LEVITICUS

BIBLE STUDY

A Verse-by-Verse Study



How sinful people can come near a holy God:
the offerings, the priesthood, and the Day of Atonement

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A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Study

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this study direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

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Introduction

Welcome, and thank you for taking the time to work through this verse-by-verse study of the book of Leviticus. My purpose in writing this study guide is the same as it was for my study of Revelation: to bring you closer to our Creator and to give you a way to grow in your Christian walk.

Leviticus is the book many Bible reading plans stall in. It is full of animals, blood, priests, skin diseases and rules about food, and it can feel a long way from our lives. But it answers one of the biggest questions in the Bible: how can sinful people come near a holy God and live? God had just come to dwell among Israel in the tabernacle. Leviticus tells them how to approach Him, and every page of it points ahead to Jesus Christ, the one sacrifice and the great High Priest. I do not claim to be an authority on the Bible or on Leviticus. I am simply someone like you who wants to grow closer to God and understand His Word, even the parts that seem hard. Before you read any part of this book, or any part of Scripture, I ask that you pray, asking God:

- For the Holy Spirit to be present, to help open your eyes and your heart (Psalm 119:18, 119:105)
- For discernment and knowledge (Psalm 119:66, James 1:5)

2 Timothy 2:15 (SLB)

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker not needing to be ashamed, cutting straight the word of truth."

The Bible is God's Word to us (2 Timothy 3:16), given for training in righteousness. If we cannot understand what it says, we cannot apply it to our lives or help build God's kingdom.

So how do we go about understanding God's Word?

The first rule is context. You may have heard the saying "Context is King," but what does that mean? Every word, sentence, and passage helps explain the ones around it. Before we read any passage, we should ask a few simple questions: Who wrote it? Who was it written to? What came right before it? Knowing the answers gives us a clearer picture of what God is saying, both in general and to each of us personally.

Context matters a great deal in Leviticus. It is not a book of random rules. It picks up right where Exodus ends. In Exodus 40 the tabernacle was set up, and "the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34). The very next words are Leviticus 1:1: the LORD called to Moses "from the tent of meeting." God now lived in the middle of His people, and they needed to know how to live with Him there. Leviticus was given to Israel, under the covenant God made with them at Mount Sinai. If we forget that, we will either try to put ourselves back under laws that Christ has fulfilled, or we will throw the book away as if it had nothing to say to us. The New Testament does neither. The letter to the Hebrews uses Leviticus to show us who Jesus is and what He did, and Peter quotes it to call us to be holy (1 Peter 1:15-16).

Exegesis, Eisegesis, and Hermeneutics

People typically interpret the Bible using one of two methods, Exegesis or Eisegesis. Both are explained below, along with a third word, Hermeneutics. Sometimes people use both methods to "make their case" for the interpretation they want. These definitions are based on www.merriam-webster.com, with my own notes added.

Exegesis means explaining a text, especially a passage of Scripture. Exegesis is reading and interpreting the full text of a passage, and drawing out what it is actually saying.

Eisegesis means reading your own ideas into a text. This happens when we try to find something in the text that really isn't there. It can lead to many errors, especially when we bring assumptions to a passage that aren't actually in it. This method can be used to justify a behavior, position, or belief that goes against what the text originally meant.

Hermeneutics is the study of the principles used to interpret a text, such as the Bible. "Hermeneutics" and "Exegesis" are sometimes used to mean the same thing. The difference is that Exegesis is the work of explaining a passage, while Hermeneutics is the set of principles that guides that work. In Biblical Hermeneutics, the Bible should be read literally unless the text itself gives us a different meaning.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (SLB)

"16 Every Scripture ***is*** God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training which ***is*** in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work."

This passage tells us plainly that the writers of Scripture were inspired by God. Every passage in the Bible came from God and was written down by man. These are not fairy tales or made-up stories. They are God's own breath, given to us so we can be equipped and ready to do good work.

Because every word was inspired and breathed by God, I believe we must let God's Word interpret itself. We must study the Bible using Exegesis, drawing out what the text says, guided by sound Biblical Hermeneutics.

We should study God's Word using the Golden Rule of Interpretation, as Dr. David L. Cooper stated it:

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."

(http://www.biblicalresearch.info/page55.html)

I read the Bible as it is written. Leviticus is law, given by God to Moses for Israel, and this study takes it at its word: these were real offerings, real priests and real rules for a real nation camped

at Mount Sinai. I read it plainly first, asking what it meant for Israel then. Then I ask how Christ fulfilled it, using the links the New Testament itself makes, and what it teaches us now about God's holiness, our sin, His grace, worship and love for our neighbor. One thing this study will never teach is that anyone is saved by keeping these laws. No one ever was. Salvation has always been by grace through faith. The Law shows us our sin and points us to Christ (Galatians 3:24).

A note on the name of God: in the SLB, when you see "LORD" in capital letters, it stands for God's personal name, Yahweh, which He made known to Moses (Exodus 3:14-15). When you see "Lord" in regular letters, it translates a word that means master. When you see "God," it usually translates Elohim, the general Hebrew word for God. Leviticus uses the name of the LORD again and again, often in the short line "I am the LORD."

This study uses the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB) unless I note otherwise. To better understand the original Hebrew, I also used The Interlinear Bible (Jay P. Green Sr., ISBN 1-56563-977-4).

How This Study Is Laid Out

Each chapter of this study follows the same pattern as my study of Revelation:

- Scripture: the full text of the chapter, broken into sections, so you can read it straight through first.
- Preview: a short look at what the chapter covers.
- Study: the chapter again, verse by verse, with my notes on what each verse says and what it means for us.
- Summary: the main points of the chapter in a few lines.
- Study Questions: questions for personal study or a small group, from simple fact questions to questions about how we live. Some of them are personal. In a group, no one should ever have to answer one aloud, and what is shared in the group stays there.

Using This Study With a Group

This study works for one person or for a group. Here are two ways a group can pace it:

- One chapter a week: twenty-seven weeks. If you like, add a first meeting to read the Introduction and the Background together.
- Two chapters a week: about fourteen weeks. Many chapters of Leviticus pair well, such as the offerings in chapters 1 to 7 and the laws of clean and unclean in chapters 11 to 15. I suggest giving chapter 16, the Day of Atonement, a week of its own, along with chapter 23 on the feasts.

For each meeting, I suggest reading the Scripture out loud together first, straight through, before anyone comments. Then walk through the Study section, stopping where the group has questions, and finish with the Study Questions and prayer. The first questions in each list can be answered from the text. The later ones are more personal, and no one should feel pressed to answer them aloud.

Some parts of Leviticus touch hard or sensitive subjects. The death of Nadab and Abihu (chapter 10) and the stoning of the blasphemer (24:10-23) are sobering, and some will ask hard questions about God's judgment. The laws on childbirth and on the body (chapters 12 and 15) and the laws on sexual sin (chapters 18 and 20) need to be read with care, especially in a mixed group or with young people present. The laws on skin disease and living outside the camp (chapters 13 and 14) may touch anyone who has lived with a long illness or felt left out. The laws on the death penalty (chapters 20 and 24) and on Israelite servants and slaves (25:39-55) raise real questions that deserve honest answers. If you lead a group, read those sections ahead of time and be ready to listen. If someone shares something that puts them or another person in danger, help them get help right away.

I look forward to walking with you through the book of Leviticus. If you'd like to share feedback, please email me at andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com.

May God bless you and your time studying and getting to know Him better.

Overview of Leviticus

Leviticus is the third book of the Bible and the third of the five books of Moses, often called the Law or the Torah. It sits between Exodus and Numbers. The name Leviticus comes from the Greek and Latin Bibles and means the book about the Levites, the tribe of Levi, which served as Israel's priests and helpers at the tabernacle. The Hebrew title is the book's first word, which means "and He called."

Leviticus covers a very short time. Exodus ends with the tabernacle set up on the first day of the first month of the second year after Israel left Egypt (Exodus 40:17). Numbers begins one month later, on the first day of the second month (Numbers 1:1). Everything in Leviticus was given at Mount Sinai during that one month. Israel did not march anywhere in this book. They stayed at the mountain and learned how to live with a holy God in their camp.

The key word of the book is holy. To be holy means to be set apart, separate from what is common and sinful, and belonging to God. God is holy, and He calls His people to be holy because He is (11:44-45; 19:2; 20:26). The book also teaches that sin brings death and that God provides atonement through the blood of a substitute (17:11). Here is the theme in God's own words:

Leviticus 11:45 (SLB)

"For I ***am*** the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be God for you; and you shall be holy, for I ***am*** holy."

Notice the order. God first saved Israel out of Egypt. Then He called them to be holy. The Law was never the way to become God's people. It was given to a people God had already redeemed.

Leviticus has 27 chapters and 859 verses. Here is its structure:

Part One: The Offerings (chapters 1 to 7)

- Chapter 1: The Burnt Offering
- Chapter 2: The Grain Offering
- Chapter 3: The Peace Offering
- Chapter 4: The Sin Offering
- Chapter 5: The Guilt Offering
- Chapter 6: Instructions for the Priests
- Chapter 7: The Priests' Share of the Offerings

Part Two: The Priests (chapters 8 to 10)

- Chapter 8: The Ordination of Aaron and His Sons
- Chapter 9: The Glory of the LORD Appears
- Chapter 10: Nadab and Abihu

Part Three: Clean and Unclean (chapters 11 to 15)

- Chapter 11: Clean and Unclean Animals
- Chapter 12: Cleansing After Childbirth
- Chapter 13: Leprosy in People and Clothing
- Chapter 14: The Cleansing of the Leper
- Chapter 15: Bodily Discharges

Part Four: The Day of Atonement (chapter 16)

- Chapter 16: The Day of Atonement

Part Five: Holy Living (chapters 17 to 22)

- Chapter 17: The Life Is in the Blood
- Chapter 18: Unlawful Sexual Relations
- Chapter 19: Be Holy, for I Am Holy
- Chapter 20: Penalties for Sin
- Chapter 21: The Holiness of the Priests
- Chapter 22: Holy Gifts and Acceptable Offerings

Part Six: Holy Times (chapters 23 to 25)

- Chapter 23: The Appointed Feasts of the LORD
- Chapter 24: The Lamp, the Bread, and the Blasphemer
- Chapter 25: The Sabbath Year and the Jubilee

Part Seven: Blessings, Curses and Vows (chapters 26 and 27)

- Chapter 26: Blessings and Curses
- Chapter 27: Vows and Things Given to the LORD

Where this book points to Christ: The New Testament reads Leviticus as a shadow of Christ (Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 10:1). Every offering points to Him. He is the burnt offering who gave Himself wholly to God, "an offering and a sacrifice to God for an aroma of fragrance" (Ephesians 5:2). He is our peace (Ephesians 2:14). He is the sin offering, made "sin on our behalf" (2 Corinthians 5:21), and Isaiah says His soul would make "a guilt offering" (Isaiah 53:10). He is the High Priest who never needs to offer for His own sins (Hebrews 7:26-27). The high priest going behind the veil once a year on the Day of Atonement pictures Christ entering heaven itself with His own blood, "once for all" (Hebrews 9:11-12, 24). Even the sin offering burned outside the camp points to Jesus, who "suffered outside the gate" (Hebrews 13:11-12). The feasts point to Him as well: Christ is "our Passover" (1 Corinthians 5:7) and "the firstfruits" of those raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20). Hebrews sums it up plainly: the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins, but by one offering Christ "has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:4, 14).

Background of the Book

Author: Moses. Leviticus says over and over, "And the LORD spoke to Moses," and it closes by saying these are the commandments the LORD gave Moses "on Mount Sinai" (27:34). Jesus Himself pointed to the cleansing law of Leviticus 14 as "the things which Moses commanded" (Mark 1:44). Many modern scholars believe Leviticus was written much later by priests, perhaps during or after the exile in Babylon, and pieced together from several sources. I take the book at its word. It claims to be the word of the LORD given through Moses, it fits a people living in tents around a portable tabernacle in the wilderness, and Jesus and the apostles treated it as the Law of Moses.

Who it was written to: The people of Israel, camped at Mount Sinai after God brought them out of Egypt. Some parts speak to all the people, and some speak mainly to Aaron and his sons, the priests, who had to know the rules well enough to teach them (10:10-11).

Setting: Israel was at Mount Sinai. God had made His covenant with them (Exodus 19 to 24), and they had built the tabernacle by His pattern (Exodus 25 to 40). The tabernacle was a large tent, also called the tent of meeting, where God's presence dwelt among His people. It stood in a courtyard with the bronze altar for sacrifices. Inside were two rooms: the holy place, and behind a veil, the Most Holy Place with the ark of the covenant, the gold-covered chest that held the tablets of the Law.

When it was written: During Israel's time at Sinai, about 1445 B.C. Many conservative scholars place the exodus about 1446 B.C. (1 Kings 6:1), and Leviticus was given about a year later. Moses may have written it down then or set it in its final form during the wilderness years.

When the events happened: In the first month of the second year after the exodus, between the setting up of the tabernacle (Exodus 40:17) and the census of Numbers 1:1. The only story told in the book, the ordination of the priests and the death of Nadab and Abihu (chapters 8 to 10), happened in those weeks, along with the account of the blasphemer (24:10-23).

Purpose: To show Israel how a sinful people could come near a holy God and live, through sacrifice and a priesthood that God Himself provided, and how a redeemed people should live as holy in worship, in their homes, in their bodies, in their business and with their neighbors.

The Law and the believer today: The Law of Moses was a covenant God made with Israel. Jesus did not come to abolish it "but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). The sacrifices, the priesthood, the food laws and the feasts were shadows, and Christ is the reality (Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 10:1-14). Christians do not offer animal sacrifices or keep the food laws as a duty to God (Mark 7:19; Acts 10:15). But the moral heart of the Law is restated in the New Testament. Leviticus 19:18, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself," is the second great commandment Jesus named (Matthew 22:39), and Peter calls us to be holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). Christ is the end of the Law "for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4). We read Leviticus to know God better, to see our sin more clearly, and to love Christ more for fulfilling it all.

Words to know: Leviticus uses some words over and over. A covenant is a binding agreement in which God makes promises to His people and tells them how to live as His own; at Sinai God made His covenant with Israel. An offering is something brought near to God. The Hebrew word is qorban, from the word meaning to bring near. Atonement is what the sacrifices made for the worshiper: sin covered and dealt with, so that the guilty could be forgiven and come near to God. Clean and unclean describe whether a person or thing was fit to come near God's tabernacle. Being unclean was often not a sin at all. It came from ordinary life, like touching a dead body or giving birth. But an unclean person could not come into God's presence until he was made clean. Each of these words will be explained again as it comes up.

Chapter 1: The Burnt Offering

Scripture

1:1-9 And He called to Moses, and the LORD spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and you shall say to them, 'When a man of you brings near an offering to the LORD, from the livestock, from the herd or from the flock you shall bring near your offering. If his offering ***is*** a burnt offering from the herd, he shall bring it near, a male without blemish; to the entrance of the tent of meeting he shall bring it near, for his acceptance before the LORD. And he shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. And he shall slaughter the young of the herd before the LORD; and the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall bring near the blood, and they shall sprinkle the blood all around on the altar that ***is at*** the entrance of the tent of meeting. And he shall skin the burnt offering, and he shall cut it into its pieces. And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and they shall arrange wood on the fire. And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall arrange the pieces, the head and the suet, on the wood which ***is*** on the fire which ***is*** on the altar. And its entrails and its legs he shall wash with water; and the priest shall make all ***of it*** smoke on the altar ***as*** a burnt offering, a fire offering of a soothing aroma to the LORD.

1:10-17 And if his offering ***is*** from the flock, from the sheep or from the goats, for a burnt offering, he shall bring it near, a male without blemish. And he shall slaughter it on the side of the altar northward before the LORD; and the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall sprinkle its blood all around on the altar. And he shall cut it into its pieces, with its head and its suet; and the priest shall arrange them on the wood which ***is*** on the fire which ***is*** on the altar. And the entrails and the legs he shall wash with water; and the priest shall bring near all ***of it*** and make ***it*** smoke on the altar; it ***is*** a burnt offering, a fire offering of a soothing aroma to the LORD. And if his offering to the LORD ***is*** a burnt offering from the birds, then he shall bring near his offering from the turtledoves or from the young of the dove. And the priest shall bring it near to the altar, and he shall wring off its head and make ***it*** smoke on the altar; and its blood shall be drained out on the wall of the altar. And he shall remove its crop with its feathers, and he shall throw it beside the altar eastward, to the place of the fatty ashes. And he shall tear it open by its wings; he shall not divide ***it***; and the priest shall make it smoke on the altar, on the wood which ***is*** on the fire; it ***is*** a burnt offering, a fire offering of a soothing aroma to the LORD.

Chapter 1 Preview

Leviticus opens with God speaking from the tent of meeting, the tabernacle Israel had just finished. The first thing He teaches His people is how to come near Him. The first offering He describes is the burnt offering, the offering that was burned whole on the altar and went up to God in smoke.

The chapter gives three versions of the same offering: a bull from the herd, a sheep or goat from the flock, or a bird for those who had less. The steps repeat on purpose. The worshiper brings an animal without blemish, lays his hand on its head, and it dies in his place. Its blood is put on the altar, and all of it goes up to the LORD as "a soothing aroma." As we read, we should see both the

cost of sin and the love of a God who made a way back to Himself. And we should look ahead to the One who gave Himself wholly for us.

Chapter 1 Study

1:1-2 *And He called to Moses, and the LORD spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and you shall say to them, 'When a man of you brings near an offering to the LORD, from the livestock, from the herd or from the flock you shall bring near your offering.*

"And He called to Moses." In Hebrew these are the first words of the book, and they became its Hebrew name. God is the One who calls. At Sinai the LORD had spoken from the mountain, and the people were afraid (Exodus 20:18-19). Now He speaks "from the tent of meeting," from the middle of the camp. The tabernacle was called the tent of meeting because it was the place where God met with His people (Exodus 25:22).

God tells Moses what to say "when a man of you brings near an offering to the LORD." The word for offering, qorban, comes from the verb to bring near. That is the whole point of the offerings: to bring a person near to God. Notice that God does not say "if" anyone wants to come. He assumes His people will want to draw near, and He shows them how.

The offering came "from the herd or from the flock." These were tame animals the family had raised and fed, not wild game. A sacrifice was meant to cost something. David later said he would not offer the LORD something that cost him nothing (2 Samuel 24:24).

1:3-4 *If his offering **is** a burnt offering from the herd, he shall bring it near, a male without blemish; to the entrance of the tent of meeting he shall bring it near, for his acceptance before the LORD. And he shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.*

A burnt offering from the herd had to be "a male without blemish." Without blemish means healthy and whole, with no defect, injury or disease. God deserved the best, not the leftovers. Centuries later the LORD rebuked Israel through Malachi for bringing blind, lame and sick animals to His altar (Malachi 1:8).

The Hebrew word for burnt offering, olah, means that which goes up. The whole animal went up in smoke to God. The worshiper brought it "to the entrance of the tent of meeting" and it was "for his acceptance before the LORD." The goal of the burnt offering was that the worshiper would be accepted by God.

"And he shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering." This was not a light touch. The worshiper leaned his hand on the animal. By this act he was saying that this animal stood for him. Then comes one of the key words of Leviticus: "it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him." Atonement means that sin is covered and dealt with, so that the guilty person can be forgiven and brought back to God. The Hebrew word, kipper, is often explained as to cover, and many also see in it the idea of a ransom paid. The animal died, and the worshiper lived. That is substitution, one dying in the place of another.

Did the blood of a bull really take away sin? Hebrews says, "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). The animal could not pay for a human soul. But God accepted the offering of a believing Israelite, and it covered his sin until the one true sacrifice came. Every lamb and bull pointed forward to Jesus, the "lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19). Old Testament believers were saved the same way we are, by faith in the God who promised to provide.

1:5-9 *And he shall slaughter the young of the herd before the LORD; and the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall bring near the blood, and they shall sprinkle the blood all around on the altar that* ***is at*** *the entrance of the tent of meeting. And he shall skin the burnt offering, and he shall cut it into its pieces. And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and they shall arrange wood on the fire. And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall arrange the pieces, the head and the suet, on the wood which* ***is*** *on the fire which* ***is*** *on the altar. And its entrails and its legs he shall wash with water; and the priest shall make all* ***of it*** *smoke on the altar* ***as*** *a burnt offering, a fire offering of a soothing aroma to the LORD.*

The worshiper himself slaughtered the animal "before the LORD." He did not hand it off to someone else. He watched it die, and he knew why. Sin is not a small thing. It brings death (Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23). Every Israelite who brought a burnt offering saw that with his own eyes.

Then the priests took over. A priest was a man God appointed to stand between Him and the people, to offer the sacrifices and to teach God's Law. Only Aaron and his sons could serve as priests (Exodus 28:1). They brought the blood near and sprinkled it "all around on the altar." Leviticus will explain why the blood mattered so much: "the life of the flesh is in the blood," and it is the blood that makes atonement (17:11). The altar here is the bronze altar of burnt offering that stood in the courtyard in front of the tent (Exodus 27:1-8).

The worshiper skinned the animal, cut it up and washed the entrails and legs. The priests arranged the pieces on the wood and burned all of it. Unlike most other offerings, no one ate any of the burnt offering. It all belonged to God. Only the hide went to the priest (7:8).

"A fire offering of a soothing aroma to the LORD." God does not need the smell of roasting meat. This is a way of saying that God was pleased with the offering and accepted it. Paul uses the same picture for Christ: He "gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an aroma of fragrance" (Ephesians 5:2). The burnt offering held nothing back. Neither did Jesus. He gave Himself wholly to the Father, and the Father was pleased.

1:10-13 *And if his offering **is** from the flock, from the sheep or from the goats, for a burnt offering, he shall bring it near, a male without blemish. And he shall slaughter it on the side of the altar northward before the LORD; and the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall sprinkle its blood all around on the altar. And he shall cut it into its pieces, with its head and its suet; and the priest shall arrange them on the wood which **is** on the fire which **is** on the altar. And the entrails and the legs he shall wash with water; and the priest shall bring near all **of it** and make **it** smoke on the altar; it **is** a burnt offering, a fire offering of a soothing aroma to the LORD.*

The same offering could come "from the flock, from the sheep or from the goats." The rules are almost the same as for the bull: a male without blemish, slaughtered before the LORD, the blood sprinkled, the pieces arranged, the entrails and legs washed, and all of it burned. Here we learn the place: "on the side of the altar northward."

Why repeat the rules? Because a sheep or goat cost far less than a bull. God made a way for more of His people to come. The sacrifice still had to be a whole, healthy animal, but it did not have to be the biggest one. What God cared about was a heart that came to Him in faith, through the way He provided.

1:14-17 *And if his offering to the LORD **is** a burnt offering from the birds, then he shall bring near his offering from the turtledoves or from the young of the dove. And the priest shall bring it near to the altar, and he shall wring off its head and make **it** smoke on the altar; and its blood shall be drained out on the wall of the altar. And he shall remove its crop with its feathers, and he shall throw it beside the altar eastward, to the place of the fatty ashes. And he shall tear it open by its wings; he shall not divide **it**; and the priest shall make it smoke on the altar, on the wood which **is** on the fire; it **is** a burnt offering, a fire offering of a soothing aroma to the LORD.*

For those who could not afford a sheep or goat, a burnt offering could be "from the turtledoves or from the young of the dove." The priest did more of the work here, because a bird is small. He wrung off its head, drained its blood on the wall of the altar, removed the crop with its feathers and threw it on the ash heap on the east side. Then he tore the bird open by its wings without dividing it, and burned it.

And this small offering is called exactly the same thing as the bull: "a burnt offering, a fire offering of a soothing aroma to the LORD." The poor man's dove pleased God as much as the rich man's bull. God does not measure our worship by its price tag. When Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the temple, they offered birds, the offering of the poor (Luke 2:22-24; see 12:8).

What does this chapter teach us now? We do not bring animals to an altar, because Christ has offered Himself "once for all" (Hebrews 10:10). But the burnt offering still teaches us how to come to God. We come through a substitute, not on our own merit. And once we are accepted in Christ, God calls us to give ourselves wholly to Him. Paul says to "present your bodies as a living, holy sacrifice, well-pleasing to God" (Romans 12:1). The burnt offering went up entirely. Is there any part of your life you are keeping off the altar?

