of his leprosy and Elisha says, go baptize yourself.

That's the word that's used in the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament. Baptize yourself seven times in the river Jordan and when he did, he came up like a newborn baby, like he was born again. This is symbolic, of course, but the idea is that he's cleansed of his leprosy like a sinner is cleansed of his sin.

When he becomes a Christian, he's baptized and he comes up born again like a newborn baby. It seems very obvious when you contemplate leprosy in the Bible how it is a type and a shadow of sin. That doesn't mean the leper is viewed by God as a particular sinner or that God's going to judge him somehow on the day of judgment because he had leprosy, not in the least.

It's just that in the ritual drama that is designed to depict spiritual truths, the leper plays an unfortunate role but it's still a role in the drama. He's telling us, teaching us something about sin and leprosy becomes the symbolism of that sin. And then in Chapter 15, it talks about emissions that come from the body.

Semen from a man, especially in a wet dream at night, or blood from a woman during her period or any other time of, you know, internal bleeding that a woman goes through. These made both a man or a woman, in such cases, unclean for a period of time. Usually from the time after it was finished, the bleeding stopped or whatever.

From that point, I think it was like 7 days they were unclean. Now, unclean, again, it's clear that you're not held responsible for having a menstrual period. Nobody chooses that or, frankly, a wet dream.

These are situations that speak of what's issuing forth from your life that are blood is unclean and apparently semen was viewed as unclean in the ritual sense. Therefore, these rules about clean and unclean in practical reality to the Jew, that meant that if you're unclean, you had to stay away from the tabernacle, which was symbolic of being excluded from God, because being morally unclean actually separates you from God. These people were only ritually unclean.

They weren't really separated from God. You could be a godly leper. You could be a godly woman on a period.

You could be a godly woman who had a child and is unclean for 40 days, ritually, but not sinfully. God is not going to judge anyone for a ritual condition. Remember, Jesus said, nothing that goes into a man's mouth will defile him.

He's talking about unclean foods. In fact, it says in Mark 7, thus Jesus declared all foods clean. But what comes out of the man defiles him.

Eating ritually unclean food doesn't really make you unclean before God. God doesn't judge you for that. What comes out of you is what he's going to judge you for.

So the whole ritualism of the Jewish tabernacle service has symbolic value. And what it symbolizes are spiritual realities. And this is all sort of a drama that depicts it.

Now, chapter 16 is the lengthy description, the most lengthy description we have in the Bible of the Day of Atonement. The one day when the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies. It was the one day when offerings were made by the high priest for the whole nation.

During the year, people would bring their own sacrifices and on holy days, sacrifices would be offered. And every morning and every night, one lamb would be offered for the nation. But the Day of Atonement covered all the sins of the nation for the whole year.

Now that doesn't mean that everyone was seen as personally forgiven and going to heaven if they died. This was for the nation's preservation. God made promises to the nation as a whole that if they kept his covenant, he would preserve them as a nation.

Now, as long as God preserved the nation, they were a nation. But still, people in the nation could be lost because they could be rebels against God. And if the nation was dissolved, as it was when they went into Babylon, individuals could still be saved.

The national fortunes were not the same as individual fortunes. When the nation of Israel went into captivity, the nation was dissolved. But Daniel and Ezekiel were in captivity and they were saved guys.

Likewise, when the nation was intact, there were individuals who were wicked people who were lost, personally lost, but the nation was preserved. The Day of Atonement was an annual national Day of Atonement that basically cleared Israel of past sins and gave them another year to basically be okay with God as a nation. Individuals, however, if they died, would be judged individually by God, of course, by their own hearts and their own actions.

So chapter 16 gives that ritual. Now, chapter 17 through 27 is basically talks about holiness, things that are holy, like the blood. Chapter 17 points out that the blood is holy, that is, it's given to God.

I said it was unclean, but it's unclean for human use. It belongs to God. It's in chapter 17 that God says, I've given you the blood to make atonement for your sins on the altar.

Blood sacrifices. Now, the New Testament also emphasizes this. In Hebrews chapter 9, it

says, without the shedding of blood, there's no remission of sins.

But in Leviticus 17, 11, he says, I've given you the blood on the altar to make atonement for your sins. You're not allowed to eat blood. Israel was not allowed to eat blood.