Chapter 1 Summary

The LORD called to Moses from the tent of meeting and told him how an Israelite could bring an offering near to Him. The burnt offering could be a male bull, a male sheep or goat, or a bird, so that rich and poor alike could come. The worshiper laid his hand on the animal's head, it was accepted to make atonement for him, and he slaughtered it before the LORD. The priests sprinkled its blood on the altar and burned the whole offering, a soothing aroma to the LORD. The burnt offering teaches that sin brings death, that God accepts a substitute, and that a forgiven worshiper belongs wholly to God. It points to Jesus Christ, who gave Himself completely as a sacrifice that pleased the Father.

Chapter 1 Study Questions

1. Where did the LORD speak to Moses from, and why does that matter after Exodus 40? (1:1)

2. What does the word qorban, offering, tell us about the purpose of the offerings? (1:2)

3. What kind of animal could be brought from the herd for a burnt offering, and why did it have to be without blemish? (1:3)

4. What did the worshiper do with his hand, and what did God say the offering would do for him? (1:4)

5. Why do you think the worshiper had to slaughter the animal himself? (1:5)

6. How much of the burnt offering was burned on the altar? (1:9, 13)

7. Why did God allow sheep, goats and birds as well as bulls? (1:10, 14)

8. How does Ephesians 5:2 connect the burnt offering to Jesus?

9. Hebrews 10:4 says animal blood could not take away sins. How then were Old Testament believers forgiven?

10. Romans 12:1 calls us to be a living sacrifice. What part of your life is hardest to give wholly to God?

Chapter 2: The Grain Offering

Scripture

2:1-16 And when a soul brings near an offering of a grain offering to the LORD, his offering shall be fine flour; and he shall pour oil on it, and he shall put frankincense on it. And he shall bring it to the sons of Aaron, the priests; and he shall take from there the fullness of his handful from its fine flour and from its oil, with all its frankincense; and the priest shall make its memorial portion smoke on the altar, a fire offering of a soothing aroma to the LORD. And the remainder of the grain offering ***is*** for Aaron and for his sons, a holy of holies from the fire offerings of the LORD. And when you bring near an offering of a grain offering baked in an oven, ***it shall be*** unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers smeared with oil. And if your offering a grain offering on the griddle, it shall be fine flour mixed with oil, unleavened. Break it ***into*** pieces, and you shall pour oil on it; it ***is*** a grain offering. And if your offering ***is*** a grain offering of the pan, it shall be made ***of*** fine flour with oil. And you shall bring the grain offering which is made from these to the LORD; and he shall bring it near to the priest, and he shall bring it close to the altar. And the priest shall lift up from the grain offering its memorial portion, and he shall make ***it*** smoke on the altar, a fire offering of a soothing aroma to the LORD. And the remainder of the grain offering ***is*** for Aaron and for his sons, a holy of holies from the fire offerings of the LORD. No grain offering which you bring near to the LORD shall be made leavened; for any leaven and any honey, you shall not make smoke ***any*** of it ***as*** a fire offering to the LORD. ***As*** an offering of first ***produce*** you shall bring them near to the LORD, and to the altar they shall not go up for a soothing aroma. And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; and you shall not let the salt of the covenant of your God cease from on your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall bring near salt. And if you bring near a grain offering of firstfruits to the LORD, you shall bring near ***as*** the grain offering of your firstfruits fresh ears roasted in the fire, crushed grain of fresh growth. And you shall put oil on it, and you shall put frankincense on it; it ***is*** a grain offering. And the priest shall make its memorial portion smoke, from its crushed grain and from its oil, with all its frankincense, a fire offering to the LORD.

Chapter 2 Preview

Chapter 1 was about blood and fire. Chapter 2 is about flour, oil and bread. The grain offering was the one offering in this first group with no animal and no blood. It could be brought as raw flour, as baked cakes or wafers, as bread from a griddle or a pan, or as roasted grain from the first of the harvest.

A small handful, the memorial portion, was burned on the altar, and the rest went to the priests as food. Two things were never allowed on the altar, leaven and honey, and one thing was always required, salt, "the salt of the covenant of your God." The grain offering was a gift of thanks from the work of a man's hands, and it reminds us that everything we have comes from God and belongs to Him.

Chapter 2 Study

2:1-3 *And when a soul brings near an offering of a grain offering to the LORD, his offering shall be fine flour; and he shall pour oil on it, and he shall put frankincense on it. And he shall bring it to the sons of Aaron, the priests; and he shall take from there the fullness of his handful from its fine flour and from its oil, with all its frankincense; and the priest shall make its memorial portion smoke on the altar, a fire offering of a soothing aroma to the LORD. And the remainder of the grain offering* ***is*** *for Aaron and for his sons, a holy of holies from the fire offerings of the LORD.*

"When a soul brings near an offering of a grain offering to the LORD." The Hebrew word for grain offering, minchah, means a gift or tribute, the kind of present a servant brings to his master. It was usually brought along with a burnt offering (Numbers 15:1-10). The burnt offering said, in effect, I belong to You. The grain offering added, and so does the work of my hands.

It was made of "fine flour," the best grade of flour, ground smooth. The worshiper poured oil on it and put frankincense on it. Frankincense was a costly sweet-smelling resin, burned as incense. The priest took "the fullness of his handful" of the flour and oil, with all the frankincense, and burned it as "its memorial portion." This handful stood for the whole offering, as if to remind God of the worshiper and remind the worshiper of God.

"And the remainder of the grain offering is for Aaron and for his sons, a holy of holies." A holy of holies means most holy. The priests did not farm land like the other tribes. God fed them from the offerings the people gave Him (Numbers 18:8-10). In the same way, the New Testament teaches that those who preach the gospel should be supported by those they serve (1 Corinthians 9:13-14).

2:4-10 *And when you bring near an offering of a grain offering baked in an oven,* ***it shall be*** *unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers smeared with oil. And if your offering* ***is*** *a grain offering on the griddle, it shall be fine flour mixed with oil, unleavened. Break it* ***into*** *pieces, and you shall pour oil on it; it* ***is*** *a grain offering. And if your offering* ***is*** *a grain offering of the pan, it shall be made* ***of*** *fine flour with oil. And you shall bring the grain offering which is made from these to the LORD; and he shall bring it near to the priest, and he shall bring it close to the altar. And the priest shall lift up from the grain offering its memorial portion, and he shall make* ***it*** *smoke on the altar, a fire offering of a soothing aroma to the LORD. And the remainder of the grain offering* ***is*** *for Aaron and for his sons, a holy of holies from the fire offerings of the LORD.*

The grain offering could also be cooked first: "baked in an oven" as cakes or wafers, made "on the griddle," or made in "the pan." Each one had to be made of fine flour with oil, and the baked ones had to be unleavened. The griddle offering was broken into pieces and had oil poured on it.

Why so many ways to make it? God took His people as they were. Some would bring raw flour. Others would bring bread they had baked at home. A rich family and a poor family could both come. As with the burnt offering, the priest burned the memorial portion "a fire offering of a soothing aroma to the LORD," and the rest was food for the priests.

Some Bible teachers see in the fine flour a picture of the perfect, even life of Jesus, with no lumps or flaws, and in the oil a picture of the Holy Spirit who rested on Him. The New Testament does

not say this about the grain offering directly, so I hold it loosely. What is clear is that Jesus called Himself "the bread of life" (John 6:35), and that His whole life, not only His death, pleased the Father (Matthew 3:17).

2:11-12 *No grain offering which you bring near to the LORD shall be made leavened; for any leaven and any honey, you shall not make smoke **any** of it **as** a fire offering to the LORD. **As** an offering of first **produce** you shall bring them near to the LORD, and to the altar they shall not go up for a soothing aroma.*

"No grain offering which you bring near to the LORD shall be made leavened." Leaven is yeast, or a bit of old fermented dough used to make new dough rise. Honey here may mean bee honey or the sweet syrup of fruit like dates. Both cause dough to ferment or spoil. Neither could be burned on the altar.

Leaven in Scripture often stands for something that spreads quietly through the whole, and most of the time for sin. Paul says, "cleanse out the old leaven," and calls us to celebrate "with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). Jesus warned about "the leaven of the Pharisees" (Matthew 16:6). Leaven was not always a picture of sin, though. Verse 12 says leaven and honey could be brought as firstfruits, just not burned on the altar, and the bread of Pentecost was baked with leaven (23:17). What went up to God in smoke had to be free of anything that pictured corruption.

2:13 *And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; and you shall not let the salt of the covenant of your God cease from on your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall bring near salt.*

"And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt." Salt does the opposite of leaven. It keeps food from spoiling. In the ancient world, people who shared a meal with salt were bound to keep faith with each other. So God calls it "the salt of the covenant of your God." Every time an Israelite salted his offering, he was reminded that God's covenant with Israel would last (Numbers 18:19; 2 Chronicles 13:5).

Jesus told His followers, "You are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13), and Paul says our speech should be "seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6). Salt is a good picture of a life that keeps faith with God and holds back the rot of the world around it.

2:14-16 *And if you bring near a grain offering of firstfruits to the LORD, you shall bring near **as** the grain offering of your firstfruits fresh ears roasted in the fire, crushed grain of fresh growth. And you shall put oil on it, and you shall put frankincense on it; it **is** a grain offering. And the priest shall make its memorial portion smoke, from its crushed grain and from its oil, with all its frankincense, a fire offering to the LORD.*

The last kind of grain offering was "a grain offering of firstfruits." Firstfruits were the first part of the harvest, given to God before the rest was used. The worshiper brought "fresh ears roasted in the fire, crushed grain of fresh growth," with oil and frankincense. The priest burned the memorial portion as before.

Giving God the first of the harvest was an act of trust. It said that God gave this harvest and God would give the rest. Proverbs 3:9-10 says to honor the LORD with the first of all our produce. Paul calls the risen Christ "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). His resurrection is the first sheaf of a great harvest to come.

How does the grain offering apply to us? We do not bring flour to an altar. Christ has fulfilled all of these offerings. But we still give God our gifts of thanks. Hebrews says, "do not forget doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16). Our work, our money and our time can all be offered to God, as long as they are offered with a heart free of the leaven of pride and seasoned with faithfulness.

Chapter 2 Summary

The grain offering was a gift to the LORD made of fine flour, oil and frankincense. It could be brought as raw flour, baked in an oven, cooked on a griddle or in a pan, or as roasted grain of firstfruits. The priest burned a handful as the memorial portion, a soothing aroma to the LORD, and the rest belonged to Aaron and his sons as most holy food. No leaven or honey could be burned on the altar, and every grain offering had to be seasoned with salt, the salt of the covenant. The grain offering teaches that our work and our harvest belong to God and should be given back to Him with thanks, from a pure and faithful heart.

For me, the leaven was the first drink. One drink led to another, and then another. A small sin that is left alone does not stay small. It works its way through everything.

Chapter 2 Study Questions

1. What were the three main ingredients of the grain offering? (2:1)

2. What part of the grain offering was burned, and who ate the rest? (2:2-3)

3. What different ways could the grain offering be prepared? (2:4-7)

4. What two things could never be burned as a fire offering to the LORD? (2:11)

5. What did God call the salt that had to be on every offering? (2:13)

6. What was a grain offering of firstfruits, and how was it prepared? (2:14)

7. How does Paul use leaven as a picture in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8?

8. Why do you think God made a way for both raw flour and home-baked bread to be offered?

9. What would it look like for you to give God the "first" of your time, money or work this week?

10. Is there any "leaven," a small sin that spreads, that you need to bring to God and be rid of?

Chapter 3: The Peace Offering

Scripture

3:1-17 And if his offering ***is*** a sacrifice of peace offerings, if he is bringing near from the herd, whether male or female, he shall bring it near without blemish before the LORD. And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and he shall slaughter it ***at*** the entrance of the tent of meeting; and the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall sprinkle the blood all around on the altar. And he shall bring near from the sacrifice of the peace offerings a fire offering to the LORD: the fat that covers the entrails, and all the fat which ***is*** on the entrails, and the two kidneys and the fat which ***is*** on them, which ***is*** on the loins, and the lobe on the liver; with the kidneys he shall remove it. And the sons of Aaron shall make it smoke on the altar, on the burnt offering which ***is*** on the wood which ***is*** on the fire, a fire offering of a soothing aroma to the LORD. And if his offering for a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD ***is*** from the flock, male or female, he shall bring it near without blemish. If he is bringing near a sheep ***as*** his offering, then he shall bring it near before the LORD. And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and he shall slaughter it before the tent of meeting; and the sons of Aaron shall sprinkle its blood all around on the altar. And he shall bring near from the sacrifice of the peace offerings a fire offering to the LORD: its fat, the whole fat tail, which he shall remove close to the backbone, and the fat that covers the entrails, and all the fat which ***is*** on the entrails, and the two kidneys and the fat which ***is*** on them, which ***is*** on the loins, and the lobe on the liver; with the kidneys he shall remove it. And the priest shall make it smoke on the altar, the food of a fire offering to the LORD. And if his offering ***is*** a goat, then he shall bring it near before the LORD. And he shall lay his hand on its head, and he shall slaughter it before the tent of meeting; and the sons of Aaron shall sprinkle its blood all around on the altar. And he shall bring near from it his offering, a fire offering to the LORD: the fat that covers the entrails, and all the fat which ***is*** on the entrails, and the two kidneys and the fat which ***is*** on them, which ***is*** on the loins, and the lobe on the liver; with the kidneys he shall remove it. And the priest shall make them smoke on the altar, the food of a fire offering for a soothing aroma; all fat ***is*** the LORD's. ***It is*** a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings: any fat and any blood you shall not eat.'"

Chapter 3 Preview

The third offering is the peace offering, sometimes called the fellowship offering. It looks a lot like the burnt offering at first. The worshiper brings an animal without blemish, lays his hand on its head and slaughters it, and the priests sprinkle its blood on the altar. But this time only the fat and certain inner parts are burned on the altar. Chapter 7 will tell us that the priests received a share and the worshiper and his family ate the rest.

The peace offering was a meal shared with God. It was offered when a person wanted to give thanks, to keep a vow, or simply to worship freely. It shows what God wants after sin is dealt with: fellowship, joy and a table where He and His people meet in peace. The chapter ends with a rule for all Israel: no fat and no blood may be eaten.

Chapter 3 Study

3:1-2 *And if his offering **is** a sacrifice of peace offerings, if he is bringing near from the herd, whether male or female, he shall bring it near without blemish before the LORD. And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and he shall slaughter it **at** the entrance of the tent of meeting; and the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall sprinkle the blood all around on the altar.*

"And if his offering is a sacrifice of peace offerings." The Hebrew word, shelamim, is related to shalom, the word for peace. Shalom means more than the absence of fighting. It means wholeness, well-being, everything being right between people and God. The peace offering did not make peace with God so much as celebrate a peace He had already made possible.

This time the animal from the herd could be "male or female," but it still had to be "without blemish." The worshiper laid his hand on its head, slaughtered it at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and the priests sprinkled the blood around the altar. Even a meal of fellowship with God started with blood. No one can sit at God's table except through a death in his place.

The New Testament says this plainly about Jesus: He "made peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:20), and "He Himself is our peace" (Ephesians 2:14). Because we are justified by faith, "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

3:3-5 *And he shall bring near from the sacrifice of the peace offerings a fire offering to the LORD: the fat that covers the entrails, and all the fat which **is** on the entrails, and the two kidneys and the fat which **is** on them, which **is** on the loins, and the lobe on the liver; with the kidneys he shall remove it. And the sons of Aaron shall make it smoke on the altar, on the burnt offering which **is** on the wood which **is** on the fire, a fire offering of a soothing aroma to the LORD.*

Here is the difference from the burnt offering. Only certain parts went on the altar: "the fat that covers the entrails," the fat on the entrails, "the two kidneys" with their fat, and "the lobe on the liver." These were the richest inner parts of the animal. The priests burned them "on the burnt offering," which probably means on top of the morning burnt offering already on the altar.

In Israel the fat was thought of as the best part of an animal. To give it to God was to say He deserves the best. The "soothing aroma" again means God accepted the offering with pleasure. The rest of the meat was eaten by people, as chapter 7 will explain. God took His portion first, and then His people feasted in His presence.

3:6-11 *And if his offering for a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD **is** from the flock, male or female, he shall bring it near without blemish. If he is bringing near a sheep **as** his offering, then he shall bring it near before the LORD. And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and he shall slaughter it before the tent of meeting; and the sons of Aaron shall sprinkle its blood all around on the altar. And he shall bring near from the sacrifice of the peace offerings a fire offering to the LORD: its fat, the whole fat tail, which he shall remove close to the backbone, and the fat that covers the entrails, and all the fat which **is** on the entrails, and the two kidneys and the fat which **is** on them, which **is** on the loins, and the lobe on the liver; with the kidneys he shall remove it. And the priest shall make it smoke on the altar, the food of a fire offering to the LORD.*

A peace offering could also come "from the flock," either a sheep or a goat. For a sheep, the worshiper gave the same inner fat and kidneys and liver lobe, and also "the whole fat tail, which he shall remove close to the backbone." The sheep of that region had large fat tails, and the tail was counted as a choice part.

The priest burned these parts on the altar, and verse 11 calls it "the food of a fire offering to the LORD." God does not eat. The wording is a picture of a shared meal, with God as the host who takes the first and best portion. It reminds Israel that this was a meal with God, not just a family barbecue.

3:12-16 *And if his offering **is** a goat, then he shall bring it near before the LORD. And he shall lay his hand on its head, and he shall slaughter it before the tent of meeting; and the sons of Aaron shall sprinkle its blood all around on the altar. And he shall bring near from it his offering, a fire offering to the LORD: the fat that covers the entrails, and all the fat which **is** on the entrails, and the two kidneys and the fat which **is** on them, which **is** on the loins, and the lobe on the liver; with the kidneys he shall remove it. And the priest shall make them smoke on the altar, the food of a fire offering for a soothing aroma; all fat **is** the LORD's.*

The third choice was "a goat." The steps are the same again: lay the hand on its head, slaughter it before the tent of meeting, sprinkle the blood, and burn the fat, the kidneys and the liver lobe. Verse 16 sums it up: "all fat is the LORD's."

Why list each animal separately when the steps are so close? Because God wanted every Israelite to know exactly how to come to Him. Worship was not left to guesswork or personal taste. That will matter a great deal in chapter 10, when two priests come to God in a way He did not command.

3:17 ***It is** a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings: any fat and any blood you shall not eat.'"*

"It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings: any fat and any blood you shall not eat." A statute is a fixed rule. This one applied to Israel wherever they lived. The fat belonged to God. The blood belonged to God even more, because "the life of the flesh is in the blood" and God had given it on the altar to make atonement (17:11). Leviticus 7:22-27 makes clear that the fat rule was for the animals used in sacrifice, while the blood rule covered all meat.

This rule was given to Israel under the Law of Moses. When the apostles met in Jerusalem, they asked Gentile believers to keep away from blood out of respect for their Jewish brothers and for the old command given to Noah (Acts 15:20, 29; Genesis 9:4). Jesus also made clear that food does not make a person unclean (Mark 7:19). Believers today differ on how the blood rule in Acts 15 applies. What does not change is the truth behind it: life belongs to God, and the blood that makes atonement is holy.

What does the peace offering teach us now? It teaches that God does not only want to forgive us. He wants to share life with us. Through Christ we are welcomed to His table. Jesus said that if anyone opens the door, "I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20). The Lord's Supper is a reminder of that peace, bought with His blood. Do you think of your walk with God as a duty, or as a meal with a Friend who paid the price to have you at His table?

Chapter 3 Summary

The peace offering could be a male or female animal from the herd, a sheep or a goat, without blemish. The worshiper laid his hand on its head and slaughtered it, and the priests sprinkled its blood around the altar. The fat over the entrails, the kidneys, the lobe of the liver, and for a sheep the fat tail, were burned on the altar as a soothing aroma to the LORD, because all fat is the LORD's. The rest was eaten, making the offering a shared meal of fellowship with God. Israel was forbidden to eat fat or blood. The peace offering celebrates the peace God gives His people, and it points to Christ, who made peace through the blood of His cross.

Chapter 3 Study Questions

1. What animals could be brought as a peace offering, and how was this different from the burnt offering? (3:1, 6, 12)

2. What did the worshiper do before the animal was slaughtered? (3:2)

3. Which parts of the animal were burned on the altar? (3:3-4)

4. What extra part was given when the offering was a sheep? (3:9)

5. What does verse 16 say about all the fat? (3:16)

6. What two things were the Israelites never to eat, and how long was this rule to last for them? (3:17)

7. What does the Hebrew word shalom mean, and how does it help us understand this offering?

8. According to Colossians 1:20 and Romans 5:1, how do we have peace with God?

9. Why do you think God wanted the peace offering to be a meal shared with His people?

10. Is your relationship with God more like a duty or like fellowship at His table? What would help it grow?

Chapter 4: The Sin Offering

Scripture

4:1-12 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'When a soul sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the LORD ***concerning things*** which are not to be done, and does any one of them, if the anointed priest sins, for the guilt of the people, then he shall bring near for his sin which he has sinned a young bull, a son of the herd, without blemish to the LORD for a sin offering. And he shall bring the bull to the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD, and he shall lay his hand on the head of the bull, and he shall slaughter the bull before the LORD. And the anointed priest shall take some of the blood of the bull, and he shall bring it into the tent of meeting. And the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and he shall spatter some of the blood seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil of the holy place. And the priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of the incense of the fragrances before the LORD, which ***is*** in the tent of meeting; and all the blood of the bull he shall pour out at the base of the altar of the burnt offering, which ***is at*** the entrance of the tent of meeting. And all the fat of the bull of the sin offering he shall lift off from it: the fat that covers the entrails, and all the fat which ***is*** on the entrails, and the two kidneys and the fat which ***is*** on them, which ***is*** on the loins, and the lobe on the liver; with the kidneys he shall remove it, just as it is lifted off from the ox of the sacrifice of the peace offerings; and the priest shall make them smoke on the altar of the burnt offering. And the hide of the bull and all its flesh, with its head and with its legs, and its entrails and its dung, even all the bull he shall bring out to outside the camp, to a clean place, to the pouring out of the fatty ashes, and he shall burn it on wood with fire; at the pouring out of the fatty ashes it shall be burned.

4:13-21 And if all the congregation of Israel errs, and the matter is hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they do one of all the commandments of the LORD ***concerning things*** which are not to be done, and they are guilty, when the sin which they have sinned in it becomes known, then the assembly shall bring near a young bull, a son of the herd, for a sin offering, and they shall bring it before the tent of meeting. And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD, and he shall slaughter the bull before the LORD. And the anointed priest shall bring some of the blood of the bull into the tent of meeting. And the priest shall dip his finger in some of the blood, and he shall spatter ***it*** seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil. And some of the blood he shall put on the horns of the altar which ***is*** before the LORD, which ***is*** in the tent of meeting; and all the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of the burnt offering, which ***is at*** the entrance of the tent of meeting. And all its fat he shall lift off from it, and he shall make ***it*** smoke on the altar. And he shall do to the bull just as he did to the bull of the sin offering; so he shall do to it. And the priest shall make atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them. And he shall bring out the bull to outside the camp, and he shall burn it just as he burned the first bull; it ***is*** the sin offering of the assembly.

4:22-35 When a leader sins, and does unintentionally one of all the commandments of the LORD his God ***concerning things*** which are not to be done, and he is guilty, or his sin which he has sinned in it is made known to him, then he shall bring ***as*** his offering a goat of the goats, a male without blemish. And he shall lay his hand on the head of the goat, and he shall slaughter it in the

place where he slaughters the burnt offering before the LORD; it ***is*** a sin offering. And the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and he shall put ***it*** on the horns of the altar of the burnt offering; and its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of the burnt offering. And all its fat he shall make smoke on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of the peace offerings; and the priest shall make atonement for him from his sin, and it shall be forgiven him. And if one soul of the people of the land sins unintentionally, in doing one of the commandments of the LORD ***concerning things*** which are not to be done, and he is guilty, or his sin which he has sinned is made known to him, then he shall bring ***as*** his offering a female goat of the goats, without blemish, a female, for his sin which he has sinned. And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and he shall slaughter the sin offering in the place of the burnt offering. And the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and he shall put ***it*** on the horns of the altar of the burnt offering; and all its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar. And all its fat he shall remove, just as the fat was removed from on the sacrifice of the peace offerings; and the priest shall make ***it*** smoke on the altar for a soothing aroma to the LORD. And the priest shall make atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him. And if he brings a lamb ***as*** his offering for a sin offering, he shall bring it a female without blemish. And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and he shall slaughter it for a sin offering in the place where he slaughters the burnt offering. And the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and he shall put ***it*** on the horns of the altar of the burnt offering; and all its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar. And all its fat he shall remove, just as the fat of the sheep is removed from the sacrifice of the peace offerings; and the priest shall make them smoke on the altar, on the fire offerings of the LORD. And the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin which he has sinned, and it shall be forgiven him.

Chapter 4 Preview

The first three offerings were mostly gifts a worshiper chose to bring. Chapter 4 begins a new kind of offering, one that was required when a person sinned. The sin offering dealt with sin that had been done "unintentionally," without meaning to, or without knowing at the time that it was wrong.

The chapter moves through four groups of people: the anointed priest, the whole congregation, a leader, and an ordinary Israelite. The higher a person's place, the larger the animal and the deeper into the tabernacle the blood was carried. Over and over the chapter ends with the same good news: "the priest shall make atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him." Sin always has a cost, and God always provides a way to be forgiven. Hebrews tells us that Jesus fulfilled this offering, even to the detail of suffering outside the camp.

Chapter 4 Study

4:1-2 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'When a soul sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the LORD* ***concerning things*** *which are not to be done, and does any one of them,*

"When a soul sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the LORD." The word unintentionally means by mistake, by wandering off the path, or without knowing it at the time. It is the opposite of sinning "with a raised hand," on purpose and in open defiance of God (Numbers 15:27-31).

Why did God need an offering for sins people did not even mean to commit? Because sin is not only about our intentions. It is about God's holiness. We can do wrong without knowing it, and it is still wrong. David asked, "Errors, who will discern them? Acquit me from hidden faults" (Psalm 19:12). The sin offering shows that God takes even our unseen sins seriously, and that He made a way to deal with them.

The Hebrew word for sin offering, chatta't, is the same word for sin itself. Many teachers also call it the purification offering, because it cleansed the sinner and the tabernacle from the stain of sin.

4:3-7 *if the anointed priest sins, for the guilt of the people, then he shall bring near for his sin which he has sinned a young bull, a son of the herd, without blemish to the LORD for a sin offering. And he shall bring the bull to the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD, and he shall lay his hand on the head of the bull, and he shall slaughter the bull before the LORD. And the anointed priest shall take some of the blood of the bull, and he shall bring it into the tent of meeting. And the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and he shall spatter some of the blood seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil of the holy place. And the priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of the incense of the fragrances before the LORD, which* ***is*** *in the tent of meeting; and all the blood of the bull he shall pour out at the base of the altar of the burnt offering, which* ***is at*** *the entrance of the tent of meeting.*

The first case is the hardest: "if the anointed priest sins." This means the high priest, the one anointed with the holy oil (8:12). His sin brought "guilt of the people," because he stood for the whole nation before God. When a leader in God's house sins, the damage spreads to everyone.

He had to bring "a young bull, a son of the herd, without blemish," the most costly animal. He laid his hand on its head and slaughtered it. Then he did something we have not seen yet. He carried some of the blood "into the tent of meeting" and spattered it seven times "in front of the veil of the holy place." The veil was the curtain that separated the holy place from the Most Holy Place, where the ark of the covenant stood. Seven in Scripture often speaks of completeness. He also put blood on the horns of the golden altar of incense inside the tent. The rest of the blood was poured out at the base of the bronze altar in the courtyard.

Why carry the blood inside? The priest's sin had stained the very place where he served. The blood had to go where the sin had reached. Hebrews 9:22 says, "apart from shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

4:8-12 *And all the fat of the bull of the sin offering he shall lift off from it: the fat that covers the entrails, and all the fat which **is** on the entrails, and the two kidneys and the fat which **is** on them, which **is** on the loins, and the lobe on the liver; with the kidneys he shall remove it, just as it is lifted off from the ox of the sacrifice of the peace offerings; and the priest shall make them smoke on the altar of the burnt offering. And the hide of the bull and all its flesh, with its head and with its legs, and its entrails and its dung, even all the bull he shall bring out to outside the camp, to a clean place, to the pouring out of the fatty ashes, and he shall burn it on wood with fire; at the pouring out of the fatty ashes it shall be burned.*

The fat, kidneys and liver lobe were burned on the bronze altar, the same parts burned in the peace offering. But the rest of the bull, "the hide of the bull and all its flesh, with its head and with its legs, and its entrails and its dung," was carried "outside the camp, to a clean place," and burned there. The priest could not eat any of this offering, since it was for his own sin.

Hebrews draws a direct line from this to Jesus. "For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, so that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate" (Hebrews 13:11-12). Jesus was crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem, in the place of shame. He was our sin offering, carried outside, so that we could be brought in.

4:13-21 *And if all the congregation of Israel errs, and the matter is hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they do one of all the commandments of the LORD **concerning things** which are not to be done, and they are guilty, when the sin which they have sinned in it becomes known, then the assembly shall bring near a young bull, a son of the herd, for a sin offering, and they shall bring it before the tent of meeting. And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD, and he shall slaughter the bull before the LORD. And the anointed priest shall bring some of the blood of the bull into the tent of meeting. And the priest shall dip his finger in some of the blood, and he shall spatter **it** seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil. And some of the blood he shall put on the horns of the altar which **is** before the LORD, which **is** in the tent of meeting; and all the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of the burnt offering, which **is at** the entrance of the tent of meeting. And all its fat he shall lift off from it, and he shall make **it** smoke on the altar. And he shall do to the bull just as he did to the bull of the sin offering; so he shall do to it. And the priest shall make atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them. And he shall bring out the bull to outside the camp, and he shall burn it just as he burned the first bull; it **is** the sin offering of the assembly.*

The second case is "if all the congregation of Israel errs, and the matter is hidden from the eyes of the assembly." A whole nation can drift into sin together without seeing it. When it "becomes known," the assembly brings a young bull, the same offering as the high priest. The elders, the older leaders of the tribes, lay their hands on its head for the people. The blood is carried inside and spattered before the veil and put on the horns of the incense altar, and the rest of the bull is burned outside the camp, just as with the first bull.

And then the promise: "the priest shall make atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them." The word forgiven appears here for the first time in Leviticus, and it will repeat to the end of the

chapter. God does not leave His people stuck in guilt. When sin is found, it can be confessed and forgiven.

Churches and nations can sin together too. We should be quick to ask God to show us the sins we have grown used to. When He does, the answer is not despair but confession and the blood of the sacrifice He provided.

4:22-26 *When a leader sins, and does unintentionally one of all the commandments of the LORD his God* ***concerning things*** *which are not to be done, and he is guilty, or his sin which he has sinned in it is made known to him, then he shall bring* ***as*** *his offering a goat of the goats, a male without blemish. And he shall lay his hand on the head of the goat, and he shall slaughter it in the place where he slaughters the burnt offering before the LORD; it* ***is*** *a sin offering. And the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and he shall put* ***it*** *on the horns of the altar of the burnt offering; and its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of the burnt offering. And all its fat he shall make smoke on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of the peace offerings; and the priest shall make atonement for him from his sin, and it shall be forgiven him.*

The third case is "when a leader sins." This was a tribal chief or ruler, not a priest. His offering was "a goat of the goats, a male without blemish." This time the blood did not go inside the tent. The priest put some on the horns of "the altar of the burnt offering" in the courtyard and poured the rest at its base. The fat was burned as with the peace offering. Chapter 6 will tell us that the priest ate the meat of this kind of sin offering (6:26).

Notice that a leader's sin was dealt with publicly, at the altar where all could see. Leaders are not above God's law. Their sin matters, and their repentance should be just as open.

4:27-31 *And if one soul of the people of the land sins unintentionally, in doing one of the commandments of the LORD* ***concerning things*** *which are not to be done, and he is guilty, or his sin which he has sinned is made known to him, then he shall bring* ***as*** *his offering a female goat of the goats, without blemish, a female, for his sin which he has sinned. And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and he shall slaughter the sin offering in the place of the burnt offering. And the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and he shall put* ***it*** *on the horns of the altar of the burnt offering; and all its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar. And all its fat he shall remove, just as the fat was removed from on the sacrifice of the peace offerings; and the priest shall make* ***it*** *smoke on the altar for a soothing aroma to the LORD. And the priest shall make atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him.*

The fourth case is "one soul of the people of the land," an ordinary Israelite. "Or his sin which he has sinned is made known to him." Someone might point it out, or his own conscience might wake up. Then he brought "a female goat of the goats, without blemish." The steps were the same as for the leader: hand on the head, slaughter at the place of the burnt offering, blood on the horns of the bronze altar and poured at its base, and the fat burned on the altar "for a soothing aroma to the LORD."

"And the priest shall make atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him." The same promise given for the high priest and the whole nation is given to the ordinary person. God did not have one kind of forgiveness for important people and a lesser kind for everyone else.

4:32-35 *And if he brings a lamb **as** his offering for a sin offering, he shall bring it a female without blemish. And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and he shall slaughter it for a sin offering in the place where he slaughters the burnt offering. And the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and he shall put **it** on the horns of the altar of the burnt offering; and all its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar. And all its fat he shall remove, just as the fat of the sheep is removed from the sacrifice of the peace offerings; and the priest shall make them smoke on the altar, on the fire offerings of the LORD. And the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin which he has sinned, and it shall be forgiven him.*

The ordinary Israelite could also bring "a lamb" for his sin offering, "a female without blemish." Everything else was done the same way. The chapter ends one more time with the words "and it shall be forgiven him."

When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). The lamb of Leviticus 4 covered one man's sin. The Lamb of God takes away sin. Paul says, "For He made the One who did not know sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

What does the sin offering teach us now? It teaches us that sin, even sin we did not mean, needs to be dealt with by God's way. It teaches us that confession leads to forgiveness. John writes, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous so that He may forgive us the sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). We do not bring a goat or a lamb. We come to God through Jesus, whose one sacrifice is enough, and we can know we are forgiven.

Chapter 4 Summary

The sin offering was required when someone sinned unintentionally against the LORD's commandments. If the anointed priest or the whole congregation sinned, a young bull was offered, its blood was carried into the tent of meeting and spattered before the veil and put on the altar of incense, and its body was burned outside the camp. If a leader sinned, he brought a male goat. If an ordinary person sinned, he brought a female goat or a female lamb. For these, the blood was put on the horns of the altar of burnt offering. In every case the priest made atonement, and the sin was forgiven. Hebrews 13:11-12 shows that Jesus fulfilled this offering when He suffered outside the gate to make His people holy through His own blood.

Chapter 4 Study Questions

1. What kind of sin does this chapter deal with? (4:2)

2. What four groups of people are named in this chapter? (4:3, 13, 22, 27)

3. Why do you think the high priest's sin brought guilt on the people? (4:3)

4. Where was the blood taken when the high priest or the whole congregation sinned? (4:5-7, 16-18)

5. What happened to the rest of the bull, and how does Hebrews 13:11-12 connect this to Jesus? (4:11-12)

6. What promise is repeated at the end of each section? (4:20, 26, 31, 35)

7. What animals could an ordinary Israelite bring? (4:28, 32)

8. Why does God care about sins we commit without meaning to?

9. Is there a sin you have grown so used to that you no longer see it? Ask God to show you.

10. How does 1 John 1:9 give you confidence when you confess your sin?

Chapter 5: The Guilt Offering

Scripture

5:1-19 And when a soul sins, and hears the voice of an oath, and he ***is*** a witness, or he has seen or he has known, if he does not tell ***it***, then he shall bear his iniquity. Or a soul who touches any unclean thing, or a carcass of an unclean living thing, or a carcass of unclean livestock, or a carcass of an unclean swarming thing, and it is hidden from him, and he ***is*** unclean, and he is guilty; or when he touches the uncleanness of man, as to any of his uncleanness by which he becomes unclean, and it is hidden from him, and he has come to know ***it***, and he is guilty; or when a soul swears, speaking rashly with ***the*** lips to do evil or to do good, as to anything that a man speaks rashly in an oath, and it is hidden from him, and he has come to know ***it***, and he is guilty of one of these; and it shall be, when he is guilty of one of these, then he shall confess that he has sinned in it. And he shall bring his guilt offering to the LORD for his sin which he has sinned, a female from the flock, a ewe lamb or a female goat of the goats, for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him from his sin. And if his hand does not reach the sufficiency of a sheep, then he shall bring ***as*** his guilt offering ***for*** that which he has sinned two turtledoves or two young of the dove to the LORD, one for a sin offering and one for a burnt offering. And he shall bring them to the priest, and he shall bring near the one which ***is*** for the sin offering first, and he shall nip off its head from the front of its neck, and he shall not divide ***it***. And he shall spatter some of the blood of the sin offering on the wall of the altar, and what remains of the blood shall be drained out at the base of the altar; it ***is*** a sin offering. And the second he shall offer ***as*** a burnt offering according to the ordinance; and the priest shall make atonement for him from his sin which he has sinned, and it shall be forgiven him. And if his hand does not attain to two turtledoves or to two young of the dove, then he shall bring ***as*** his offering ***for*** that which he has sinned approximately 2 quarts (a tenth of the ephah) of fine flour for a sin offering; he shall not place oil on it, and he shall not put frankincense on it, for it ***is*** a sin offering. And he shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take a handful from it, the fullness of his handful, its memorial portion, and he shall make ***it*** smoke on the altar, on the fire offerings of the LORD; it ***is*** a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin which he has sinned in any one of these, and it shall be forgiven him; and ***the rest*** shall be the priest's, like the grain offering.'" And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "When a soul acts unfaithfully ***in*** unfaithfulness, and sins unintentionally in ***regard to*** the holy things of the LORD, then he shall bring his guilt offering to the LORD, a ram without blemish from the flock, by your valuation in silver shekels, by the shekel of the holy place, for a guilt offering. And that which he has sinned in ***regard to*** the holy thing he shall repay, and let him add its fifth to it, and he shall give it to the priest; and the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and it shall be forgiven him. And if a soul sins and does one of all the commandments of the LORD ***concerning things*** which are not to be done, and he did not know ***it***, and he is guilty, then he shall bear his iniquity. And he shall bring a ram without blemish from the flock, by your valuation, for a guilt offering to the priest; and the priest shall make atonement for him for his unintentional error in which he erred, and he himself did not know ***it***; and it shall be forgiven him. It ***is*** a guilt offering; he has certainly been guilty toward the LORD."

Chapter 5 Preview

Chapter 5 finishes the teaching on the sin offering and then begins the fifth offering, the guilt offering. The first part names some everyday ways a person could become guilty: keeping silent when he should testify, touching something unclean without noticing, or making a careless oath. In each case he had to confess his sin and bring an offering. God then gave a sliding scale, a lamb or goat, two birds, or a little flour, so that no one was too poor to be forgiven.

The second part introduces the guilt offering, for sins against "the holy things of the LORD" and for wrongs a person did not even know he had done. Here the sinner had to bring a ram and also pay back what he owed, plus a fifth more. Forgiveness from God and making things right go together.

Chapter 5 Study

5:1 *And when a soul sins, and hears the voice of an oath, and he **is** a witness, or he has seen or he has known, if he does not tell **it**, then he shall bear his iniquity.*

The first case is a witness who stays silent. A public "oath" was a call for anyone who knew something about a crime to come forward. If a man "has seen or he has known" and "does not tell it, then he shall bear his iniquity." To bear iniquity means to carry the guilt of the sin and be answerable to God for it.

This sin is not something done. It is something not done. Silence can be a sin when the truth is needed. God cares about justice for the person wronged, and He holds us responsible for what we know. James 4:17 says that whoever knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

5:2-4 *Or a soul who touches any unclean thing, or a carcass of an unclean living thing, or a carcass of unclean livestock, or a carcass of an unclean swarming thing, and it is hidden from him, and he **is** unclean, and he is guilty; or when he touches the uncleanness of man, as to any of his uncleanness by which he becomes unclean, and it is hidden from him, and he has come to know **it**, and he is guilty; or when a soul swears, speaking rashly with **the** lips to do evil or to do good, as to anything that a man speaks rashly in an oath, and it is hidden from him, and he has come to know **it**, and he is guilty of one of these;*

The next two cases are about touching something unclean: the dead body of an unclean animal, or "the uncleanness of man," such as the things that made a person unclean in chapters 12 to 15. Clean and unclean will be explained in chapter 11. For now it is enough to know that being unclean meant a person was not fit to come near God's tabernacle until he was cleansed. The problem here is that "it is hidden from him." He did not notice, and he went on as if nothing had happened. When he "has come to know it," he is guilty.

The last case is a rash oath: someone "speaking rashly with the lips to do evil or to do good." He made a promise without thinking and then forgot it or failed to keep it. Jesus taught that our yes should mean yes and our no should mean no (Matthew 5:37). Careless words matter to God.

5:5-6 *and it shall be, when he is guilty of one of these, then he shall confess that he has sinned in it. And he shall bring his guilt offering to the LORD for his sin which he has sinned, a female from the flock, a ewe lamb or a female goat of the goats, for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him from his sin.*

"Then he shall confess that he has sinned in it." This is the first time Leviticus speaks of confession. The offering was not a ritual a person could go through while hiding his sin. He had to name it out loud. "My sin I made known to You," David wrote, "and my iniquity I did not cover" (Psalm 32:5).

Then he brought "a female from the flock, a ewe lamb or a female goat," for a sin offering. The SLB calls it "his guilt offering" here. The Hebrew word, asham, can mean guilt, the penalty for guilt, or the guilt offering. In verses 1 to 13 the animal is clearly a sin offering, and the word asham here describes it as the payment due for his guilt. The new guilt offering proper starts at verse 14.

5:7-10 *And if his hand does not reach the sufficiency of a sheep, then he shall bring **as** his guilt offering **for** that which he has sinned two turtledoves or two young of the dove to the LORD, one for a sin offering and one for a burnt offering. And he shall bring them to the priest, and he shall bring near the one which **is** for the sin offering first, and he shall nip off its head from the front of its neck, and he shall not divide **it**. And he shall spatter some of the blood of the sin offering on the wall of the altar, and what remains of the blood shall be drained out at the base of the altar; it **is** a sin offering. And the second he shall offer **as** a burnt offering according to the ordinance; and the priest shall make atonement for him from his sin which he has sinned, and it shall be forgiven him.*

"And if his hand does not reach the sufficiency of a sheep." That is a Hebrew way of saying, if he cannot afford a sheep. Then he could bring "two turtledoves or two young of the dove," one for a sin offering and one for a burnt offering. The priest offered the sin offering bird first, nipping off its head and spattering some of its blood on the side of the altar. Then he offered the second bird as a burnt offering.

Why first the sin offering, then the burnt offering? Sin had to be dealt with before the worshiper could give himself wholly to God. The order teaches us something about coming to God. We do not start by offering Him our devotion. We start by having our sin forgiven. Then we give Him our lives.

5:11-13 *And if his hand does not attain to two turtledoves or to two young of the dove, then he shall bring **as** his offering **for** that which he has sinned approximately 2 quarts (a tenth of the ephah) of fine flour for a sin offering; he shall not place oil on it, and he shall not put frankincense on it, for it **is** a sin offering. And he shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take a handful from it, the fullness of his handful, its memorial portion, and he shall make **it** smoke on the altar, on the fire offerings of the LORD; it **is** a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin which he has sinned in any one of these, and it shall be forgiven him; and **the rest** shall be the priest's, like the grain offering.'"*

For the very poor there was one more step down: a tenth of an ephah "of fine flour for a sin offering." An ephah was a dry measure of a little over half a bushel, so a tenth was about two

quarts of flour. No oil and no frankincense were added, "for it is a sin offering." This was not a time for joy and fragrance. It was a time for confession.

But wait, did not Hebrews say there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22)? Hebrews says "almost all things" are purified with blood. The handful of flour was burned "on the fire offerings of the LORD," on top of the animal offerings already on the altar, so even this offering was joined to the blood of the altar. God would not let poverty keep anyone from forgiveness. "And it shall be forgiven him." The gospel is the same. No one is too poor to come to Christ. Salvation is a gift (Ephesians 2:8-9).

5:14-16 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "When a soul acts unfaithfully **in** unfaithfulness, and sins unintentionally in **regard to** the holy things of the LORD, then he shall bring his guilt offering to the LORD, a ram without blemish from the flock, by your valuation in silver shekels, by the shekel of the holy place, for a guilt offering. And that which he has sinned in **regard to** the holy thing he shall repay, and let him add its fifth to it, and he shall give it to the priest; and the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and it shall be forgiven him.*

Now the guilt offering begins. It was for "when a soul acts unfaithfully in unfaithfulness, and sins unintentionally in regard to the holy things of the LORD." The holy things were what belonged to God: the tithes, the firstborn animals, the offerings, the priests' portions. If someone held back or used something that belonged to God, even by mistake, he had robbed God.

His offering was "a ram without blemish from the flock," valued "in silver shekels, by the shekel of the holy place." A shekel was a weight of silver, a little under half an ounce. The ram had to be worth a set amount. But there was more. "That which he has sinned in regard to the holy thing he shall repay, and let him add its fifth to it." He paid back what he owed, plus twenty percent. The guilt offering was about repair. Sin is not only a stain to be washed. It is also a debt.

Isaiah says of the coming Servant of the LORD, "If His soul makes a guilt offering, He will see offspring" (Isaiah 53:10). Jesus paid the debt we could never repay. We had robbed God of the glory and obedience we owed Him, and Christ made full payment.

5:17-19 *And if a soul sins and does one of all the commandments of the LORD **concerning things** which are not to be done, and he did not know **it**, and he is guilty, then he shall bear his iniquity. And he shall bring a ram without blemish from the flock, by your valuation, for a guilt offering to the priest; and the priest shall make atonement for him for his unintentional error in which he erred, and he himself did not know **it**; and it shall be forgiven him. It **is** a guilt offering; he has certainly been guilty toward the LORD."*

The last case is a person who broke one of the LORD's commandments "and he did not know it." He is still "guilty," and "he shall bear his iniquity." For this he brought a ram as a guilt offering, and "it shall be forgiven him." Verse 19 sums it up: "he has certainly been guilty toward the LORD."

This is humbling. We are guilty before God for more than we know. That should keep us from pride and send us often to the cross. It should also comfort us. God made a way to cover even the

sins we cannot see. Paul could say, "I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this" (1 Corinthians 4:4). Our standing with God rests on Christ's sacrifice, not on our own self-examination.

What does this chapter teach us now? Confession matters. Making things right matters. Silence and careless words matter. And grace is open to rich and poor alike. We are not saved by keeping these rules; they show us how much we need a Savior. In Christ we have One who was both our sin offering and our guilt offering.

Chapter 5 Summary

Chapter 5 named several ways a person could become guilty: refusing to testify, touching something unclean without noticing, or making a careless oath. The guilty person had to confess his sin and bring a female lamb or goat. If he could not afford it, he could bring two birds, and if he could not afford those, a tenth of an ephah of fine flour, and in each case it would be forgiven him. Then the guilt offering was introduced for unfaithfulness in regard to the LORD's holy things. The guilty person brought a ram without blemish and also repaid what he owed plus a fifth. A ram was also required for breaking God's commands without knowing it. Isaiah 53:10 tells us that the Messiah would make His soul a guilt offering, paying in full the debt of our sin.

Chapter 5 Study Questions

1. What sin is described in verse 1, and why is silence sometimes a sin? (5:1)

2. What three kinds of hidden guilt are named in verses 2 to 4? (5:2-4)

3. What did the guilty person have to do before bringing his offering? (5:5)

4. What could a person bring if he could not afford a lamb or a goat? If he could not afford two birds? (5:7, 11)

5. Why was no oil or frankincense put on the flour of the sin offering? (5:11)

6. What did a person have to repay in a guilt offering, and how much extra did he add? (5:16)

7. What does verse 17 teach about sins we do not know we have committed? (5:17)

8. How does Isaiah 53:10 connect the guilt offering with Jesus?

9. Is there something you need to make right with another person, not only confess to God?

10. Why do you think God made sure that even the poorest person could be forgiven? What does that tell you about Him?

Chapter 6: Instructions for the Priests

Scripture

6:1-13 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "When a soul sins and acts unfaithfully ***in*** unfaithfulness against the LORD, and lies to his fellow about a deposit, or about a pledge of ***the*** hand, or about robbery, or has extorted from his fellow, or has found a lost thing and lies about it, and swears to a falsehood, about any one of all that a man may do, sinning in them, then it shall be, when he sins and is guilty, that he shall return the thing robbed which he robbed, or the thing extorted which he extorted, or the deposit which was deposited with him, or the lost thing which he found, or anything about which he swore to a falsehood; and he shall repay it in its principal, and let him add its fifth to it; to ***the one*** whose it ***is*** he shall give it, on the day of his being guilty. And his guilt offering he shall bring to the LORD, a ram without blemish from the flock, by your valuation, for a guilt offering, to the priest. And the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and it shall be forgiven him, concerning any one of all that he may do, becoming guilty by it." And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Command Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This ***is*** the law of the burnt offering: it ***is*** the burnt offering on the hearth on the altar all the night until the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it. And the priest shall put on his linen garment, and linen undergarments he shall put on over his flesh; and he shall lift up the fatty ashes ***into*** which the fire consumes the burnt offering on the altar, and he shall place it beside the altar. And he shall strip off his garments, and he shall put on other garments, and he shall bring out the fatty ashes to outside the camp, to a clean place. And the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not go out; and the priest shall kindle wood on it morning by morning, and he shall arrange the burnt offering on it, and he shall make the fat ***portions*** of the peace offerings smoke on it. A fire shall be kept burning continually on the altar; it shall not go out.