They weren't supposed to really touch blood. If a woman was bleeding on her period, or after having a baby, she was unclean because she's touching blood. But, of course, again, that's ritual uncleanness.

That's not moral uncleanness. The point here is that blood becomes sacred partly to foreshadow the sacredness and the efficacy of the blood of Christ who would give his life for us. He says, the life of the flesh is in the blood.

That's what he says there. Then in chapter 18 through 20, we won't go into detail about this, but it basically is talking about how the people of Israel are holy. That is set apart for God.

And it talks about all the moral behavior that is appropriate for them. This is not talking about the ritual cleanness and uncleanness, like those earlier chapters were. This is talking about moral behavior of a holy people.

A lot of sexual sins are named as forbidden. Incest, for example. Bestiality.

Obviously, homosexuality and adultery. Fornication. Those things are listed and many others are listed as the kinds of things that holy people must not do.

Chapters 21 through 22 then focus on the priests themselves and what restrictions are on them. Who they could marry, what they could eat, and so forth. The priests had certain restrictions upon them that weren't on all the people.

Those are laid out in chapters 21 and 22. Chapter 23 is a special chapter because in it we have all the festivals of the calendar year of the Jewish calendar laid out. There were three weeks.

Passover, which was also unleavened bread. Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles that were week-long festivals. In addition to those, there was Yom Kippur, which is the Day of Atonement, which we read about in chapter 16.

There was Rosh Hashanah, which is the New Year. And the Feast of Trumpets, also in the fall. And there was something called the Feast of Firstfruits, which was on the first day after the Sabbath of Passover.

Now these festivals are all laid out for us in chapter 23. We can't go into them together now, but there are many Bible teachers and preachers and authors who've written and spoken extensively on these feasts on how they foreshadowed Christ. We can see how Passover does.

It says in 1 Corinthians 5, 7, Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us. Pentecost was fulfilled, of course, on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out. Some of these other feasts, it's not as clear how they were or will be.

Most of these feasts are clustered in the late spring, mid to late spring, or in the early fall. And some say, well, Jesus fulfilled all the spring feasts in his first coming, and he'll fulfill the fall feasts at his second coming, notably the Feast of Trumpets. He's going to come with the sound of a trumpet, and so forth.

But that is not clearly stated in the Scripture. Certainly, Jesus did fulfill the spring feasts. That is stated in the Scripture.

The Bible does not address either looking back or looking forward, does not address exactly the fulfillment of the fall feasts. But it certainly is the most common view among Christians that the fall feasts are related to the second coming of Christ. And we don't have specific New Testament reference to them in a way that would answer how they're fulfilled, and that might be because it's still future.

But these festivals of the calendar year, they are fascinating to a certain mindset. I found them fascinating when I was younger. I'm less fascinated by them than I used to be, but many Christians are really going to detail about all the things that are done in these feasts and how they represent Christ in certain ways, and I'm sure that is interesting.

Then, of course, chapter 24 primarily has the story about the blasphemer and the penalty of death that was brought upon him. Once again, we don't believe that blasphemers in any secular society should be put to death. But Israel was not a secular society.

They were God's special people. They were to worship Yahweh. They were His people.

For anyone in Israel to blaspheme Yahweh, basically, it's like advocating the assassination of the president or something like that, or the king. It simply shows a kind of disrespect toward the king, God, that is absolutely intolerable in a kingdom, in a monarchy, and God was their king. So the blasphemer was like a traitor, and he was put to death as traitors historically have been in almost all societies.

Then, chapter 25, and we only have a few chapters left to consider, chapter 25 talks about the Sabbaths and the Sabbath years and the Jubilee years. Not only did Israel have to observe the seventh day each week as a special day, where they did no manual labor, no regular labor, but every seventh year was a Sabbath year which was celebrated by not doing any farming. The crops were not, they didn't sow new crops in the seventh year.

They let the ground lie fallow. Now, anything that just grew up from incidental seed that had been left there from the previous year, they were allowed to eat, but they weren't

allowed to go out and plow and plant and cultivate crops the seventh year in the cycle. Also, they were supposed to release people from debts in the seventh year.