6:14-30 And this ***is*** the law of the grain offering: the sons of Aaron shall bring it near before the LORD, to the front of the altar. And he shall lift up from it in his handful some of the fine flour of the grain offering and some of its oil, and all the frankincense which ***is*** on the grain offering, and he shall make ***it*** smoke ***on*** the altar, a soothing aroma, its memorial portion to the LORD. And the remainder of it Aaron and his sons shall eat; it shall be eaten ***as*** unleavened bread in a holy place; in the courtyard of the tent of meeting they shall eat it. It shall not be baked leavened. I have given it ***as*** their portion from My fire offerings; it ***is*** a holy of holies, like the sin offering and like the guilt offering. Every male among the sons of Aaron shall eat it; ***it is*** a due forever throughout your generations from the fire offerings of the LORD. Whatever touches them shall be holy.'" And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "This ***is*** the offering of Aaron and his sons which they shall bring near to the LORD on the day he is anointed: approximately 2 quarts (a tenth of the ephah) of fine flour ***as*** a grain offering continually, half of it in the morning and half of it in the evening. On a griddle it shall be made with oil; well-mixed you shall bring it in; ***in*** broken pieces, a grain offering of bits, you shall bring it near, a soothing aroma to the LORD. And the anointed priest in his place from among his sons shall offer it; ***it is*** a due forever to the LORD; it shall be made to smoke whole. And every grain offering of a priest shall be whole; it shall not be eaten." And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'This ***is*** the law of the sin offering: in the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered, the sin offering shall be slaughtered

before the LORD; it ***is*** a holy of holies. The priest who makes it a sin offering shall eat it; in a holy place it shall be eaten, in the courtyard of the tent of meeting. Whatever touches its flesh shall be holy; and when ***any*** of its blood spatters on the garment, that on which it spatters you shall wash in a holy place. And an earthenware vessel in which it is boiled shall be broken; and if it was boiled in a bronze vessel, then it shall be scoured and it shall be rinsed with water. Every male among the priests shall eat it; it ***is*** a holy of holies. And any sin offering, some of whose blood is brought into the tent of meeting to make atonement in the holy place, shall not be eaten; with fire it shall be burned.

Chapter 6 Preview

Chapter 6 opens with one more case for the guilt offering: wrongs done to a neighbor, such as lying about a loan, stealing, cheating, or keeping something found and swearing falsely about it. God calls these sins "against the LORD." The guilty person had to pay back his neighbor in full plus a fifth, and then bring his guilt offering. (In Hebrew Bibles, verses 1 to 7 are counted as the end of chapter 5, so the verse numbers in chapter 6 are seven lower there.)

From verse 8 on, the instructions turn to the priests. Chapters 1 to 5 told the people what to bring. Chapters 6 and 7 tell the priests how to handle what was brought. We learn that the fire on the altar was never to go out, how the priests were to eat the grain offering, what offering the high priest gave every day, and how holy the sin offering was.

Chapter 6 Study

6:1-5 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "When a soul sins and acts unfaithfully **in** unfaithfulness against the LORD, and lies to his fellow about a deposit, or about a pledge of **the** hand, or about robbery, or has extorted from his fellow, or has found a lost thing and lies about it, and swears to a falsehood, about any one of all that a man may do, sinning in them, then it shall be, when he sins and is guilty, that he shall return the thing robbed which he robbed, or the thing extorted which he extorted, or the deposit which was deposited with him, or the lost thing which he found, or anything about which he swore to a falsehood; and he shall repay it in its principal, and let him add its fifth to it; to **the one** whose it **is** he shall give it, on the day of his being guilty.*

"When a soul sins and acts unfaithfully in unfaithfulness against the LORD, and lies to his fellow." Notice how the sentence starts with the LORD and ends with a neighbor. Every wrong done to another person is also a sin against God. David saw this after his sin with Bathsheba and against her husband: "Against You, You alone, I have sinned" (Psalm 51:4).

The list is practical: lying about "a deposit," something left with you for safekeeping; lying about "a pledge," something given as security for a loan; "robbery"; extortion, taking by pressure or threat; and finding "a lost thing" and lying about it. Each one ends with swearing "to a falsehood," lying under oath to cover it up.

The answer was restitution, which means paying back what was taken. "He shall repay it in its principal, and let him add its fifth to it." He gave back the full amount plus twenty percent, and he did it "on the day of his being guilty." It had to be done right away, and it went to the person he

wronged. When Zacchaeus met Jesus, he went far beyond this and said, "if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore fourfold" (Luke 19:8). A changed heart wants to make things right.

6:6-7 *And his guilt offering he shall bring to the LORD, a ram without blemish from the flock, by your valuation, for a guilt offering, to the priest. And the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and it shall be forgiven him, concerning any one of all that he may do, becoming guilty by it."*

After the neighbor was paid back, the guilty person brought "a ram without blemish from the flock" as his guilt offering, and "it shall be forgiven him." The order matters. First he made things right with his neighbor. Then he came to the altar.

Jesus taught the same order. "Therefore if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go away; first be reconciled to your brother, and then, having come, offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24). We are not forgiven by paying people back. Forgiveness is God's gift through Christ. But a person who has been forgiven will want to repair the harm he has done, as far as he can.

6:8-13 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Command Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This **is** the law of the burnt offering: it **is** the burnt offering on the hearth on the altar all the night until the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it. And the priest shall put on his linen garment, and linen undergarments he shall put on over his flesh; and he shall lift up the fatty ashes **into** which the fire consumes the burnt offering on the altar, and he shall place it beside the altar. And he shall strip off his garments, and he shall put on other garments, and he shall bring out the fatty ashes to outside the camp, to a clean place. And the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not go out; and the priest shall kindle wood on it morning by morning, and he shall arrange the burnt offering on it, and he shall make the fat **portions** of the peace offerings smoke on it. A fire shall be kept burning continually on the altar; it shall not go out.*

"This is the law of the burnt offering." The priests are now told how to care for it. The burnt offering stayed "on the hearth on the altar all the night until the morning." Each morning the priest put on "his linen garment" and linen undergarments, lifted the ashes from the altar and set them beside it. Then he changed clothes and carried the ashes "to outside the camp, to a clean place." Even the ashes of an offering were treated with respect.

Three times in these verses God says the fire must keep burning: "the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it," "it shall not go out," and "A fire shall be kept burning continually on the altar; it shall not go out." In 9:24 God Himself would send fire on this altar. The priests' job was to feed it with wood every morning so that it never died. The morning and evening burnt offerings were offered on it every day (Exodus 29:38-42).

The altar fire is a picture of worship that never stops. The way to God was always open. For us, the way is open because of Christ, who is "always living to intercede" for those who draw near to God through Him (Hebrews 7:25). And the fire reminds us to keep our own devotion burning. Paul

says, "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19). What are you doing each morning to keep the fire going?

6:14-18 *And this **is** the law of the grain offering: the sons of Aaron shall bring it near before the LORD, to the front of the altar. And he shall lift up from it in his handful some of the fine flour of the grain offering and some of its oil, and all the frankincense which **is** on the grain offering, and he shall make **it** smoke **on** the altar, a soothing aroma, its memorial portion to the LORD. And the remainder of it Aaron and his sons shall eat; it shall be eaten **as** unleavened bread in a holy place; in the courtyard of the tent of meeting they shall eat it. It shall not be baked leavened. I have given it **as** their portion from My fire offerings; it **is** a holy of holies, like the sin offering and like the guilt offering. Every male among the sons of Aaron shall eat it; **it is** a due forever throughout your generations from the fire offerings of the LORD. Whatever touches them shall be holy.'"*

"And this is the law of the grain offering." The priest burned the handful with the frankincense as the memorial portion. The rest was eaten by Aaron and his sons "as unleavened bread in a holy place," in "the courtyard of the tent of meeting." It was "a holy of holies," most holy, like the sin and guilt offerings.

"Every male among the sons of Aaron shall eat it." This was their portion "from My fire offerings," God says. God was feeding His servants from His own table.

"Whatever touches them shall be holy." This probably means that anything that touched these most holy foods now belonged to God's sanctuary and had to be treated that way. Holiness in Leviticus is real and weighty. It is not a feeling. Things given to God were set apart from common use.

6:19-23 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "This **is** the offering of Aaron and his sons which they shall bring near to the LORD on the day he is anointed: approximately 2 quarts (a tenth of the ephah) of fine flour **as** a grain offering continually, half of it in the morning and half of it in the evening. On a griddle it shall be made with oil; well-mixed you shall bring it in; **in** broken pieces, a grain offering of bits, you shall bring it near, a soothing aroma to the LORD. And the anointed priest in his place from among his sons shall offer it; **it is** a due forever to the LORD; it shall be made to smoke whole. And every grain offering of a priest shall be whole; it shall not be eaten."*

These verses describe a special grain offering for the priests. "On the day he is anointed," and from then on, the high priest offered a tenth of an ephah of fine flour, "half of it in the morning and half of it in the evening," cooked on a griddle with oil and broken in pieces. "It shall be made to smoke whole." Unlike the people's grain offering, none of it was eaten. "Every grain offering of a priest shall be whole; it shall not be eaten."

Why? A priest could not eat from his own offering, just as he could not eat from his own sin offering. He could not serve as both the giver and the receiver. The high priest offered this every day, morning and evening, for as long as he served. It was a daily reminder that even the high priest had to give himself to God all over again each day.

6:24-30 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'This **is** the law of the sin offering: in the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered, the sin offering shall be slaughtered before the LORD; it **is** a holy of holies. The priest who makes it a sin offering shall eat it; in a holy place it shall be eaten, in the courtyard of the tent of meeting. Whatever touches its flesh shall be holy; and when **any** of its blood spatters on the garment, that on which it spatters you shall wash in a holy place. And an earthenware vessel in which it is boiled shall be broken; and if it was boiled in a bronze vessel, then it shall be scoured and it shall be rinsed with water. Every male among the priests shall eat it; it **is** a holy of holies. And any sin offering, some of whose blood is brought into the tent of meeting to make atonement in the holy place, shall not be eaten; with fire it shall be burned.*

"This is the law of the sin offering." It was slaughtered in the same place as the burnt offering, on the north side of the altar (1:11). "It is a holy of holies." For the sin offerings of a leader or an ordinary Israelite, whose blood was put on the bronze altar outside, the priest who offered it ate it "in a holy place," in the courtyard.

The sin offering was so holy that anything it touched became holy. If its blood spattered on a garment, the garment had to be washed in a holy place. A clay pot used to boil it had to be broken. A bronze pot had to be scoured and rinsed. Clay would soak up the juices, so it could not be cleaned.

"And any sin offering, some of whose blood is brought into the tent of meeting to make atonement in the holy place, shall not be eaten; with fire it shall be burned." That refers to the offerings for the high priest and for the whole congregation (4:3-21). Their bodies were burned outside the camp. This is the very rule Hebrews 13:11 points to when it says Jesus suffered outside the gate. Hebrews 13:10 also says, "We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no authority to eat." Our sacrifice is Christ, and those who hold on to the old system cannot share in Him while they hold on to it.

What do these rules teach us now? God cares how His servants handle holy things. Those who lead in worship today are not priests in the Old Testament sense, since all believers are "a holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5) and Christ is our High Priest. But all of us are called to treat God's things with reverence and to keep the fire of worship burning.

Chapter 6 Summary

Chapter 6 begins with the guilt offering for wrongs against a neighbor, such as lying about a deposit, stealing, cheating or keeping lost property, which God calls unfaithfulness against Himself. The guilty person had to repay in full plus a fifth on the day he was found guilty, and then bring a ram as a guilt offering. Then the LORD gave the priests the law of the burnt offering, with the command that the altar fire must never go out. He gave the law of the grain offering, eaten by the priests in a holy place, and the high priest's own grain offering, offered morning and evening and burned whole. Finally He gave the law of the sin offering, which was most holy, eaten by the priests unless its blood had been brought into the holy place, in which case it was burned.

Chapter 6 Study Questions

1. What kinds of wrongs against a neighbor are listed in this chapter? (6:2-3)

2. Why does God call these sins "against the LORD"? (6:2)

3. What did the guilty person have to give back, and when? (6:4-5)

4. How does Matthew 5:23-24 match the order of 6:5-6?

5. How many times is the command about the altar fire given, and what did it say? (6:9, 12, 13)

6. Where did the priests eat the grain offering, and why could it not be leavened? (6:16-17)

7. Why was the high priest's grain offering burned whole and never eaten? (6:22-23)

8. Which sin offerings were burned rather than eaten, and how does Hebrews 13:10-12 apply this to Jesus? (6:30)

9. Is there someone you have wronged that you need to make things right with?

10. What helps you keep the "fire" of worship burning day after day?

Chapter 7: The Priests' Share of the Offerings

Scripture

7:1-10 And this ***is*** the law of the guilt offering: it ***is*** a holy of holies. In the place where they slaughter the burnt offering they shall slaughter the guilt offering, and its blood he shall sprinkle on the altar all around. And all its fat he shall bring near from it: the fat tail, and the fat that covers the entrails, and the two kidneys and the fat which ***is*** on them, which ***is*** on the loins, and the lobe on the liver; with the kidneys he shall remove it. And the priest shall make them smoke on the altar ***as*** a fire offering to the LORD; it ***is*** a guilt offering. Every male among the priests shall eat it; in a holy place it shall be eaten; it ***is*** a holy of holies. Like the sin offering ***is*** the guilt offering; one law ***is*** for them. The priest who makes atonement with it, it shall be his. And the priest who brings near the burnt offering of a man, the hide of the burnt offering which he has brought near ***is*** for the priest; it shall be his. And every grain offering that is baked in the oven, and all that is made in the pan and on a griddle, ***is*** for the priest who brings it near; it shall be his. And every grain offering, mixed with oil or dry, shall be for all the sons of Aaron, each man like his brother.

7:11-21 And this ***is*** the law of the sacrifice of the peace offerings which he shall bring near to the LORD. If he brings it near for thanksgiving, then he shall bring near with the sacrifice of the thanksgiving unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and fine flour well-mixed, cakes mixed with oil. With cakes of leavened bread he shall bring near his offering, with the sacrifice of the thanksgiving of his peace offerings. And he shall bring near from it one from every offering ***as*** a contribution to the LORD; to the priest who sprinkles the blood of the peace offerings, it shall be his. And the flesh of the sacrifice of the thanksgiving of his peace offerings shall be eaten on the day of his offering; he shall not leave any of it until morning. And if the sacrifice of his offering ***is*** a vow or a freewill offering, on the day he brings near his sacrifice it shall be eaten; and on the next day the remainder of it also shall be eaten. And the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burned with fire. And if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings is eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted; for the one who brings it near it shall not be reckoned to him; it shall be a foul thing, and the soul who eats of it shall bear its iniquity. And the flesh which touches any unclean ***thing*** shall not be eaten; it shall be burned with fire. And ***as for*** the flesh, everyone clean may eat flesh. And the soul who eats flesh from the sacrifice of the peace offerings which ***is*** the LORD's while his uncleanness ***is*** on him, then that soul shall be cut off from its kinsmen. And when a soul touches any unclean ***thing***, the uncleanness of man or unclean livestock or any unclean detestable thing, and eats of the flesh of the sacrifice of the peace offerings which ***is*** the LORD's, then that soul shall be cut off from its kinsmen.'"

7:22-38 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'Any fat of ox and sheep and goat you shall not eat. And the fat of a carcass and the fat of a torn animal may be used for any work, but you shall certainly not eat it. For anyone who eats fat from the animal from which one brings near a fire offering to the LORD, then the soul who eats shall be cut off from its kinsmen. And any blood you shall not eat in all your dwellings, whether of the bird or of the livestock. Any soul who eats any blood, then that soul shall be cut off from its kinsmen.'" And

the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'The one who brings near the sacrifice of his peace offerings to the LORD shall bring his offering to the LORD from the sacrifice of his peace offerings. His own hands shall bring the fire offerings of the LORD: the fat with the breast he shall bring, the breast, to wave it ***as*** a wave offering before the LORD. And the priest shall make the fat smoke on the altar, and the breast shall be for Aaron and for his sons. And the right thigh you shall give ***as*** a contribution to the priest from the sacrifices of your peace offerings. The one among the sons of Aaron who brings near the blood of the peace offerings and the fat, the right thigh shall be his for a portion. For the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the contribution I have taken from the sons of Israel, from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and I have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons for a due forever from the sons of Israel.'" This ***is*** the anointed portion of Aaron and the anointed portion of his sons from the fire offerings of the LORD, on the day he brought them near to serve as priests to the LORD, which the LORD commanded to give to them on the day he anointed them, from the sons of Israel, ***as*** a statute forever throughout their generations. This ***is*** the law for the burnt offering, for the grain offering, and for the sin offering, and for the guilt offering, and for the installation, and for the sacrifice of the peace offerings, which the LORD commanded Moses on Mount Sinai, on the day He commanded the sons of Israel to bring near their offerings to the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai.

Chapter 7 Preview

Chapter 7 finishes the instructions to the priests about the offerings. It gives the law of the guilt offering and then explains which parts of the offerings belonged to the priests. Most of the chapter is about the peace offering: the three reasons a person might bring one (thanksgiving, a vow, or a freewill gift), how quickly the meat had to be eaten, and who could eat it.

The chapter repeats the rule against eating fat and blood, and it sets aside the breast and the right thigh of every peace offering for the priests. It ends with a summary of all the offerings in chapters 1 to 7, given by the LORD to Moses on Mount Sinai. The theme running through it is that God provides for those who serve Him, and that the holy food of His table must be treated as holy.

Chapter 7 Study

7:1-7 *And this **is** the law of the guilt offering: it **is** a holy of holies. In the place where they slaughter the burnt offering they shall slaughter the guilt offering, and its blood he shall sprinkle on the altar all around. And all its fat he shall bring near from it: the fat tail, and the fat that covers the entrails, and the two kidneys and the fat which **is** on them, which **is** on the loins, and the lobe on the liver; with the kidneys he shall remove it. And the priest shall make them smoke on the altar **as** a fire offering to the LORD; it **is** a guilt offering. Every male among the priests shall eat it; in a holy place it shall be eaten; it **is** a holy of holies. Like the sin offering **is** the guilt offering; one law **is** for them. The priest who makes atonement with it, it shall be his.*

"And this is the law of the guilt offering: it is a holy of holies." Chapter 5 told the people when to bring it. Here the priests learn how to offer it. It was slaughtered where the burnt offering was

slaughtered, its blood sprinkled "on the altar all around," and its fat, fat tail, kidneys and liver lobe burned on the altar.

"Every male among the priests shall eat it; in a holy place it shall be eaten." Then comes a simple rule: "Like the sin offering is the guilt offering; one law is for them. The priest who makes atonement with it, it shall be his." The priest who did the work received the meat.

There is a lesson in that. The priests did not grow crops. They lived from serving at the altar. God made sure the one who served was fed. Paul uses this very pattern: "those who attend at the altar share with the altar" (1 Corinthians 9:13), and in the same way "those who proclaim the gospel" should "live from the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14).

7:8-10 *And the priest who brings near the burnt offering of a man, the hide of the burnt offering which he has brought near **is** for the priest; it shall be his. And every grain offering that is baked in the oven, and all that is made in the pan and on a griddle, **is** for the priest who brings it near; it shall be his. And every grain offering, mixed with oil or dry, shall be for all the sons of Aaron, each man like his brother.*

More rules about the priests' share. The priest who offered a burnt offering kept "the hide." The grain offerings that were cooked "in the oven," "in the pan" or "on a griddle" went to the priest who offered them. The grain offerings that were raw, "mixed with oil or dry," were shared by "all the sons of Aaron, each man like his brother."

These details may seem small, but they kept things fair among the priests. No priest was to grab more than his share. Later, in the days of Eli, his sons Hophni and Phinehas did exactly that, taking meat by force before the fat was burned, and the LORD judged them for it (1 Samuel 2:12-17). Greed in God's house is a serious sin.

7:11-15 *And this **is** the law of the sacrifice of the peace offerings which he shall bring near to the LORD. If he brings it near for thanksgiving, then he shall bring near with the sacrifice of the thanksgiving unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and fine flour well-mixed, cakes mixed with oil. With cakes of leavened bread he shall bring near his offering, with the sacrifice of the thanksgiving of his peace offerings. And he shall bring near from it one from every offering **as** a contribution to the LORD; to the priest who sprinkles the blood of the peace offerings, it shall be his. And the flesh of the sacrifice of the thanksgiving of his peace offerings shall be eaten on the day of his offering; he shall not leave any of it until morning.*

"And this is the law of the sacrifice of the peace offerings." The first kind was "for thanksgiving." The worshiper brought the animal along with unleavened cakes, wafers and fine flour, and also "cakes of leavened bread." This is one of the few places where leaven was part of an offering (see also 23:17), because it was not burned on the altar. It was eaten at the meal. One of each kind of bread was given "as a contribution to the LORD" to the priest who sprinkled the blood.

"The flesh of the sacrifice of the thanksgiving of his peace offerings shall be eaten on the day of his offering; he shall not leave any of it until morning." A whole animal is a lot of meat. To eat it all in

one day, a family had to invite others to the feast: neighbors, servants, the poor, the Levite (Deuteronomy 12:18; 16:11). Giving thanks to God was meant to be shared.

Hebrews tells us what our thank offering looks like now: "Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips confessing His name" (Hebrews 13:15). When was the last time your thanks to God was something others could hear and share in?

7:16-18 *And if the sacrifice of his offering **is** a vow or a freewill offering, on the day he brings near his sacrifice it shall be eaten; and on the next day the remainder of it also shall be eaten. And the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burned with fire. And if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings is eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted; for the one who brings it near it shall not be reckoned to him; it shall be a foul thing, and the soul who eats of it shall bear its iniquity.*

The second and third kinds of peace offering were "a vow or a freewill offering." A vow offering paid a promise made to God, often in a time of trouble (Psalm 66:13-14). A freewill offering was simply given out of a glad heart, with no reason other than love for God. These could be eaten on the day of the offering and "on the next day," but anything left on the third day had to be burned.

"And if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings is eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted." It would be "a foul thing," and whoever ate it would "bear its iniquity." In a hot climate with no refrigeration, meat spoiled fast, so there was good sense in the rule. But the main point is spiritual. This was holy food from God's altar, and it had to be eaten God's way. A sacrifice treated carelessly lost its worth.

7:19-21 *And the flesh which touches any unclean **thing** shall not be eaten; it shall be burned with fire. And **as for** the flesh, everyone clean may eat flesh. And the soul who eats flesh from the sacrifice of the peace offerings which **is** the LORD's while his uncleanness **is** on him, then that soul shall be cut off from its kinsmen. And when a soul touches any unclean **thing**, the uncleanness of man or unclean livestock or any unclean detestable thing, and eats of the flesh of the sacrifice of the peace offerings which **is** the LORD's, then that soul shall be cut off from its kinsmen.'"*

"The flesh which touches any unclean thing shall not be eaten." And no person who was unclean could eat it. If someone ate from a peace offering "while his uncleanness is on him," then "that soul shall be cut off from its kinsmen." To be cut off was a serious penalty. Teachers differ on exactly what it meant: some say being put out of the community, others say death by the hand of God, and others say a family line ending. Whatever the exact meaning, it meant losing one's place among God's people.

Paul gives a New Testament warning in the same spirit about the Lord's Supper. Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord "unworthily will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord," so "let a man examine himself" first (1 Corinthians 11:27-28). We do not come to the Lord's table perfect. We come to it having confessed our sin and trusting in Christ.

7:22-27 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'Any fat of ox and sheep and goat you shall not eat. And the fat of a carcass and the fat of a torn animal may be used for any work, but you shall certainly not eat it. For anyone who eats fat from the animal from which one brings near a fire offering to the LORD, then the soul who eats shall be cut off from its kinsmen. And any blood you shall not eat in all your dwellings, whether of the bird or of the livestock. Any soul who eats any blood, then that soul shall be cut off from its kinsmen.'"*

"Any fat of ox and sheep and goat you shall not eat." The fat of the sacrificial animals belonged to the LORD. The fat of an animal that died on its own or was killed by a wild animal could be used "for any work," such as making lamps or leather goods, but it could not be eaten.

"And any blood you shall not eat in all your dwellings, whether of the bird or of the livestock." The penalty for both was to be "cut off from its kinsmen." These rules repeat 3:17, which shows how seriously God took them. The fat was His portion, and the blood was the life, given for atonement (17:11). Christians are not under the food laws of Moses (Mark 7:19; Colossians 2:16-17), but we should keep the lesson: what belongs to God must not be taken for ourselves.

7:28-34 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'The one who brings near the sacrifice of his peace offerings to the LORD shall bring his offering to the LORD from the sacrifice of his peace offerings. His own hands shall bring the fire offerings of the LORD: the fat with the breast he shall bring, the breast, to wave it **as** a wave offering before the LORD. And the priest shall make the fat smoke on the altar, and the breast shall be for Aaron and for his sons. And the right thigh you shall give **as** a contribution to the priest from the sacrifices of your peace offerings. The one among the sons of Aaron who brings near the blood of the peace offerings and the fat, the right thigh shall be his for a portion. For the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the contribution I have taken from the sons of Israel, from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and I have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons for a due forever from the sons of Israel.'"*

These verses give the priests their share of every peace offering. The worshiper's "own hands" brought the fat and the breast. The breast was waved "as a wave offering before the LORD." A wave offering was lifted up and moved toward the altar and back, a way of showing that the gift was given to God and then given back by Him to the priest. The fat was burned, "and the breast shall be for Aaron and for his sons."

"And the right thigh you shall give as a contribution to the priest." The right thigh was one of the best cuts of meat. It went to the priest who offered the blood and fat. God says, "I have taken" these portions "from the sons of Israel," and "I have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons for a due forever." The priests did not take them. God gave them.

Notice that the worshiper had to bring the offering with his "own hands." He could not send it with someone else. Worship is personal. No one else can bring your thanks to God for you.

7:35-38 *This **is** the anointed portion of Aaron and the anointed portion of his sons from the fire offerings of the LORD, on the day he brought them near to serve as priests to the LORD, which the LORD commanded to give to them on the day he anointed them, from the sons of Israel, **as** a statute forever throughout their generations. This **is** the law for the burnt offering, for the grain offering, and for the sin offering, and for the guilt offering, and for the installation, and for the sacrifice of the peace offerings, which the LORD commanded Moses on Mount Sinai, on the day He commanded the sons of Israel to bring near their offerings to the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai.*

"This is the anointed portion of Aaron and the anointed portion of his sons." These portions were given to them from "the day He brought them near to serve as priests to the LORD." That points ahead to chapter 8, when they will be anointed.

Verses 37 and 38 sum up chapters 1 to 7: "the law for the burnt offering, for the grain offering, and for the sin offering, and for the guilt offering, and for the installation, and for the sacrifice of the peace offerings." The installation offering is the ordination offering we will see in chapter 8. All of this "the LORD commanded Moses on Mount Sinai."

Five offerings, each with its own lesson. The burnt offering, full surrender. The grain offering, gifts of thanks. The peace offering, fellowship with God. The sin offering, forgiveness and cleansing. The guilt offering, the payment of a debt. Each one was a shadow, and Christ is the substance (Colossians 2:17). His one offering did everything these offerings pictured, "once for all" (Hebrews 10:10). We do not keep these laws to be saved, and Israel never could have been saved by them either. They teach us how holy God is, how serious sin is, and how complete the work of Christ is.

Chapter 7 Summary

Chapter 7 gives the law of the guilt offering, which was most holy and eaten by the priest who made atonement with it, and it lists the priests' portions of the other offerings. The peace offering could be brought for thanksgiving, for a vow, or as a freewill offering. The thanksgiving offering had to be eaten the same day, and the others by the second day, with anything left on the third day burned. No one who was unclean could eat it. The chapter repeats that Israel must not eat fat or blood. The breast of every peace offering, waved before the LORD, belonged to Aaron and his sons, and the right thigh went to the priest who offered it, as a gift from God. The chapter closes by summing up all the offerings the LORD commanded Moses on Mount Sinai.

Chapter 7 Study Questions

1. What rule did the guilt offering and the sin offering share? (7:7)

2. Which parts of the offerings went to the priest who offered them? (7:8-9)

3. What three reasons could a person have for bringing a peace offering? (7:12, 16)

4. How soon did the thanksgiving offering have to be eaten, and why might that lead to a shared feast? (7:15)

5. What happened if peace offering meat was eaten on the third day? (7:18)

6. What did it mean to be "cut off" from one's kinsmen, and what brought that penalty in this chapter? (7:20-27)

7. Which portions of the peace offering went to the priests, and who gave them? (7:31-34)

8. Why did the worshiper have to bring his offering with his own hands? (7:30)

9. According to Hebrews 13:15, what kind of sacrifice can you offer to God every day?

10. Think about the five offerings in chapters 1 to 7. Which one speaks most to you right now, and why?

Chapter 8: The Ordination of Aaron and His Sons

Scripture

8:1-13 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the oil of the anointing, and the bull of the sin offering, and the two rams, and the basket of the unleavened bread, and assemble all the congregation to the entrance of the tent of meeting." And Moses did just as the LORD had commanded him, and the congregation was assembled to the entrance of the tent of meeting. And Moses said to the congregation, "This ***is*** the thing which the LORD has commanded to do." And Moses brought near Aaron and his sons, and he washed them with water. And he put the tunic on him, and he girded him with the sash, and he clothed him ***with*** the robe, and he put the ephod on him; and he girded him with the band of the ephod, and he bound ***it*** on him with it. And he placed the breastpiece on him, and he put into the breastpiece the Urim and the Thummim. And he placed the turban on his head, and he placed on the turban, toward the front of his face, the plate of gold, the crown of holiness, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And Moses took the oil of the anointing, and he anointed the tabernacle and all that ***was*** in it, and he sanctified them. And he spattered some of it on the altar seven times, and he anointed the altar and all its articles, and the laver and its base, to sanctify them. And he poured some of the oil of the anointing on the head of Aaron, and he anointed him to sanctify him. And Moses brought near the sons of Aaron, and he clothed them ***with*** tunics, and he girded them ***with*** a sash, and he bound headdresses on them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

8:14-21 And he brought close the bull of the sin offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the bull of the sin offering. And he slaughtered ***it***, and Moses took the blood, and he put ***it*** on the horns of the altar all around with his finger, and he purified the altar from sin; and the blood he poured at the base of the altar, and he sanctified it, to make atonement for it. And he took all the fat that ***was*** on the entrails, and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and their fat, and Moses made ***them*** smoke on the altar. And the bull and its hide and its flesh and its dung he burned with fire outside the camp, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And he brought near the ram of the burnt offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. And he slaughtered ***it***, and Moses sprinkled the blood on the altar all around. And the ram he cut into its pieces, and Moses made the head and the pieces and the suet smoke. And the entrails and the legs he washed with water, and Moses made the whole ram smoke on the altar; it ***was*** a burnt offering for a soothing aroma; it ***was*** a fire offering to the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

8:22-36 And he brought near the second ram, the ram of installation, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. And he slaughtered ***it***, and Moses took some of its blood, and he put ***it*** on the lobe of the right ear of Aaron, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. And he brought near the sons of Aaron, and Moses put some of the blood on the lobe of their right ear, and on the thumb of their right hand, and on the big toe of their right foot; and Moses sprinkled the blood on the altar all around. And he took the fat and the fat tail, and all the fat that ***was*** on the entrails, and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and their fat, and the right thigh; and from the basket of the unleavened bread that ***was*** before the LORD he took one unleavened cake, and one cake of bread ***with*** oil, and one wafer, and he placed ***them*** on

the fat ***portions*** and on the right thigh. And he put the whole on the palms of Aaron and on the palms of his sons, and he waved them ***as*** a wave offering before the LORD. And Moses took them from on their palms, and he made ***them*** smoke on the altar on the burnt offering; they ***were*** installation ***offerings*** for a soothing aroma; it ***was*** a fire offering to the LORD. And Moses took the breast, and he waved it ***as*** a wave offering before the LORD; from the ram of installation it was for Moses for a portion, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And Moses took some of the oil of the anointing and some of the blood which ***was*** on the altar, and he spattered ***it*** on Aaron, on his garments, and on his sons and on the garments of his sons with him; and he sanctified Aaron, his garments, and his sons and the garments of his sons with him. And Moses said to Aaron and to his sons, "Boil the flesh ***at*** the entrance of the tent of meeting, and there you shall eat it and the bread which ***is*** in the basket of installation, just as I commanded, saying, 'Aaron and his sons shall eat it.' And the remainder of the flesh and of the bread you shall burn with fire. And from the entrance of the tent of meeting you shall not go out ***for*** seven days, until the day the days of your installation are completed; for seven days he shall fill your hand. Just as he has done on this day, ***so*** the LORD has commanded to do, to make atonement for you. And ***at*** the entrance of the tent of meeting you shall remain day and night ***for*** seven days, and you shall keep the charge of the LORD, and you shall not die; for so I have been commanded." And Aaron and his sons did all the things which the LORD had commanded by the hand of Moses.

Chapter 8 Preview

Chapters 1 to 7 gave the laws of the offerings. Now Leviticus turns to a story. In Exodus 28 and 29 God told Moses how to set apart Aaron and his sons as priests. In chapter 8 Moses does it, step by step, in front of the whole congregation. The phrase "just as the LORD had commanded Moses" runs all through the chapter like a drumbeat.

Moses washes Aaron and his sons, dresses them in the holy garments and anoints the tabernacle and Aaron with oil. He offers a sin offering, a burnt offering and a ram of installation, and he puts blood on the right ear, thumb and big toe of each priest. For seven days they stay at the entrance of the tent of meeting. The chapter shows that no one could make himself a priest. God chose, God cleansed, God clothed and God consecrated. It points us to Jesus, our great High Priest, and to the priesthood He has given to everyone who believes in Him.

Chapter 8 Study

8:1-5 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the oil of the anointing, and the bull of the sin offering, and the two rams, and the basket of the unleavened bread, and assemble all the congregation to the entrance of the tent of meeting." And Moses did just as the LORD had commanded him, and the congregation was assembled to the entrance of the tent of meeting. And Moses said to the congregation, "This **is** the thing which the LORD has commanded to do."*

The LORD told Moses to bring Aaron and his sons, "the garments, and the oil of the anointing, and the bull of the sin offering, and the two rams, and the basket of the unleavened bread," and to gather "all the congregation to the entrance of the tent of meeting." Ordination means being

formally set apart for a sacred task. This one was done in public, so the whole nation would know who God had chosen to serve Him.

"This is the thing which the LORD has commanded to do." Moses made it clear that he was not inventing anything. Aaron was Moses' own brother, but this was not family favoritism. Hebrews 5:4 says no one takes the honor of high priest for himself, but only when called by God, "just as also Aaron was." The same verses go on to say that Christ did not exalt Himself either; the Father appointed Him (Hebrews 5:5).

8:6-9 *And Moses brought near Aaron and his sons, and he washed them with water. And he put the tunic on him, and he girded him with the sash, and he clothed him* ***with*** *the robe, and he put the ephod on him; and he girded him with the band of the ephod, and he bound* ***it*** *on him with it. And he placed the breastpiece on him, and he put into the breastpiece the Urim and the Thummim. And he placed the turban on his head, and he placed on the turban, toward the front of his face, the plate of gold, the crown of holiness, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.*

"And Moses brought near Aaron and his sons, and he washed them with water." Before they could put on holy clothes, they had to be cleansed. Then Moses dressed Aaron in the garments of the high priest described in Exodus 28. He put on him the tunic, the sash and the robe. Over these went the ephod, a sleeveless vest of gold, blue, purple and scarlet thread, held by its woven band. On the ephod he placed the breastpiece, with twelve stones bearing the names of the tribes, so that Aaron carried Israel on his heart before the LORD (Exodus 28:29).

Into the breastpiece Moses put "the Urim and the Thummim." The words mean lights and perfections. They were used to seek God's will in certain decisions (Numbers 27:21), but Scripture does not tell us what they looked like or exactly how they worked. Last came the turban, and on its front "the plate of gold, the crown of holiness." It was engraved, "Holiness to the LORD" (Exodus 28:36).

Each piece taught something. The high priest stood before God for the people, carried their names on his heart, and wore God's holiness on his forehead. Jesus is the High Priest who truly does all of this. He is "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26).

8:10-13 *And Moses took the oil of the anointing, and he anointed the tabernacle and all that* ***was*** *in it, and he sanctified them. And he spattered some of it on the altar seven times, and he anointed the altar and all its articles, and the laver and its base, to sanctify them. And he poured some of the oil of the anointing on the head of Aaron, and he anointed him to sanctify him. And Moses brought near the sons of Aaron, and he clothed them* ***with*** *tunics, and he girded them* ***with*** *a sash, and he bound headdresses on them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.*

Moses took "the oil of the anointing" and anointed "the tabernacle and all that was in it" and sanctified them. To sanctify means to set apart as holy for God. He spattered oil on the altar seven times and anointed the laver, the large bronze basin where the priests washed. Then "he poured some of the oil of the anointing on the head of Aaron, and he anointed him to sanctify him." Psalm 133:2 remembers this oil running down Aaron's beard and onto his robes.

In the Old Testament, prophets, priests and kings were anointed with oil to show they were set apart by God. The words Messiah in Hebrew and Christ in Greek both mean Anointed One. Jesus was anointed not with oil but with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38). He is the true Prophet, Priest and King.

Then Moses dressed Aaron's sons in tunics, sashes and headdresses, simpler garments than the high priest wore, "just as the LORD had commanded Moses."

8:14-17 *And he brought close the bull of the sin offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the bull of the sin offering. And he slaughtered **it**, and Moses took the blood, and he put **it** on the horns of the altar all around with his finger, and he purified the altar from sin; and the blood he poured at the base of the altar, and he sanctified it, to make atonement for it. And he took all the fat that **was** on the entrails, and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and their fat, and Moses made **them** smoke on the altar. And the bull and its hide and its flesh and its dung he burned with fire outside the camp, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.*

Now came the sacrifices. First was "the bull of the sin offering." Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. They had just been washed, dressed and anointed, and they still needed a sin offering. Holy clothes do not make a sinful man holy.

Moses put the blood "on the horns of the altar all around with his finger, and he purified the altar from sin," and he poured the rest at its base "to make atonement for it." Even the altar, made by human hands, needed cleansing before it could be used. The fat was burned, and the rest of the bull was burned outside the camp.

Here is a great difference between Aaron and Jesus. Aaron had to offer for his own sins first. Jesus "does not have need every day, as the high priests do, to offer up sacrifices first for their own sins, then for those of the people; for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself" (Hebrews 7:27).

8:18-21 *And he brought near the ram of the burnt offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. And he slaughtered **it**, and Moses sprinkled the blood on the altar all around. And the ram he cut into its pieces, and Moses made the head and the pieces and the suet smoke. And the entrails and the legs he washed with water, and Moses made the whole ram smoke on the altar; it **was** a burnt offering for a soothing aroma; it **was** a fire offering to the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.*

Next was "the ram of the burnt offering." Again Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. Moses slaughtered it, sprinkled the blood around the altar, cut it into pieces, washed the entrails and legs, and burned "the whole ram" on the altar, "a burnt offering for a soothing aroma."

First the sin offering dealt with their sin. Then the burnt offering showed their full surrender to God. That is the same order we saw in 5:7-10. Before a man can serve God, his sin must be dealt with, and then he must give himself wholly to the One he serves.

8:22-24 *And he brought near the second ram, the ram of installation, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. And he slaughtered* ***it****, and Moses took some of its blood, and he put* ***it*** *on the lobe of the right ear of Aaron, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. And he brought near the sons of Aaron, and Moses put some of the blood on the lobe of their right ear, and on the thumb of their right hand, and on the big toe of their right foot; and Moses sprinkled the blood on the altar all around.*

The third animal was "the second ram, the ram of installation." The Hebrew word means filling, as in filling the hand. When they laid their hands on it, Moses slaughtered it and did something new. He put some of its blood "on the lobe of the right ear of Aaron, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot." He did the same to each of Aaron's sons.

Why those three places? Many teachers have seen a simple meaning. The ear was set apart to hear God's word. The hand was set apart to do God's work. The foot was set apart to walk in God's ways. The whole man, from top to bottom, was marked by the blood of the sacrifice and given to God. The same marking was used for a cleansed leper (14:14).

Our hearing, our work and our walk all belong to the Lord who bought us. Paul says, "you are not your own, for you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

8:25-29 *And he took the fat and the fat tail, and all the fat that* ***was*** *on the entrails, and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and their fat, and the right thigh; and from the basket of the unleavened bread that* ***was*** *before the LORD he took one unleavened cake, and one cake of bread* ***with*** *oil, and one wafer, and he placed* ***them*** *on the fat* ***portions*** *and on the right thigh. And he put the whole on the palms of Aaron and on the palms of his sons, and he waved them* ***as*** *a wave offering before the LORD. And Moses took them from on their palms, and he made* ***them*** *smoke on the altar on the burnt offering; they* ***were*** *installation* ***offerings*** *for a soothing aroma; it* ***was*** *a fire offering to the LORD. And Moses took the breast, and he waved it* ***as*** *a wave offering before the LORD; from the ram of installation it was for Moses for a portion, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.*

Moses took the fat portions and the right thigh of the ram, along with one unleavened cake, one cake with oil and one wafer from the basket. He put all of it "on the palms of Aaron and on the palms of his sons," and waved it before the LORD. Then he took it back and burned it on the altar.

This is the meaning of the Hebrew phrase to fill the hand. Their hands were filled with the offerings they would spend their lives handling. From now on, their hands would always be full of service to God.

Moses took the breast and waved it, and it became his portion. In this one ceremony Moses served as the priest, since Aaron was not yet ordained. After this day, the priests' work belonged to Aaron and his sons.

8:30 *And Moses took some of the oil of the anointing and some of the blood which **was** on the altar, and he spattered **it** on Aaron, on his garments, and on his sons and on the garments of his sons with him; and he sanctified Aaron, his garments, and his sons and the garments of his sons with him.*

"And Moses took some of the oil of the anointing and some of the blood which was on the altar, and he spattered it on Aaron, on his garments, and on his sons and on the garments of his sons." The oil and the blood together set them apart.

The blood speaks of forgiveness through a sacrifice. The oil is often a picture in Scripture of the Holy Spirit (1 Samuel 16:13; Acts 10:38). Every believer today has both. We are cleansed by the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7) and anointed by the Spirit of God (1 John 2:20, 27). Peter says all believers are "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). We do not offer animals. We offer "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).

8:31-36 *And Moses said to Aaron and to his sons, "Boil the flesh **at** the entrance of the tent of meeting, and there you shall eat it and the bread which **is** in the basket of installation, just as I commanded, saying, 'Aaron and his sons shall eat it.' And the remainder of the flesh and of the bread you shall burn with fire. And from the entrance of the tent of meeting you shall not go out **for** seven days, until the day the days of your installation are completed; for seven days he shall fill your hand. Just as he has done on this day, **so** the LORD has commanded to do, to make atonement for you. And **at** the entrance of the tent of meeting you shall remain day and night **for** seven days, and you shall keep the charge of the LORD, and you shall not die; for so I have been commanded." And Aaron and his sons did all the things which the LORD had commanded by the hand of Moses.*

Moses told Aaron and his sons to boil the meat at the entrance of the tent of meeting and eat it there with the bread of the basket. Anything left over was to be burned. Then came a command: "from the entrance of the tent of meeting you shall not go out for seven days, until the day the days of your installation are completed; for seven days he shall fill your hand."

For a full week they stayed day and night at the tent, keeping "the charge of the LORD." The ceremony was repeated each day (Exodus 29:35-37). "And you shall not die." These were not empty words. Coming near a holy God carelessly was deadly, as chapter 10 will soon show.

"And Aaron and his sons did all the things which the LORD had commanded by the hand of Moses." The chapter ends with full obedience. For the moment, everything was done God's way.

What does this chapter teach us now? We have a High Priest who was chosen by God, who needed no sin offering for Himself, and who never needs to be replaced (Hebrews 7:23-25). And through Him, every believer has been washed, clothed in His righteousness and set apart to serve. What would change in your week if you saw your work, your words and your walk as priestly service to God?

Chapter 8 Summary

Moses gathered the congregation at the tent of meeting and did what the LORD commanded to ordain Aaron and his sons as priests. He washed them, dressed Aaron in the high priest's garments, including the ephod, the breastpiece with the Urim and Thummim, and the gold plate on the turban, and dressed his sons in their tunics. He anointed the tabernacle, the altar and Aaron with the holy oil. He offered a bull as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering, and with the ram of installation he put blood on the right ear, thumb and big toe of each priest. He filled their hands with the offerings and waved them before the LORD, then spattered them with oil and blood. For seven days they stayed at the entrance of the tent of meeting. The chapter points to Jesus, our sinless High Priest, and to the priesthood of all believers in Him.

Chapter 8 Study Questions

1. Why did Moses gather the whole congregation for this ceremony? (8:3-5)

2. What was the first thing Moses did to Aaron and his sons? (8:6)

3. What pieces of clothing did Aaron wear, and what was written on the gold plate? (8:7-9; Exodus 28:36)

4. What did Moses anoint with oil? (8:10-12)

5. Why did Aaron and his sons need a sin offering even after they were washed and anointed? (8:14-15)

6. Where did Moses put the blood of the ram of installation, and what might each place mean? (8:23-24)

7. How long did the priests stay at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and why? (8:33-35)

8. How is Jesus different from Aaron as a high priest? (Hebrews 7:26-27)

9. 1 Peter 2:9 calls believers "a royal priesthood." What does that mean for your daily life?

10. If your ears, hands and feet were all set apart for God, what would you listen to, do, and where would you go differently?

Chapter 9: The Glory of the LORD Appears

Scripture

9:1-14 And it was on the eighth day, Moses called to Aaron and to his sons and to the elders of Israel. And he said to Aaron, "Take for yourself a calf, a young ***one*** of the herd, for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering, without blemish, and bring ***them*** near before the LORD. And to the sons of Israel you shall speak, saying, 'Take a male goat of the goats for a sin offering, and a calf and a lamb, sons of a year, without blemish, for a burnt offering, and an ox and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before the LORD, and a grain offering mixed with oil; for today the LORD will appear to you.'" And they took what Moses had commanded to the front of the tent of meeting, and all the congregation drew near, and they stood before the LORD. And Moses said, "This ***is*** the thing which the LORD has commanded ***that*** you shall do, so that the glory of the LORD may appear to you." And Moses said to Aaron, "Draw near to the altar, and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering, and make atonement for yourself and for the people; and offer the offering of the people, and make atonement for them, just as the LORD has commanded." And Aaron drew near to the altar, and he slaughtered the calf of the sin offering which ***was*** for himself. And the sons of Aaron brought near the blood to him, and he dipped his finger in the blood, and he put ***it*** on the horns of the altar; and the blood he poured at the base of the altar. And the fat and the kidneys and the lobe from the liver from the sin offering he made smoke on the altar, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And the flesh and the hide he burned with fire outside the camp. And he slaughtered the burnt offering, and the sons of Aaron handed the blood to him, and he sprinkled it on the altar all around. And the burnt offering they handed to him by its pieces, and the head; and he made ***them*** smoke on the altar. And he washed the entrails and the legs, and he made ***them*** smoke on the burnt offering on the altar.

9:15-24 And he brought near the offering of the people, and he took the goat of the sin offering which ***was*** for the people, and he slaughtered it, and he made it a sin offering like the first. And he brought near the burnt offering, and he offered it according to the ordinance. And he brought near the grain offering, and he filled his palm from it, and he made ***it*** smoke on the altar, besides the burnt offering of the morning. And he slaughtered the ox and the ram, the sacrifice of the peace offerings which ***was*** for the people; and the sons of Aaron handed the blood to him, and he sprinkled it on the altar all around; and the fat ***portions*** from the ox and from the ram, the fat tail, and the covering ***fat***, and the kidneys, and the lobe of the liver. And they placed the fat ***portions*** on the breasts, and he made the fat ***portions*** smoke on the altar. And the breasts and the right thigh Aaron waved ***as*** a wave offering before the LORD, just as Moses had commanded. And Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people, and he blessed them; and he came down from offering the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and they came out, and they blessed the people; and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. And fire went out from before the LORD, and it consumed on the altar the burnt offering and the fat ***portions***; and all the people saw, and they shouted, and they fell on their faces.