And then, after seven Sabbath years, that is, after 49 years, because the Sabbath year was every seven years, and after seven of those, that would be after 49 years, then the next year, the 50th year, was the Jubilee. That was a year of radical release from debt and from slavery and the return of all properties that had been forfeit because of debt or whatever, returned to their original owners. Every 50th year, all property was to go back to the original owners from the days of Joshua.

You see, all the land of Israel is divided up between the families of Israel, and those families were supposed to own those pieces in perpetuity. Though, if a family fell into hard times, they could sell their property to somebody else to get themselves out of financial difficulty, but in the 50th year, the Jubilee, they had to have it given back to them for free. If you were in debt, your debts were canceled at Jubilee.

If you were a slave, you were released at Jubilee. The Jubilee year is a type and a shadow of salvation in Christ. In fact, Isaiah, chapter 61, scholars agree, is referring to the Jubilee year in the opening verses.

In Isaiah, chapter 61, we read what may be very familiar verses to you, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. The acceptable year of the Lord is apparently a reference to the Jubilee year. It involved the opening of the prison doors for prisoners to go free, the release of all debts, good news to poor people.

I'm proclaiming the Jubilee. Now, we know that Jesus quoted these verses near the beginning of his ministry in Luke, chapter 4. He was in the synagogue of his own hometown, Nazareth, and they gave him Isaiah's scroll to read, and he read these verses. And then he said, today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

In other words, the Jubilee year, the ritual of Jubilee, was fulfilled in Christ, as he proclaimed liberty to captives and the release of debt spiritually, the forgiveness of sins, the release from spiritual bondage, good news to the poor. Jesus said, blessed are the poor in spirit. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

And so, the Jubilee year serves as a type and a shadow of actual salvation in Christ, where people were released from physical debts, in Christ we're released from our sin debt. Where people were released from prison, we are released from, or bondage, we are released from the bondage of sin and of the demonic powers in Christ. Jesus proclaims liberty to the captives, and the releasing of debts, and so forth.

This is spiritual in the New Testament. It was a literal economic phenomenon in Israel's law. Now, we don't read that Israel ever kept the Jubilee.

They were supposed to. Whether they ever did or not, we don't really know. I think

there's one time later, like in Ezra's time or Nehemiah's time, that they kept the Jubilee, if I'm not mistaken.

But it was not something that we read that they kept regularly. And since Israel was apostate from God much of their history, it's very unlikely that they were unselfish enough to meet the conditions of Jubilee every 50 years. Usually, the prophets who wrote to condemn Israel for their apostasy talk about how they exploited the poor and did not do justice.

So probably the Jubilee was not kept most of the time. But it was ordered to be kept because it was intended to be a picture of the spiritual Jubilee which Christ proclaims and inaugurated by His coming. That's chapter 25.

Chapter 26 is a little like another chapter you'll find in Deuteronomy 28 where God enumerates the blessings that will come on Israel if they keep His covenant and the curses that will come upon them if they don't. These are very severe curses and very great blessings. They're national, not individual.

That is, the nation will enjoy prosperity, exemption from invaders, good weather, productive crops, animals that don't miscarry their young. On the other hand, if they disobey God and violate His covenant, all the opposite will happen to them. Horrible things will happen to them.

Leviticus 26 goes into this in some detail. Deuteronomy 28 goes into the same kind of thing in much more detail, but we're not in Deuteronomy tonight. Then the last part, the last chapter of Leviticus is chapter 27 and it is essentially talking about tithes and things that are dedicated to God by vows.

This is simply talking about you know, you basically support the Levites by paying your tithes. Now, by the way, tithing is not commanded in the New Testament. But it was mandatory in the Old Testament and when the people neglected it, as they often did, Malachi the prophet, for example, told them they were robbing God.

You could rob God other ways too. You could vow to give God something and not give it to Him. You could dedicate things to God and not give it to Him.

And this is talking about those kinds of things. If you deprive God of them, you have to repay them with, again, 20% interest penalty. And so that's how the book of Leviticus ends.

And that's where we're going to end tonight because we have run a long time and we've talked very briefly about everything in the book, pretty much. As you read the book, I hope some of those things will make it easier for you to make sense of some of the things that are pretty culturally removed from our frame of reference. And that's what we find in the older books of the Bible like this.

Remember, we're talking about something that was written 3,500 years ago. 3,500 years ago. How many books do you read that are that old?