Chapter 9 Preview

On the eighth day, after the seven days of ordination, Aaron begins his work as high priest. Moses tells him what to offer for himself and for the people, and he gives a promise: "today the LORD will appear to you." Aaron offers a sin offering and a burnt offering for himself, then a sin offering, burnt offering, grain offering and peace offerings for the people, all just as the LORD commanded.

Then Aaron lifts his hands and blesses the people. He and Moses go into the tent of meeting and come out and bless them again. The glory of the LORD appears to everyone, and fire comes out from before the LORD and burns up the offering on the altar. The people shout and fall on their faces. This is the high point of the first part of Leviticus. God has accepted the sacrifices and the priests, and He has shown Himself to His people.

Chapter 9 Study

9:1-4 *And it was on the eighth day, Moses called to Aaron and to his sons and to the elders of Israel. And he said to Aaron, "Take for yourself a calf, a young **one** of the herd, for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering, without blemish, and bring **them** near before the LORD. And to the sons of Israel you shall speak, saying, 'Take a male goat of the goats for a sin offering, and a calf and a lamb, sons of a year, without blemish, for a burnt offering, and an ox and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before the LORD, and a grain offering mixed with oil; for today the LORD will appear to you.'"*

"And it was on the eighth day." The seven days of ordination were finished (8:33). The eighth day was a new beginning. Moses called Aaron, his sons, and "the elders of Israel," the leaders of the tribes.

Aaron was to take "a calf, a young one of the herd, for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering" for himself. Some have noticed that the first animal Aaron offered for his own sin was a calf. Not long before, Aaron had made the golden calf at the foot of this same mountain (Exodus 32). Scripture does not draw the link, but it is hard to miss.

The people were to bring a goat for a sin offering, a calf and a lamb for a burnt offering, an ox and a ram for peace offerings, and a grain offering. Every kind of offering from chapters 1 to 4 was there. Why? "For today the LORD will appear to you." Everything pointed toward meeting with God.

9:5-7 *And they took what Moses had commanded to the front of the tent of meeting, and all the congregation drew near, and they stood before the LORD. And Moses said, "This **is** the thing which the LORD has commanded **that** you shall do, so that the glory of the LORD may appear to you." And Moses said to Aaron, "Draw near to the altar, and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering, and make atonement for yourself and for the people; and offer the offering of the people, and make atonement for them, just as the LORD has commanded."*

The people brought what Moses commanded, and "all the congregation drew near, and they stood before the LORD." Moses told them, "This is the thing which the LORD has commanded that you shall do, so that the glory of the LORD may appear to you."

The glory of the LORD is the visible sign of God's presence, often seen as a bright cloud or fire (Exodus 24:16-17; 40:34). Notice the order in Moses' words. Do what God commanded, and you will see His glory. There is no shortcut to God's presence. Many people today want an experience of God's glory without coming the way He has provided. But the only way to God is the way He has made, and for us that way is Christ (John 14:6).

Moses then told Aaron, "Draw near to the altar, and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering, and make atonement for yourself and for the people." Aaron had to be made right with God before he could stand for others. Hebrews 5:3 says the high priest is obligated, "just as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins."

9:8-14 *And Aaron drew near to the altar, and he slaughtered the calf of the sin offering which **was** for himself. And the sons of Aaron brought near the blood to him, and he dipped his finger in the blood, and he put **it** on the horns of the altar; and the blood he poured at the base of the altar. And the fat and the kidneys and the lobe from the liver from the sin offering he made smoke on the altar, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And the flesh and the hide he burned with fire outside the camp. And he slaughtered the burnt offering, and the sons of Aaron handed the blood to him, and he sprinkled it on the altar all around. And the burnt offering they handed to him by its pieces, and the head; and he made **them** smoke on the altar. And he washed the entrails and the legs, and he made **them** smoke on the burnt offering on the altar.*

Aaron went to the altar and slaughtered his calf for a sin offering. His sons brought him the blood. He dipped his finger in it, put it on the horns of the altar and poured the rest at its base. He burned the fat, kidneys and liver lobe on the altar, "just as the LORD had commanded Moses," and burned the flesh and hide outside the camp.

Then he offered his burnt offering in the same careful way. His sons handed him the blood, the pieces and the head, and he washed the entrails and legs and burned them all.

This was Aaron's first day on the job. He did not try anything new or creative. He followed the instructions God had given in chapters 1 to 7 exactly. For an Old Testament priest, faithfulness meant doing what God said, the way God said to do it.

9:15-21 *And he brought near the offering of the people, and he took the goat of the sin offering which **was** for the people, and he slaughtered it, and he made it a sin offering like the first. And he brought near the burnt offering, and he offered it according to the ordinance. And he brought near the grain offering, and he filled his palm from it, and he made **it** smoke on the altar, besides the burnt offering of the morning. And he slaughtered the ox and the ram, the sacrifice of the peace offerings which **was** for the people; and the sons of Aaron handed the blood to him, and he sprinkled it on the altar all around; and the fat **portions** from the ox and from the ram, the fat tail, and the covering **fat**, and the kidneys, and the lobe of the liver. And they placed the fat **portions** on the breasts, and he made the fat **portions** smoke on the altar. And the breasts and the right thigh Aaron waved **as** a wave offering before the LORD, just as Moses had commanded.*

Now Aaron turned to "the offering of the people." He offered their goat as a sin offering "like the first." He offered their burnt offering "according to the ordinance." He offered the grain offering, burning a handful of it "besides the burnt offering of the morning," which tells us the daily morning burnt offering had already begun (Exodus 29:38-42).

Then came the peace offerings, the ox and the ram. Aaron sprinkled the blood, burned the fat portions, and waved the breasts and the right thigh "as a wave offering before the LORD, just as Moses had commanded."

Look at the order of the whole day: sin offering, then burnt offering, then grain offering, then peace offering. First sin is dealt with. Then the worshiper gives himself to God. Then he brings his gifts. Then he sits at the table in fellowship with God. That is the order of the gospel too. We do not start with fellowship. We start with the cross.

9:22 *And Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people, and he blessed them; and he came down from offering the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings.*

"And Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people, and he blessed them." The words of his blessing are not given here, but Numbers 6:24-26 gives the blessing God later told the priests to speak: "May the LORD bless you, and may He keep you; may the LORD make His face shine toward you, and may He be gracious to you; may the LORD lift up His face toward you, and may He set peace for you."

After the sacrifices came the blessing. The people had been made right with God, and now God's blessing could rest on them. Luke tells us that the last thing Jesus did before He went up into heaven was to lift up His hands and bless His disciples (Luke 24:50-51). Our High Priest finished His sacrifice and blessed His people.

9:23-24 *And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and they came out, and they blessed the people; and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. And fire went out from before the LORD, and it consumed on the altar the burnt offering and the fat* ***portions****; and all the people saw, and they shouted, and they fell on their faces.*

"And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and they came out, and they blessed the people; and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people." The promise of verse 4 came true. Everything had been done God's way, and God showed Himself.

"And fire went out from before the LORD, and it consumed on the altar the burnt offering and the fat portions." God Himself lit the altar fire, or perhaps added His fire to it, in a way everyone could see. This was His sign that He accepted the offerings and the priesthood. It is the fire that 6:13 said must never go out. God also sent fire to accept offerings in the days of Solomon (2 Chronicles 7:1) and Elijah (1 Kings 18:38).

"And all the people saw, and they shouted, and they fell on their faces." Joy and awe came together. They shouted for joy, and they bowed to the ground in reverence. That is real worship. It is not only happy, and it is not only fearful. It is both, because God is both good and holy.

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came on the believers with what looked like "tongues being distributed, as of fire" (Acts 2:3). God showed again that He had come to dwell with His people, this time not in a tent but in them. One day we will see His glory face to face (Revelation 22:4). When you worship, do you come with both joy and reverence?

Chapter 9 Summary

On the eighth day, after the ordination, Moses told Aaron to offer a calf as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering for himself, and told the people to bring sin, burnt, peace and grain offerings, because the LORD would appear to them that day. Aaron offered his own sin and burnt offerings first, then the people's sin offering, burnt offering, grain offering and peace offerings, all as the LORD had commanded. He lifted his hands and blessed the people. Then Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, came out and blessed the people, and the glory of the LORD appeared to all. Fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the offerings on the altar, and the people shouted and fell on their faces. God had accepted the priests and the sacrifices and shown His presence among His people.

Chapter 9 Study Questions

1. What day was it when Aaron began his work, and why does that matter? (9:1; 8:33)

2. What did Aaron offer for himself before he offered for the people? (9:2, 8-14)

3. What promise did Moses give the people? (9:4, 6)

4. What was the order of the offerings that day, and what does that order teach? (9:8-21)

5. What did Aaron do after he finished the offerings? (9:22)

6. What happened when Moses and Aaron came out of the tent of meeting? (9:23-24)

7. How did the people respond when the fire came out from before the LORD? (9:24)

8. How does Hebrews 5:3 explain why Aaron had to offer for himself first?

9. Why is there no shortcut to God's glory? How does John 14:6 answer this?

10. Does your worship include both joy and reverence? What might help you grow in the one you lack?

Chapter 10: Nadab and Abihu

Scripture

10:1-11 And the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, took each man his censer, and they put fire in them, and they placed incense on it, and they brought near before the LORD strange fire, which He had not commanded them. And fire went out from before the LORD, and it consumed them, and they died before the LORD. And Moses said to Aaron, "This ***is*** what the LORD spoke, saying, 'Among those near Me I will be sanctified, and before the face of all the people I will be glorified.'" And Aaron was silent. And Moses called to Mishael and to Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel, the uncle of Aaron, and he said to them, "Draw near, carry your brothers from before the holy place to outside the camp." And they drew near, and they carried them in their tunics to outside the camp, just as Moses had spoken. And Moses said to Aaron and to Eleazar and to Ithamar, his sons, "Do not let loose ***the hair of*** your heads, and do not tear your garments, and you shall not die, and He shall not be angry with all the congregation; and your brothers, all the house of Israel, shall weep ***over*** the burning which the LORD has burned. And from the entrance of the tent of meeting you shall not go out, lest you die; for the oil of the anointing of the LORD ***is*** on you." And they did according to the word of Moses. And the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying, "Do not drink wine and strong drink, you and your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, and you shall not die; ***it is*** a statute forever throughout your generations, and to separate between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean, and to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses."

10:12-20 And Moses spoke to Aaron and to Eleazar and to Ithamar, his sons who were left, "Take the grain offering that is left from the fire offerings of the LORD, and eat it ***as*** unleavened bread beside the altar, for it ***is*** a holy of holies. And you shall eat it in a holy place, for it ***is*** your due and the due of your sons from the fire offerings of the LORD; for so I have been commanded. And the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the contribution you shall eat in a clean place, you and your sons and your daughters with you; for ***as*** your due and the due of your sons they have been given from the sacrifices of the peace offerings of the sons of Israel. The thigh of the contribution and the breast of the wave offering, with the fire offerings of the fat ***portions***, they shall bring to wave ***as*** a wave offering before the LORD; and it shall be for you and for your sons with you for a due forever, just as the LORD has commanded." And Moses diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and look, it had been burned; and he was angry with Eleazar and with Ithamar, the sons of Aaron who were left, saying, "Why did you not eat the sin offering in the place of holiness? For it ***is*** a holy of holies, and He has given it to you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD. Look, its blood was not brought into the holy place within; you should certainly have eaten it in the holy place, just as I commanded." And Aaron spoke to Moses, "Look, today they have brought near their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD, and ***things*** like these have happened to me; and ***if*** I had eaten a sin offering today, would it be good in the eyes of the LORD?" And Moses heard, and it was good in his eyes.

Chapter 10 Preview

Chapter 9 ended with God's glory and fire from heaven, and the people shouting for joy. Chapter 10 begins, perhaps that same day, with fire from the LORD again. This time it does not consume an offering. It consumes two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, who brought "strange fire" before the LORD, "which He had not commanded them."

This is one of the hardest passages in Leviticus. It is sobering, and it is meant to be. Moses explains what God said: "Among those near Me I will be sanctified." Aaron is silent. The priests are told not to mourn in the usual ways while they serve, and God gives Aaron new commands about wine and about teaching. The chapter ends with a gentler scene, where Moses is angry about a sin offering and Aaron answers him from a grieving heart, and Moses accepts it. Here we see both the holiness of God and His understanding of human weakness.

Chapter 10 Study

10:1 *And the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, took each man his censer, and they put fire in them, and they placed incense on it, and they brought near before the LORD strange fire, which He had not commanded them.*

"And the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, took each man his censer." These were Aaron's two oldest sons (Exodus 6:23). They had been on Mount Sinai with Moses and the elders and had seen the God of Israel (Exodus 24:9-10). They had just been ordained as priests. They had every privilege.

A censer was a small pan used to carry burning coals, with incense sprinkled on top to make fragrant smoke. They "put fire in them," "placed incense on it," and "brought near before the LORD strange fire, which He had not commanded them." Strange fire means fire that was foreign or unauthorized.

What exactly was wrong? Scripture does not spell it out, so we should be careful. The text puts the weight on one point: God "had not commanded" it. Later, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest was told to take coals "from on the altar" for the incense (16:12), so many believe Nadab and Abihu took fire from somewhere else. Exodus 30:9 had forbidden "strange incense" on the altar. Some think they went where only the high priest could go, or at a time God had not set. And because God warns about wine in verse 9, some suggest they had been drinking. The one thing the text says plainly is that they came to God in their own way and not in His.

10:2 *And fire went out from before the LORD, and it consumed them, and they died before the LORD.*

"And fire went out from before the LORD, and it consumed them, and they died before the LORD." The same words, "fire went out from before the LORD," were used in 9:24. The same fire that showed God's acceptance of the sacrifice now showed His judgment on the priests who treated Him lightly. Hebrews 12:29 says, "our God is also a consuming fire."

Why would God act so severely? This was the first day of the priesthood. Nadab and Abihu were not ordinary people making an honest mistake. They were priests, newly anointed, who had been told again and again to do everything "just as the LORD had commanded." If God had let their disobedience pass on the first day, Israel would have learned that His commands about worship did not really matter. God does not deal with every sin this way, or none of us would be alive. But at key moments, at the start of something new, He has given clear warnings. He did it again when Uzzah touched the ark (2 Samuel 6:7), and in the early church with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). After that, "great fear came upon the whole church" (Acts 5:11).

This passage is not meant to make us afraid that God is waiting to strike us down for every mistake. The whole book of Leviticus is about God making a way for sinful people to come near Him and live. It is meant to show us that the way matters. God provided the way. Nadab and Abihu ignored it.

10:3 *And Moses said to Aaron, "This **is** what the LORD spoke, saying, 'Among those near Me I will be sanctified, and before the face of all the people I will be glorified.'" And Aaron was silent.*

Moses spoke to his brother: "This is what the LORD spoke, saying, 'Among those near Me I will be sanctified, and before the face of all the people I will be glorified.'" Those near Me means the priests, the ones who came closest to God. The closer a person stands to God's work, the more seriously God takes how he handles it. James warns that teachers "will receive greater judgment" (James 3:1).

God will be treated as holy. If His servants will not honor Him as holy by their obedience, He will show Himself holy by His judgment. Either way, He will be glorified before all the people.

"And Aaron was silent." This may be the most heartbreaking line in the chapter. Aaron had just lost two sons in a moment. He did not argue with God. He did not accuse Him. He did not explain it away. He was silent. There are times in grief when the only right response is to be still before God, even when we cannot understand. Scripture does not ask grieving people to pretend they are not hurting. But Aaron's silence was a kind of trust: he knew God was holy and just, even in this.

If you are reading this while carrying a loss you do not understand, know that God sees your grief. The same God who is holy is also "compassionate and gracious" (Exodus 34:6), and He is near to the brokenhearted (Psalm 34:18).

10:4-5 *And Moses called to Mishael and to Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel, the uncle of Aaron, and he said to them, "Draw near, carry your brothers from before the holy place to outside the camp." And they drew near, and they carried them in their tunics to outside the camp, just as Moses had spoken.*

Moses called "to Mishael and to Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel, the uncle of Aaron." These were Aaron's cousins, Levites but not priests. Aaron and his remaining sons were newly anointed priests on duty at the tent of meeting, and they could not touch a dead body (10:7; 21:10-12). So the cousins carried the bodies out "in their tunics to outside the camp."

The detail that they were carried "in their tunics" tells us the fire did not burn up their bodies or their priestly clothes. It took their lives, but not in a way that destroyed the bodies. They were carried out still wearing the garments of an office they had dishonored.

10:6-7 *And Moses said to Aaron and to Eleazar and to Ithamar, his sons, "Do not let loose* ***the hair of*** *your heads, and do not tear your garments, and you shall not die, and He shall not be angry with all the congregation; and your brothers, all the house of Israel, shall weep* ***over*** *the burning which the LORD has burned. And from the entrance of the tent of meeting you shall not go out, lest you die; for the oil of the anointing of the LORD* ***is*** *on you." And they did according to the word of Moses.*

Moses then told Aaron and his two remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, not to let their hair hang loose and not to tear their clothes. Those were the usual signs of mourning. The anointing oil was on them, and they were on duty at the tent of meeting (10:7). To leave their post or mourn publicly would have looked like a protest against God's judgment.

This command may sound hard. But notice the rest of the verse: "your brothers, all the house of Israel, shall weep over the burning which the LORD has burned." Grief was allowed. It was right. The whole nation would weep for them. Only the priests on duty could not stop their service to do it. The work of God's house had to go on, even through tears.

"And they did according to the word of Moses." Aaron and his sons obeyed, in the hardest moment of their lives.

10:8-11 *And the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying, "Do not drink wine and strong drink, you and your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, and you shall not die;* ***it is*** *a statute forever throughout your generations, and to separate between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean, and to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses."*

Then "the LORD spoke to Aaron." Up to now God had spoken through Moses. Here, right after the tragedy, He speaks to Aaron directly. That is a kindness in itself.

"Do not drink wine and strong drink, you and your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, and you shall not die." Strong drink means fermented drinks other than wine, like beer. The timing has made many think Nadab and Abihu had been drinking, but the text does not say so. Either way, the reason is clear: priests on duty needed clear heads.

They had two jobs that needed a clear mind. First, "to separate between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean." Profane means common, ordinary, not set apart for God. The priests had to know the difference and keep it. Second, "to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken." The priests were Israel's Bible teachers (Malachi 2:7). The rest of Leviticus, starting in chapter 11, will teach exactly these differences between clean and unclean.

Paul says, "do not be drunk with wine, in which is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). Anyone who leads God's people needs a clear head and a pure heart, so that they can tell what is holy from what is common and teach others to do the same.

10:12-15 *And Moses spoke to Aaron and to Eleazar and to Ithamar, his sons who were left, "Take the grain offering that is left from the fire offerings of the LORD, and eat it **as** unleavened bread beside the altar, for it **is** a holy of holies. And you shall eat it in a holy place, for it **is** your due and the due of your sons from the fire offerings of the LORD; for so I have been commanded. And the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the contribution you shall eat in a clean place, you and your sons and your daughters with you; for **as** your due and the due of your sons they have been given from the sacrifices of the peace offerings of the sons of Israel. The thigh of the contribution and the breast of the wave offering, with the fire offerings of the fat **portions**, they shall bring to wave **as** a wave offering before the LORD; and it shall be for you and for your sons with you for a due forever, just as the LORD has commanded."*

Moses turned back to the duties left from chapter 9. He told Aaron, Eleazar and Ithamar, "his sons who were left," to eat the grain offering beside the altar, "for it is a holy of holies." They were also to eat the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the contribution from the peace offerings "in a clean place," with their families. This was their due "just as the LORD has commanded."

These are ordinary words after an extraordinary loss. Yet there is grace in them. God did not cast off Aaron's family. The priesthood went on through Eleazar and Ithamar, and they still had their place at God's table.

10:16-18 *And Moses diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and look, it had been burned; and he was angry with Eleazar and with Ithamar, the sons of Aaron who were left, saying, "Why did you not eat the sin offering in the place of holiness? For it **is** a holy of holies, and He has given it to you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD. Look, its blood was not brought into the holy place within; you should certainly have eaten it in the holy place, just as I commanded."*

"And Moses diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and look, it had been burned." The people's sin offering (9:15) should have been eaten by the priests, because its blood had not been brought inside the tent (6:26, 30). Moses was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar. After what had just happened, he must have been afraid of another failure. "Why did you not eat the sin offering in the place of holiness?" It had been given to them "to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD."

That phrase tells us something about the priest's role. When the priest ate the sin offering, he was in some way carrying the people's guilt as their representative. It is a picture of the true High Priest, who did more than represent us: He "Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24).

10:19-20 *And Aaron spoke to Moses, "Look, today they have brought near their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD, and **things** like these have happened to me; and **if** I had eaten a sin offering today, would it be good in the eyes of the LORD?" And Moses heard, and it was good in his eyes.*

Aaron answered. "Look, today they have brought near their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD, and things like these have happened to me; and if I had eaten a sin offering today, would it be good in the eyes of the LORD?"

Aaron was saying that on the day he lost two sons for dishonoring God, he did not feel fit to eat the most holy food as if nothing had happened. His heart was crushed. He did not want to go through the motions. He was not rebelling against God's command. He was afraid of treating it lightly.

"And Moses heard, and it was good in his eyes." Moses understood. And since God did not rebuke Aaron, it seems God accepted it too. This is a striking end to the chapter. Nadab and Abihu acted in pride and were judged. Aaron fell short of the letter of the rule out of humble grief and reverence, and he was accepted. God looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and crushed heart, God, You will not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

What does this chapter teach us now? We do not come to God with fire in a censer. We come through Jesus Christ, the one way God has provided (John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5). That is good news, not a burden. We do not have to invent our own way to God, and we must not. God is holy, and He is to be honored as holy. And God is also gentle with the broken and humble heart. "Let us therefore come with boldness to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help" (Hebrews 4:16). Boldness through Christ, and reverence because He is a consuming fire: both belong together (Hebrews 12:28-29).

Chapter 10 Summary

Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's two oldest sons, offered strange fire before the LORD that He had not commanded, and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them. Moses told Aaron that the LORD said He would be treated as holy by those who come near Him and glorified before all the people, and Aaron was silent. Their cousins carried the bodies outside the camp. Aaron and his remaining sons were told not to show the usual signs of mourning or leave the tent of meeting while the anointing oil was on them, though all Israel would weep. The LORD told Aaron that the priests must not drink wine or strong drink when serving, so that they could tell holy from common and clean from unclean and teach Israel God's statutes. Moses told the priests to eat their portions, but was angry when the people's sin offering had been burned instead of eaten. Aaron explained that after such a day he could not eat it rightly, and Moses accepted his answer.

Chapter 10 Study Questions

1. What did Nadab and Abihu do, and what does the text say was wrong with it? (10:1)

2. What happened to them, and how does this fire compare with the fire in 9:24? (10:2)

3. What did the LORD say about those who come near Him? (10:3)

4. How did Aaron respond, and what do you think his silence meant? (10:3)

5. Why were Aaron and his sons told not to mourn in the usual way, and who was told to weep? (10:6-7)

6. What two things did God tell Aaron the priests must do with clear minds? (10:9-11)

7. Why was Moses angry about the sin offering, and how did Aaron answer him? (10:16-20)

8. Why do you think God judged Nadab and Abihu so severely on the first day of the priesthood? How do Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:7) and Ananias (Acts 5:1-11) fit the same pattern?

9. In what ways might people today try to come to God in their own way rather than His?

10. Hebrews 4:16 calls us to come boldly, and Hebrews 12:28-29 calls us to come with reverence. How can you hold both together in your prayer and worship?

Chapter 11: Clean and Unclean Animals

Scripture

11:1-23 And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying to them, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'This ***is*** the living thing which you may eat from all the animals which ***are*** on the earth. Everything that divides a hoof and cleaves a cleft of hooves, bringing up cud, among the animals, it you may eat. Only this you shall not eat, of those that bring up the cud and of those that divide the hoof: the camel, for it brings up cud, and a hoof it does not divide; it ***is*** unclean to you. And the rock badger, for it brings up cud, and a hoof it does not divide; it ***is*** unclean to you. And the hare, for it brings up cud, and a hoof it does not divide; it ***is*** unclean to you. And the pig, for it divides a hoof and cleaves a cleft of ***the*** hoof, and it does not chew cud; it ***is*** unclean to you. Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcass you shall not touch; they ***are*** unclean to you. This you may eat of all that ***is*** in the waters: all that has fins and scales in the waters, in the seas and in the streams, them you may eat. And all that does not have fins and scales in the seas and in the streams, of every swarming thing of the waters and of every living being which ***is*** in the waters, they ***are*** a detestable thing to you. And they shall be a detestable thing to you; of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcass you shall detest. All that does not have fins and scales in the waters, it ***is*** a detestable thing to you. And these you shall detest among the birds; they shall not be eaten; they ***are*** a detestable thing: the eagle and the bearded vulture and the osprey, and the black kite and the hawk according to its kind, every raven according to its kind, and the ostrich and the screech owl and the gull and the falcon according to its kind, and the little owl and the cormorant and the great owl, and the barn owl and the desert owl and the Egyptian vulture, and the stork, the heron according to its kind, and the hoopoe and the bat. Every flying swarming thing that walks on four ***legs***, it ***is*** a detestable thing to you. Only this you may eat of every flying swarming thing that walks on four ***legs***: that which has legs above its feet, to leap with them on the earth. These of them you may eat: the locust according to its kind, and the bald locust according to its kind, and the cricket according to its kind, and the grasshopper according to its kind. And every flying swarming thing which has four feet, it ***is*** a detestable thing to you.

11:24-47 And by these you shall make yourselves unclean: everyone who touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening. And everyone who carries any of their carcass shall wash his garments, and he shall be unclean until the evening. As to every animal which divides a hoof and does not cleave a cleft, and does not bring up cud, they ***are*** unclean to you; everyone who touches them shall be unclean. And everything that walks on its paws, among every living thing that walks on four ***feet***, they ***are*** unclean to you; everyone who touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening. And the one who carries their carcass shall wash his garments, and he shall be unclean until the evening; they ***are*** unclean to you. And this ***is*** the unclean to you among the swarming things that swarm on the earth: the weasel and the mouse and the great lizard according to its kind, and the gecko and the monitor lizard and the wall lizard and the skink and the chameleon. These ***are*** the unclean to you among all the swarming things; everyone who touches them in their death shall be unclean until the evening. And everything on which any of them falls in their death shall be unclean, ***whether*** any vessel of wood or garment or hide or sack; any vessel with which work is done shall be brought into water, and it shall be unclean until the

evening, and it shall be clean. And every earthenware vessel into whose midst any of them falls, all that ***is*** in its midst shall be unclean, and it you shall break. Any of all the food which may be eaten, on which water comes, shall be unclean; and any drink which may be drunk in any vessel shall be unclean. And everything on which any of their carcass falls shall be unclean; an oven and a stove shall be broken down; they ***are*** unclean, and they shall be unclean to you. Only a spring and a cistern, a gathering of water, shall be clean; and the one who touches their carcass shall be unclean. And if any of their carcass falls on any seed for sowing which is sown, it ***is*** clean. And if water is put on ***the*** seed, and any of their carcass falls on it, it ***is*** unclean to you. And if any of the animals which ***is*** yours for food dies, the one who touches its carcass shall be unclean until the evening. And the one who eats of its carcass shall wash his garments, and he shall be unclean until the evening; and the one who carries its carcass shall wash his garments, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And every swarming thing that swarms on the earth ***is*** a detestable thing; it shall not be eaten. Anything that walks on ***the*** belly, and anything that walks on four ***feet***, up to anything that has many feet, of all the swarming things that swarm on the earth, you shall not eat them, for they ***are*** a detestable thing. Do not make your souls detestable with any swarming thing that swarms, and you shall not make yourselves unclean with them, and thus be made unclean by them. For I ***am*** the LORD your God; and you shall sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy, for I ***am*** holy; and you shall not make your souls unclean with any swarming thing that moves on the earth. For I ***am*** the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be God for you; and you shall be holy, for I ***am*** holy. This ***is*** the law of the animals and the birds and every living being that moves in the waters, and of every being that swarms on the earth, to separate between the unclean and the clean, and between the living thing that may be eaten and the living thing that may not be eaten.'"

Chapter 11 Preview

In chapter 10 God told the priests to "separate between the unclean and the clean" and to teach Israel His statutes (10:10-11). Chapters 11 to 15 now give those lessons, starting with food. Chapter 11 lists which land animals, water creatures, birds and insects Israel could eat, and which they could not. It also explains how touching the dead body of an unclean animal made a person unclean until evening.

The chapter ends with the reason behind it all: "you shall be holy, for I am holy." These laws marked Israel off from the nations around them, every day, at every meal. Jesus later declared all foods clean (Mark 7:19), so Christians are not under these food laws. But the lesson stays: God's people are to be different, set apart for Him, in the ordinary parts of life as well as in worship.

Chapter 11 Study

11:1-8 *And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying to them, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'This **is** the living thing which you may eat from all the animals which **are** on the earth. Everything that divides a hoof and cleaves a cleft of hooves, bringing up cud, among the animals, it you may eat. Only this you shall not eat, of those that bring up the cud and of those that divide the hoof: the camel, for it brings up cud, and a hoof it does not divide; it **is** unclean to you. And the rock badger, for it brings up cud, and a hoof it does not divide; it **is** unclean to you. And the hare, for it brings up cud, and a hoof it does not divide; it **is** unclean to you. And the pig, for it divides a hoof and cleaves a cleft of **the** hoof, and it does not chew cud; it **is** unclean to you. Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcass you shall not touch; they **are** unclean to you.*

"And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron." Aaron is included because the priests would teach these laws. First come the land animals. An animal that "divides a hoof and cleaves a cleft of hooves," which means it has a split hoof, and that brings up the cud, could be eaten. Cattle, sheep, goats and deer fit that description.

Four animals are named that have only one of the two marks. The camel, the rock badger and the hare were described as bringing up cud without a divided hoof. The pig has a divided hoof but "does not chew cud." Each is "unclean to you." Israel was not to eat their meat or touch their dead bodies.

What do clean and unclean mean? In Leviticus they do not mean dirty or sinful in themselves. Clean meant fit to come near God's presence, or fit for God's people to eat. Unclean meant unfit, and anyone who became unclean could not come to the tabernacle until he was made clean again. Most uncleanness came from ordinary life, not from sin.

Someone might ask whether the hare really chews the cud. The Hebrew phrase describes what people saw, an animal that keeps working its jaw as if chewing. Rabbits and hares also eat part of their food a second time, though not the way cattle do. Scripture describes animals by how they appear, not by modern scientific categories.

11:9-12 *This you may eat of all that **is** in the waters: all that has fins and scales in the waters, in the seas and in the streams, them you may eat. And all that does not have fins and scales in the seas and in the streams, of every swarming thing of the waters and of every living being which **is** in the waters, they **are** a detestable thing to you. And they shall be a detestable thing to you; of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcass you shall detest. All that does not have fins and scales in the waters, it **is** a detestable thing to you.*

In the waters, "all that has fins and scales" could be eaten. Anything without fins and scales, such as shellfish, eels and many others, was "a detestable thing to you." The word detestable is strong. Israel was taught to look at these creatures with a settled dislike, at least as food.

God gave a simple test anyone could use. A fisherman did not need a priest to look at every catch. He could check for fins and scales himself. Holiness was meant to be part of everyday life, right down to the dinner table.

11:13-19 *And these you shall detest among the birds; they shall not be eaten; they **are** a detestable thing: the eagle and the bearded vulture and the osprey, and the black kite and the hawk according to its kind, every raven according to its kind, and the ostrich and the screech owl and the gull and the falcon according to its kind, and the little owl and the cormorant and the great owl, and the barn owl and the desert owl and the Egyptian vulture, and the stork, the heron according to its kind, and the hoopoe and the bat.*

For birds, God gives a list of the ones Israel must not eat. Most of them are birds of prey or scavengers: the eagle, vultures, the kite and the hawk, the raven, owls, the gull, the cormorant, the stork, the heron and the hoopoe. "The bat" is listed too, since the Hebrew word for bird means any flying creature. Some of these Hebrew names are hard to identify today, so different Bibles name some of them differently.

Many of these birds eat dead flesh or blood. Israel had been told not to eat blood (3:17; 7:26), so it fits that the creatures who live by it were unclean. Birds not on the list, like doves, pigeons, quail and chickens, could be eaten.

11:20-23 *Every flying swarming thing that walks on four **legs**, it **is** a detestable thing to you. Only this you may eat of every flying swarming thing that walks on four **legs**: that which has legs above its feet, to leap with them on the earth. These of them you may eat: the locust according to its kind, and the bald locust according to its kind, and the cricket according to its kind, and the grasshopper according to its kind. And every flying swarming thing which has four feet, it **is** a detestable thing to you.*

"Every flying swarming thing that walks on four legs" was detestable. This means winged insects that crawl. Walks on four is the ordinary way of speaking of creatures that creep along close to the ground, like we might say a baby crawls on all fours. One group of insects was allowed: those with jointed legs "to leap with them on the earth." The locust, the bald locust, the cricket and the grasshopper could be eaten. John the Baptist lived on "locusts and wild honey" (Mark 1:6).

11:24-28 *And by these you shall make yourselves unclean: everyone who touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening. And everyone who carries any of their carcass shall wash his garments, and he shall be unclean until the evening. As to every animal which divides a hoof and does not cleave a cleft, and does not bring up cud, they **are** unclean to you; everyone who touches them shall be unclean. And everything that walks on its paws, among every living thing that walks on four **feet**, they **are** unclean to you; everyone who touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening. And the one who carries their carcass shall wash his garments, and he shall be unclean until the evening; they **are** unclean to you.*

Now the chapter turns from eating to touching. "Everyone who touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening." A carcass is a dead body. Anyone who carried one had to wash his clothes and was unclean until evening. This applied to animals without a split hoof or that did not chew cud, and to animals that walk "on its paws," like dogs, cats, bears and lions.

Being unclean until evening was not a punishment for sin. It was a short break from coming near the holy things. At sundown the person was clean again. Death, even the death of an animal, was

the opposite of the life of the holy God. Every time an Israelite washed after touching something dead, he was reminded that death is an intruder in God's world, the result of sin (Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12).

11:29-38 *And this **is** the unclean to you among the swarming things that swarm on the earth: the weasel and the mouse and the great lizard according to its kind, and the gecko and the monitor lizard and the wall lizard and the skink and the chameleon. These **are** the unclean to you among all the swarming things; everyone who touches them in their death shall be unclean until the evening. And everything on which any of them falls in their death shall be unclean, **whether** any vessel of wood or garment or hide or sack; any vessel with which work is done shall be brought into water, and it shall be unclean until the evening, and it shall be clean. And every earthenware vessel into whose midst any of them falls, all that **is** in its midst shall be unclean, and it you shall break. Any of all the food which may be eaten, on which water comes, shall be unclean; and any drink which may be drunk in any vessel shall be unclean. And everything on which any of their carcass falls shall be unclean; an oven and a stove shall be broken down; they **are** unclean, and they shall be unclean to you. Only a spring and a cistern, a gathering of water, shall be clean; and the one who touches their carcass shall be unclean. And if any of their carcass falls on any seed for sowing which is sown, it **is** clean. And if water is put on **the** seed, and any of their carcass falls on it, it **is** unclean to you.*

"And this is the unclean to you among the swarming things that swarm on the earth": the weasel, the mouse, and several kinds of lizards. These small creatures got into houses, pots and food. So God gave rules for what happened when one of them died and fell on something.

A wooden bowl, a garment, a piece of leather or a sack had to be washed and stayed unclean until evening. A clay pot had to be broken, since it soaked up what touched it. Food or drink that had water on it and then was touched became unclean. An oven or stove had to be broken down. But "a spring and a cistern, a gathering of water, shall be clean," and dry seed for planting stayed clean. Wet seed did not.

These rules had real health benefits in a world without refrigerators or soap as we know it. Many have pointed this out. But health was not the main reason God gave. The reason, given at the end of the chapter, is holiness.

11:39-40 *And if any of the animals which **is** yours for food dies, the one who touches its carcass shall be unclean until the evening. And the one who eats of its carcass shall wash his garments, and he shall be unclean until the evening; and the one who carries its carcass shall wash his garments, and he shall be unclean until the evening.*

Even a clean animal used for food made a person unclean if it "dies" on its own. Whoever touched its carcass was unclean until evening. Whoever ate from it or carried it had to wash his clothes and was unclean until evening. The point is the same. Death defiles. Life belongs to God.

11:41-45 *And every swarming thing that swarms on the earth **is** a detestable thing; it shall not be eaten. Anything that walks on **the** belly, and anything that walks on four **feet**, up to anything that has many feet, of all the swarming things that swarm on the earth, you shall not eat them, for they **are** a detestable thing. Do not make your souls detestable with any swarming thing that swarms, and you shall not make yourselves unclean with them, and thus be made unclean by them. For I **am** the LORD your God; and you shall sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy, for I **am** holy; and you shall not make your souls unclean with any swarming thing that moves on the earth. For I **am** the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be God for you; and you shall be holy, for I **am** holy.*

"Every swarming thing that swarms on the earth is a detestable thing." Anything that crawls on its belly, walks on all fours close to the ground, or has many feet was not to be eaten. "Do not make your souls detestable with any swarming thing that swarms."

Then God gives the reason for the whole chapter: "For I am the LORD your God; and you shall sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy, for I am holy." And again: "For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be God for you; and you shall be holy, for I am holy."

God saved Israel out of Egypt first. Then He called them to be holy. Their food laws did not make them God's people. They showed they already were. At every meal, an Israelite was reminded that he belonged to the LORD, who had set him apart.

Peter quotes these words to the church: "as the One who called you is holy, you yourselves also be holy in all your conduct," and he gives the reason from Leviticus: "Be holy, because I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16). The food laws are gone, but the call to holiness is not.

11:46-47 *This **is** the law of the animals and the birds and every living being that moves in the waters, and of every being that swarms on the earth, to separate between the unclean and the clean, and between the living thing that may be eaten and the living thing that may not be eaten.'"*

"This is the law of the animals and the birds and every living being," given "to separate between the unclean and the clean." Israel had to learn to make distinctions. The world says everything is the same. God says some things are holy and some are not, and His people must learn the difference.

How did Christ fulfill these laws? Jesus taught that "Not what enters into the mouth defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth" (Matthew 15:11). Mark adds that in saying this He was "cleansing all the foods" (Mark 7:19). God showed Peter a sheet full of unclean animals and said, "What God has cleansed, you must not call common" (Acts 10:15). That vision was really about the Gentiles. The food laws had helped keep Israel separate from the nations. Now, in Christ, Jews and Gentiles are brought together in one body (Ephesians 2:14-16). Paul says these laws were "a shadow of the things coming, but the body is of Christ" (Colossians 2:16-17).

What does this teach us now? We are free to eat any food with thanks (1 Timothy 4:4-5). But we are still called to be different from the world, not by what we eat, but by how we live. Is there any

part of your daily life where you look exactly like everyone around you, when God has called you to be set apart?

Chapter 11 Summary

God gave Moses and Aaron the laws of clean and unclean animals. Land animals with a split hoof that chew the cud could be eaten, but not the camel, rock badger, hare or pig. Water creatures with fins and scales could be eaten. Birds of prey and scavengers, along with the bat, could not. Winged insects that crawl were forbidden except locusts, crickets and grasshoppers. Touching or carrying the carcass of an unclean animal, or of a clean animal that died on its own, made a person unclean until evening, and small creatures that died on pots, food or clothing made them unclean. The reason was holiness: the LORD who brought Israel out of Egypt called them to be holy because He is holy. Jesus later declared all foods clean, but the call to be a holy people still stands for us.

Chapter 11 Study Questions

1. Why were Moses and Aaron both given these laws? (11:1; 10:10-11)

2. What two marks made a land animal clean to eat? (11:3)

3. What was the test for creatures in the water? (11:9)

4. What kinds of insects could Israel eat? (11:21-22)

5. How long was a person unclean after touching a dead unclean animal, and what did he have to do? (11:24-25)

6. What reason does God give for these laws in verses 44 and 45? (11:44-45)

7. What does it mean that God saved Israel from Egypt before He gave them these laws? (11:45)

8. How do Mark 7:19 and Acts 10:15 show what happened to the food laws in Christ?

9. 1 Peter 1:15-16 quotes Leviticus 11. What does holiness look like in your conduct this week?

10. Where in your daily life do you find it hardest to be different from the world around you?

Chapter 12: Cleansing After Childbirth

Scripture

12:1-8 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'When a woman conceives seed and bears a male, then she shall be unclean seven days; like the days of the impurity of her infirmity she shall be unclean. And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. And thirty-three days she shall remain in the blood of purification; she shall not touch any holy thing, and she shall not go into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are completed. And if she bears a female, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as ***in*** her impurity; and sixty-six days she shall remain in the blood of purification. And when the days of her purification are completed, for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb, a son of its year, for a burnt offering, and a young ***one*** of the dove or a turtledove for a sin offering, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, to the priest. And he shall bring it near before the LORD, and he shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean from the source of her blood. This ***is*** the law of her who gives birth, for the male or for the female. And if her hand does not find the sufficiency of a sheep, then she shall take two turtledoves or two young of the dove, one for a burnt offering and one for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean.'"

Chapter 12 Preview

Chapter 12 is short, only eight verses. It deals with a mother after she gives birth. For a time she was ceremonially unclean because of the bleeding that follows childbirth, and she could not touch holy things or come to the sanctuary. At the end of that time she brought a burnt offering and a sin offering, and the priest made atonement for her, and she was clean. If she could not afford a lamb, she could bring two birds.

This chapter can raise questions, especially why the time was longer for a daughter than for a son. We will be honest about what Scripture says and what it does not. We will also see a tender link to the Gospels: Mary, the mother of Jesus, kept this very law after His birth, and she brought the offering of the poor.

Chapter 12 Study

12:1-2 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'When a woman conceives seed and bears a male, then she shall be unclean seven days; like the days of the impurity of her infirmity she shall be unclean.*

"When a woman conceives seed and bears a male, then she shall be unclean seven days; like the days of the impurity of her infirmity she shall be unclean." The time was the same as for a woman's monthly period (15:19).

Let me be clear here. Being unclean was not a sin. Having a baby is not a sin. God's first command to mankind was to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28), and children are a gift from the LORD (Psalm 127:3). The uncleanness came from the flow of blood after birth. In Leviticus, blood is the

life (17:11), and the loss of blood, like contact with death, made a person unfit for a time to come into the presence of the God of life. It was a ritual matter, not a moral one.

There was also kindness in this law. A new mother was not expected to travel to the tabernacle or carry out duties at the sanctuary. She was given time to rest and recover with her baby.

12:3 *And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.*

"And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised." Circumcision was the sign of God's covenant with Abraham, given generations before (Genesis 17:10-12). Every Israelite boy received it on the eighth day.

This verse sits right in the middle of the laws about the mother. The baby boy was brought into the covenant people even while his mother was still in her days of purification. Jesus Himself was circumcised on the eighth day and given His name (Luke 2:21). Paul teaches that the true circumcision now is of the heart, done by the Spirit (Romans 2:29; Colossians 2:11).

12:4-5 *And thirty-three days she shall remain in the blood of purification; she shall not touch any holy thing, and she shall not go into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are completed. And if she bears a female, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as **in** her impurity; and sixty-six days she shall remain in the blood of purification.*

After the first seven days, the mother waited "thirty-three days" more "in the blood of purification." During this time she was no longer unclean in the same way, but "she shall not touch any holy thing, and she shall not go into the sanctuary" until her days of purification were completed. The total was forty days.

For a daughter, the times were doubled: "two weeks," then "sixty-six days," for a total of eighty days.

Why the difference? Scripture does not tell us. Many explanations have been offered. Some suggest it was tied to the fact that a daughter would one day bear children herself. Others point out that a baby girl sometimes has a small flow of blood in her first days, so both mother and daughter were included. Others connect it with Eve and Genesis 3:16. What we can say firmly is that it does not mean a daughter was worth less in God's eyes. The offering at the end was exactly the same for a son or a daughter (12:6), and both were made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). In Christ "there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

12:6-7 *And when the days of her purification are completed, for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb, a son of its year, for a burnt offering, and a young **one** of the dove or a turtledove for a sin offering, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, to the priest. And he shall bring it near before the LORD, and he shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean from the source of her blood. This **is** the law of her who gives birth, for the male or for the female.*

"And when the days of her purification are completed, for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb, a son of its year, for a burnt offering, and a young one of the dove or a turtledove for a sin offering." A son of its year means a lamb in its first year.

Why a sin offering when she had not sinned? Here the sin offering worked as a purification offering. It cleansed her from the uncleanness, so she could come back to the sanctuary. It also reminded every family that each new life came into a fallen world, in need of God's grace (Psalm 51:5).

The burnt offering was her gift of herself to God, and likely a gift of thanks for the safe birth of her child. "And he shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean from the source of her blood." Her return to worship was a joyful one.

12:8 *And if her hand does not find the sufficiency of a sheep, then she shall take two turtledoves or two young of the dove, one for a burnt offering and one for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean.'"*

"And if her hand does not find the sufficiency of a sheep, then she shall take two turtledoves or two young of the dove, one for a burnt offering and one for a sin offering."

This is the verse Luke quotes in the story of Jesus' birth. When the forty days were complete, Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem, "to give a sacrifice according to what has been said in the law of the Lord," which was "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons" (Luke 2:22-24). Mary and Joseph could not afford a lamb. The Son of God was born into a poor family.

Think about it. Mary brought two birds because she had no lamb. But in her arms was the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Every offering ever made in the temple pointed to the Child she was holding.

What does this chapter teach us now? We are not under these purity laws. Christ has fulfilled them. But they still teach us that childbirth is a holy moment in God's sight, that new mothers deserve care and rest, that every child needs God's grace, and that God makes room for the poor at His altar. They also show us that Jesus, the Son of God, was "born of a woman, born under law" (Galatians 4:4), and kept the Law perfectly for us.

Chapter 12 Summary

After giving birth to a son, a woman was unclean for seven days, and the boy was circumcised on the eighth day. She then waited thirty-three days more before she could touch holy things or enter the sanctuary. After a daughter, the times were fourteen days and sixty-six days. When her days were complete, she brought a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a dove or turtledove for a sin offering, and the priest made atonement for her and she was clean. If she could not afford a lamb, she could bring two birds. This uncleanness was not sin, and the offering was the same for a son or a daughter. Mary kept this law after Jesus was born, bringing the offering of the poor while holding the Lamb of God in her arms.

Chapter 12 Study Questions

1. How long was a mother unclean after the birth of a son, and what was this compared to? (12:2)

2. What happened to a baby boy on the eighth day, and what did it mean? (12:3; Genesis 17:10-12)

3. What could a mother not do during her days of purification? (12:4)

4. How were the times different for a daughter, and what stayed the same? (12:5-6)

5. What two offerings did the mother bring at the end of her purification? (12:6)

6. What could a poor mother bring instead of a lamb? (12:8)

7. Why is it important to understand that being unclean here was not the same as sinning?

8. According to Luke 2:22-24, what did Mary and Joseph offer, and what does that tell you about their family?

9. How does it encourage you that God made room for the poor at His altar?

10. How can your church care well for new mothers and families, and for those who long for children and grieve?

Chapter 13: Leprosy in People and Clothing

Scripture

13:1-17 And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, "When a man has in the skin of his flesh a swelling or a scab or a bright spot, and it becomes in the skin of his flesh a plague of leprosy, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests. And the priest shall look at the plague in the skin of the flesh; and ***if*** the hair in the plague has turned white, and the appearance of the plague ***is*** deeper than the skin of his flesh, it ***is*** a plague of leprosy; and the priest shall look at him and pronounce him unclean. And if the bright spot ***is*** white in the skin of his flesh, and its appearance ***is*** not deeper than the skin, and its hair has not turned white, then the priest shall shut in ***the one with*** the plague seven days. And the priest shall look at him on the seventh day, and look, ***if*** in his eyes the plague has stood, ***and*** the plague has not spread in the skin, then the priest shall shut him in a second seven days. And the priest shall look at him on the seventh day a second time, and look, ***if*** the plague has grown dim and the plague has not spread in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean; it ***is*** an eruption; and he shall wash his garments and be clean. And if the eruption surely spreads in the skin after he has appeared to the priest for his cleansing, then he shall appear a second time to the priest. And the priest shall look, and look, ***if*** the eruption has spread in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it ***is*** leprosy. "When a plague of leprosy is on a man, then he shall be brought to the priest. And the priest shall look, and look, ***if there is*** a white swelling in the skin, and it has turned the hair white, and ***there is*** a raw spot of living flesh in the swelling, it ***is*** an old leprosy in the skin of his flesh, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean; he shall not shut him in, for he ***is*** unclean. And if the leprosy surely breaks out in the skin, and the leprosy covers all the skin of ***the one with*** the plague from his head even to his feet, to all the sight of the eyes of the priest, then the priest shall look, and look, ***if*** the leprosy has covered all his flesh, then he shall pronounce clean ***the one with*** the plague; all of it has turned white; he ***is*** clean. And on the day living flesh appears in him, he shall be unclean. And the priest shall look at the living flesh and pronounce him unclean; the living flesh ***is*** unclean; it ***is*** leprosy. Or if the living flesh turns back and is changed to white, then he shall come to the priest. And the priest shall look at him, and look, ***if*** the plague has been changed to white, then the priest shall pronounce clean ***the one with*** the plague; he ***is*** clean.

13:18-37 "And ***when*** the flesh has in it, in its skin, a boil, and it has been healed, and in the place of the boil there is a white swelling or a reddish-white bright spot, then it shall appear to the priest. And the priest shall look, and look, ***if*** its appearance ***is*** lower than the skin, and its hair has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it ***is*** a plague of leprosy; it has broken out in the boil. And if the priest looks at it, and look, ***there is*** no white hair in it, and it ***is*** not lower than the skin, and it ***is*** dim, then the priest shall shut him in seven days. And if it surely spreads in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it ***is*** a plague. And if the bright spot stands in its place ***and*** has not spread, it ***is*** the scar of the boil; and the priest shall pronounce him clean. "Or ***when*** the flesh has in its skin a burn of fire, and the raw spot of the burn becomes a bright spot, reddish-white or white, then the priest shall look at it, and look, ***if*** the hair in the bright spot has been changed to white, and its appearance ***is*** deeper than the skin, it ***is*** leprosy; it has broken

out in the burn; and the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it ***is*** a plague of leprosy. And if the priest looks at it, and look, ***there is*** no white hair in the bright spot, and it ***is*** not lower than the skin, and it ***is*** dim, then the priest shall shut him in seven days. And the priest shall look at him on the seventh day; if it surely spreads in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it ***is*** a plague of leprosy. And if the bright spot stands in its place ***and*** has not spread in the skin, and it ***is*** dim, it ***is*** the swelling of the burn; and the priest shall pronounce him clean, for it ***is*** the scar of the burn. "And ***when*** a man or a woman has a plague on the head or on the beard, then the priest shall look at the plague, and look, ***if*** its appearance ***is*** deeper than the skin, and in it ***is*** thin yellow hair, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it ***is*** a scaly patch; it ***is*** leprosy of the head or of the beard. And if the priest looks at the plague of the scaly patch, and look, its appearance ***is*** not deeper than the skin, and ***there is*** no black hair in it, then the priest shall shut in ***the one with*** the plague of the scaly patch seven days. And the priest shall look at the plague on the seventh day, and look, ***if*** the scaly patch has not spread, and there is no yellow hair in it, and the appearance of the scaly patch ***is*** not deeper than the skin, then he shall shave himself, but the scaly patch he shall not shave; and the priest shall shut in ***the one with*** the scaly patch a second seven days. And the priest shall look at the scaly patch on the seventh day, and look, ***if*** the scaly patch has not spread in the skin, and its appearance ***is*** not deeper than the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean; and he shall wash his garments and be clean. And if the scaly patch surely spreads in the skin after his cleansing, then the priest shall look at him, and look, ***if*** the scaly patch has spread in the skin, the priest shall not search for the yellow hair; he ***is*** unclean. And if in his eyes the scaly patch has stood, and black hair has sprouted in it, the scaly patch has been healed; he ***is*** clean; and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

13:38-59 "And ***when*** a man or a woman has in the skin of their flesh bright spots, white bright spots, then the priest shall look, and look, ***if*** in the skin of their flesh ***there are*** dim white bright spots, it ***is*** a rash; it has broken out in the skin; he ***is*** clean. "And ***when*** a man's head becomes bare, he ***is*** bald; he ***is*** clean. And if his head becomes bare from the side of his face, he ***is*** bald on the forehead; he ***is*** clean. And if there is on the bald head or on the bald forehead a reddish-white plague, it ***is*** leprosy breaking out on his bald head or on his bald forehead. And the priest shall look at him, and look, ***if*** the swelling of the plague ***is*** reddish-white on his bald head or on his bald forehead, like the appearance of leprosy of the skin of the flesh, he ***is*** a leprous man; he ***is*** unclean; the priest shall surely pronounce him unclean; his plague ***is*** on his head. "And the leper in whom the plague ***is***, his garments shall be torn, and ***the hair of*** his head shall be let loose, and he shall cover over ***his*** mustache, and he shall call out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' All the days that the plague ***is*** in him he shall be unclean; he ***is*** unclean; he shall dwell alone; his dwelling ***shall be*** outside the camp. "And ***when*** the garment has in it a plague of leprosy, in a garment of wool or in a garment of linen, or in warp or in weft, of linen or of wool, or in leather or in any work of leather, and the plague is greenish or reddish in the garment or in the leather or in the warp or in the weft or in any article of leather, it ***is*** a plague of leprosy, and it shall be shown to the priest. And the priest shall look at the plague and shut in the plague seven days. And he shall look at the plague on the seventh day; if the plague has spread in the garment or in the warp or in the weft or in the leather, for all that the leather is made into for work, the plague ***is*** a malignant leprosy; it ***is*** unclean. And he shall burn the garment or the warp or the weft, in wool or in linen, or any article of leather in which the plague is, for it ***is*** a malignant leprosy; it shall be burned in the fire. And if

the priest looks, and look, the plague has not spread in the garment or in the warp or in the weft or in any article of leather, then the priest shall command, and they shall wash ***that*** in which the plague ***is***, and he shall shut it in a second seven days. And the priest shall look after the plague has been washed, and look, ***if*** the plague has not changed its appearance, and the plague has not spread, it ***is*** unclean; you shall burn it in the fire; it ***is*** a corrosion on its bald back or on its bald front. And if the priest looks, and look, the plague has grown dim after it has been washed, then he shall tear it out of the garment or out of the leather or out of the warp or out of the weft. And if it appears again in the garment or in the warp or in the weft or in any article of leather, it ***is*** breaking out; you shall burn in the fire ***that*** in which the plague ***is***. And the garment or the warp or the weft or any article of leather which you wash, and the plague departs from them, then it shall be washed a second time, and it shall be clean. This ***is*** the law of the plague of leprosy of a garment of wool or of linen, or the warp or the weft, or any article of leather, to pronounce it clean or to pronounce it unclean."

Chapter 13 Preview

Chapter 13 is a long and detailed chapter about "a plague of leprosy," a skin disease that made a person unclean. The priest acted as an inspector. He looked at swellings, spots, boils, burns, and patches on the head or beard, checked whether the hair had turned white and whether the sore went deeper than the skin, and decided whether the person was clean or unclean. If he could not tell, he shut the person away for seven days and looked again.

A person declared leprous had to tear his clothes, cover his mouth, call out "Unclean! Unclean!" and live alone outside the camp. The chapter ends with the same kind of "leprosy" in clothing and leather, a spreading mold or mildew that had to be washed or burned. Much of the chapter repeats the same steps for different cases, so we will move through it in larger sections. We will also see how lonely this life was, and how Jesus reached out and touched lepers and made them clean.

Chapter 13 Study

13:1-3 *And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, "When a man has in the skin of his flesh a swelling or a scab or a bright spot, and it becomes in the skin of his flesh a plague of leprosy, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests. And the priest shall look at the plague in the skin of the flesh; and* ***if*** *the hair in the plague has turned white, and the appearance of the plague* ***is*** *deeper than the skin of his flesh, it* ***is*** *a plague of leprosy; and the priest shall look at him and pronounce him unclean.*

"And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron." The priests were the ones who had to judge these cases. A person with "a swelling or a scab or a bright spot" on his skin was brought to "Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests."

The Hebrew word translated leprosy is tsara'at. It covered a range of skin diseases, and even mold on cloth or on the walls of a house (14:33-53). It is not the same as what doctors today call leprosy, Hansen's disease, though that disease may have been among them. The marks described here,

white hair and a sore "deeper than the skin," do not match Hansen's disease closely. So when we read leprosy in Leviticus, we should think of a serious, spreading skin disease that made a person unclean.

The priest was not a doctor. He did not treat the disease. His job was to decide whether the person was clean or unclean, fit or unfit to live in the camp and come near God's tabernacle. If the hair in the sore had turned white and the sore went deeper than the skin, "the priest shall look at him and pronounce him unclean."

13:4-8 *And if the bright spot **is** white in the skin of his flesh, and its appearance **is** not deeper than the skin, and its hair has not turned white, then the priest shall shut in **the one with** the plague seven days. And the priest shall look at him on the seventh day, and look, **if** in his eyes the plague has stood, **and** the plague has not spread in the skin, then the priest shall shut him in a second seven days. And the priest shall look at him on the seventh day a second time, and look, **if** the plague has grown dim and the plague has not spread in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean; it **is** an eruption; and he shall wash his garments and be clean. And if the eruption surely spreads in the skin after he has appeared to the priest for his cleansing, then he shall appear a second time to the priest. And the priest shall look, and look, **if** the eruption has spread in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it **is** leprosy.*

If the spot was white but not deeper than the skin and the hair had not turned white, the priest could not be sure. So he would "shut in the one with the plague seven days." This was a quarantine, a time set apart to wait and see. On the seventh day he looked again. If it had not spread, he waited another seven days. If by then "the plague has grown dim and the plague has not spread," it was only "an eruption," a rash. The person washed his clothes and was clean.

But if it spread later, he came back to the priest, and if it had spread, it was leprosy.

These rules were careful and patient. No one was to be declared unclean on a guess. The priest looked, waited, and looked again. That is a good lesson for us when we judge others. Be slow, careful, and fair. Do not put someone outside the camp on first appearances.

13:9-17 *"When a plague of leprosy is on a man, then he shall be brought to the priest. And the priest shall look, and look,* ***if there is*** *a white swelling in the skin, and it has turned the hair white, and* ***there is*** *a raw spot of living flesh in the swelling, it* ***is*** *an old leprosy in the skin of his flesh, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean; he shall not shut him in, for he* ***is*** *unclean. And if the leprosy surely breaks out in the skin, and the leprosy covers all the skin of* ***the one with*** *the plague from his head even to his feet, to all the sight of the eyes of the priest, then the priest shall look, and look,* ***if*** *the leprosy has covered all his flesh, then he shall pronounce clean* ***the one with*** *the plague; all of it has turned white; he* ***is*** *clean. And on the day living flesh appears in him, he shall be unclean. And the priest shall look at the living flesh and pronounce him unclean; the living flesh* ***is*** *unclean; it* ***is*** *leprosy. Or if the living flesh turns back and is changed to white, then he shall come to the priest. And the priest shall look at him, and look,* ***if*** *the plague has been changed to white, then the priest shall pronounce clean* ***the one with*** *the plague; he* ***is*** *clean.*

The next case is a white swelling with white hair and "a raw spot of living flesh," an open sore. That was "an old leprosy," clearly established. The priest did not need to wait. "He shall not shut him in, for he is unclean."

Then comes a surprising rule. If the leprosy "has covered all his flesh" from head to foot, and "all of it has turned white," then "he is clean." Why would a person covered in white be clean? It seems the disease had run its course. The skin had healed over and was no longer open or spreading. But if raw flesh appeared again, he was unclean. If it turned white again, he was clean.

The open, raw flesh was the mark of uncleanness. A disease still active and spreading kept a person out. A disease that had finished its work and healed over did not.

13:18-28 *"And **when** the flesh has in it, in its skin, a boil, and it has been healed, and in the place of the boil there is a white swelling or a reddish-white bright spot, then it shall appear to the priest. And the priest shall look, and look, **if** its appearance **is** lower than the skin, and its hair has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it **is** a plague of leprosy; it has broken out in the boil. And if the priest looks at it, and look, **there is** no white hair in it, and it **is** not lower than the skin, and it **is** dim, then the priest shall shut him in seven days. And if it surely spreads in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it **is** a plague. And if the bright spot stands in its place **and** has not spread, it **is** the scar of the boil; and the priest shall pronounce him clean. "Or **when** the flesh has in its skin a burn of fire, and the raw spot of the burn becomes a bright spot, reddish-white or white, then the priest shall look at it, and look, **if** the hair in the bright spot has been changed to white, and its appearance **is** deeper than the skin, it **is** leprosy; it has broken out in the burn; and the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it **is** a plague of leprosy. And if the priest looks at it, and look, **there is** no white hair in the bright spot, and it **is** not lower than the skin, and it **is** dim, then the priest shall shut him in seven days. And the priest shall look at him on the seventh day; if it surely spreads in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it **is** a plague of leprosy. And if the bright spot stands in its place **and** has not spread in the skin, and it **is** dim, it **is** the swelling of the burn; and the priest shall pronounce him clean, for it **is** the scar of the burn.*

Two more cases follow the same pattern. The first is a boil that has healed but leaves "a white swelling or a reddish-white bright spot." The second is a burn that becomes a bright spot. In each case the priest checked the same things: was the hair white, and was the sore lower or "deeper than the skin"? If so, leprosy had "broken out" in the old wound, and the person was unclean. If not, the priest shut him in for seven days. If it spread, he was unclean. If it stayed in place and grew dim, it was only "the scar of the boil" or "the scar of the burn," and he was clean.

The steps repeat on purpose. The priests needed clear rules they could follow every time, so that judgments were fair and the same for everyone. God cared about the health of the camp, and He also cared that no one was put out unjustly.

13:29-37 *"And **when** a man or a woman has a plague on the head or on the beard, then the priest shall look at the plague, and look, **if** its appearance **is** deeper than the skin, and in it **is** thin yellow hair, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it **is** a scaly patch; it **is** leprosy of the head or of the beard. And if the priest looks at the plague of the scaly patch, and look, its appearance **is** not deeper than the skin, and **there is** no black hair in it, then the priest shall shut in **the one with** the plague of the scaly patch seven days. And the priest shall look at the plague on the seventh day, and look, **if** the scaly patch has not spread, and there is no yellow hair in it, and the appearance of the scaly patch **is** not deeper than the skin, then he shall shave himself, but the scaly patch he shall not shave; and the priest shall shut in **the one with** the scaly patch a second seven days. And the priest shall look at the scaly patch on the seventh day, and look, **if** the scaly patch has not spread in the skin, and its appearance **is** not deeper than the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean; and he shall wash his garments and be clean. And if the scaly patch surely spreads in the skin after his cleansing, then the priest shall look at him, and look, **if** the scaly patch has spread in the skin, the priest shall not search for the yellow hair; he **is** unclean. And if in his eyes the scaly patch has stood, and black hair has sprouted in it, the scaly patch has been healed; he **is** clean; and the priest shall pronounce him clean.*

The next case is "a plague on the head or on the beard," for "a man or a woman." Here the signs were a patch deeper than the skin with "thin yellow hair." That was "a scaly patch," leprosy of the head or beard, and the person was unclean.

If it was not clear, the priest shut the person in for seven days. If it had not spread, the person shaved around the patch, leaving the patch itself, and waited another seven days. If it still had not spread, he was clean and washed his clothes. If it spread later, he was unclean, and the priest did not even need to look for yellow hair. If black hair grew in it, "the scaly patch has been healed; he is clean."

13:38-44 *"And **when** a man or a woman has in the skin of their flesh bright spots, white bright spots, then the priest shall look, and look, **if** in the skin of their flesh **there are** dim white bright spots, it **is** a rash; it has broken out in the skin; he **is** clean. "And **when** a man's head becomes bare, he **is** bald; he **is** clean. And if his head becomes bare from the side of his face, he **is** bald on the forehead; he **is** clean. And if there is on the bald head or on the bald forehead a reddish-white plague, it **is** leprosy breaking out on his bald head or on his bald forehead. And the priest shall look at him, and look, **if** the swelling of the plague **is** reddish-white on his bald head or on his bald forehead, like the appearance of leprosy of the skin of the flesh, he **is** a leprous man; he **is** unclean; the priest shall surely pronounce him unclean; his plague **is** on his head.*

Some things looked like leprosy but were not. "Dim white bright spots" on the skin were only "a rash," and the person was "clean." Baldness, whether on top of the head or on the forehead, was not uncleanness either: "he is bald; he is clean."

But if "a reddish-white plague" appeared on a bald head or bald forehead, looking like leprosy of the skin, then "he is a leprous man; he is unclean." The priest had to tell the difference between what was harmless and what was not. He was not to declare anyone unclean for something ordinary.

13:45-46 *"And the leper in whom the plague **is**, his garments shall be torn, and **the hair of** his head shall be let loose, and he shall cover over **his** mustache, and he shall call out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' All the days that the plague **is** in him he shall be unclean; he **is** unclean; he shall dwell alone; his dwelling **shall be** outside the camp.*

These two verses are the hardest in the chapter. "And the leper in whom the plague is, his garments shall be torn, and the hair of his head shall be let loose, and he shall cover over his mustache, and he shall call out, 'Unclean! Unclean!'" Torn clothes and loose hair were the signs of mourning. Covering the mouth was a sign of shame and grief. He had to warn others away by calling out what he was.

"All the days that the plague is in him he shall be unclean; he is unclean; he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp." He could not live with his family. He could not come to the tabernacle. He lived alone, or with other lepers, outside the camp, for as long as the disease lasted. Miriam spent seven days outside the camp with this disease (Numbers 12:10-15). King Uzziah lived in a separate house until he died, "cut off from the house of the LORD" (2 Chronicles 26:21).

Why so harsh? The rule protected the community from a spreading disease, and it taught Israel that what was unclean could not live near the holy God. Leprosy was not always a punishment for a particular sin. Sometimes it was (Numbers 12; 2 Kings 5:27; 2 Chronicles 26), but most often it was simply sickness in a fallen world. Many Bible teachers have seen in leprosy a picture of sin: it spreads, it defiles, it cuts us off from God and others, and we cannot cure ourselves.

And this is where Jesus comes in. A leper came to Jesus and said, "If You are willing, You are able to cleanse me." And Jesus, "having been moved with compassion, having stretched out His hand, touched him" and said, "I am willing; be cleansed" (Mark 1:40-41). Under the Law, touching a leper made a person unclean. When Jesus touched the leper, the leper became clean. Jesus then sent him to the priest to offer what Moses commanded (Mark 1:44), the offerings we will see in chapter 14. When John the Baptist asked whether Jesus was the One, part of His answer was, "lepers are cleansed" (Matthew 11:5).

Hebrews also says Jesus "suffered outside the gate," and calls us to "go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:12-13). He went to the place of the outcast for us. If you have ever felt like you were outside the camp, He has been there, and He reaches out to you.

13:47-52 *"And **when** the garment has in it a plague of leprosy, in a garment of wool or in a garment of linen, or in warp or in weft, of linen or of wool, or in leather or in any work of leather, and the plague is greenish or reddish in the garment or in the leather or in the warp or in the weft or in any article of leather, it **is** a plague of leprosy, and it shall be shown to the priest. And the priest shall look at the plague and shut in the plague seven days. And he shall look at the plague on the seventh day; if the plague has spread in the garment or in the warp or in the weft or in the leather, for all that the leather is made into for work, the plague **is** a malignant leprosy; it **is** unclean. And he shall burn the garment or the warp or the weft, in wool or in linen, or any article of leather in which the plague is, for it **is** a malignant leprosy; it shall be burned in the fire.*

The last part of the chapter deals with "a plague of leprosy" in a garment of wool or linen, in the warp or the weft, or in leather. A "greenish or reddish" spot was shown to the priest. This was probably a mold or mildew that ate into cloth and leather.

The priest shut it away for seven days. If it had spread, it was "a malignant leprosy," and the item was burned. In a world where clothing was costly and hard to replace, this was a real loss. But a spreading rot could not be kept in the camp.

13:53-59 *And if the priest looks, and look, the plague has not spread in the garment or in the warp or in the weft or in any article of leather, then the priest shall command, and they shall wash **that** in which the plague **is**, and he shall shut it in a second seven days. And the priest shall look after the plague has been washed, and look, **if** the plague has not changed its appearance, and the plague has not spread, it **is** unclean; you shall burn it in the fire; it **is** a corrosion on its bald back or on its bald front. And if the priest looks, and look, the plague has grown dim after it has been washed, then he shall tear it out of the garment or out of the leather or out of the warp or out of the weft. And if it appears again in the garment or in the warp or in the weft or in any article of leather, it **is** breaking out; you shall burn in the fire **that** in which the plague **is**. And the garment or the warp or the weft or any article of leather which you wash, and the plague departs from them, then it shall be washed a second time, and it shall be clean. This **is** the law of the plague of leprosy of a garment of wool or of linen, or the warp or the weft, or any article of leather, to pronounce it clean or to pronounce it unclean."*

If the spot had not spread, the item was washed and shut away another seven days. If the spot still looked the same after washing, even if it had not spread, it was unclean and had to be burned. If it had faded, the priest tore out the spoiled part. If it came back, the whole item was burned. If washing removed it completely, it was washed a second time and was clean. Verse 59 closes the section: "This is the law of the plague of leprosy of a garment."

There is a lesson here about dealing with sin in our lives. Some things can be washed and kept. Some things have to be cut out. And some things, if they keep coming back, must be gotten rid of completely. Jesus said that if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off (Matthew 5:30). He did not mean we should harm our bodies. He meant we must deal with sin seriously, and remove whatever keeps leading us into it. Jude speaks of "hating even the tunic stained by the flesh" (Jude 1:23).

What does this chapter teach us now? We are not under these laws, and our churches do not put the sick outside the camp. Christ has fulfilled the Law of cleansing, and His touch makes the unclean clean. But this chapter teaches us to judge carefully and fairly, to take spreading sin seriously, and to love the outcast the way Jesus did. Who in your life is living outside the camp, and how could you reach out to them?

Chapter 13 Summary

The LORD gave Moses and Aaron the laws for examining leprosy, a serious skin disease that made a person unclean. The priest looked at swellings, spots, boils, burns, and patches on the head or beard, checking whether the hair had turned white or yellow and whether the sore went deeper than the skin. When he was unsure, he shut the person in for seven days, sometimes twice, and looked again. A rash, a healed scar or simple baldness was clean. A person declared leprous had to tear his clothes, let his hair hang loose, cover his mouth, call out "Unclean! Unclean!" and live alone outside the camp. Mold in wool, linen or leather was examined the same way, and the item was washed, cut, or burned. Jesus fulfilled these laws when He touched lepers and made them clean, and He went outside the camp for us.

Sometimes I have felt like I was living outside the camp. It is lonely, and sometimes a feeling of abandonment comes with it. Hebrews 13:12-13 reminds me that Jesus went outside the camp too. When I feel shut out, I am not out there alone.

Chapter 13 Study Questions

1. Who examined a person with a skin disease, and what was his job? (13:2-3)

2. What two signs showed that a sore was leprosy? (13:3)

3. What did the priest do when he was not sure? (13:4-6)

4. What surprising rule is given in verses 12 and 13, and what might it mean? (13:12-13)

5. What things looked like leprosy but were clean? (13:23, 28, 39-41)

6. What did a leper have to do, and where did he have to live? (13:45-46)

7. What happened to a garment with a spreading mold? (13:51-52, 57)

8. What did Jesus do when the leper came to Him in Mark 1:40-41, and why was it so surprising?

9. Have you ever felt like you were living outside the camp? How does Hebrews 13:12-13 speak to that?

10. Is there a sin in your life that needs more than washing, something that needs to be cut out? What would that take?

Chapter 14: The Cleansing of the Leper

Scripture

14:1-20 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "This shall be the law of the leper on the day of his cleansing: he shall be brought to the priest. And the priest shall go out to the outside of the camp, and the priest shall look, and look, ***if*** the plague of leprosy has been healed from the leper, then the priest shall command, and he shall take for the one cleansing himself two living clean birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet of a worm, and hyssop. And the priest shall command, and he shall slaughter the one bird into an earthenware vessel over living water. ***As for*** the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood and the scarlet of the worm and the hyssop, and he shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the living water. And he shall spatter ***it*** on the one cleansing himself from the leprosy seven times, and he shall pronounce him clean, and he shall let the living bird go over the face of the field. And the one cleansing himself shall wash his garments, and shave all his hair, and bathe in water, and he shall be clean. And afterward he shall come into the camp, and he shall dwell outside his tent seven days. And it shall be on the seventh day ***that*** he shall shave all his hair: his head and his beard and the brows of his eyes, even all his hair he shall shave; and he shall wash his garments, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and he shall be clean. "And on the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb, a daughter of its year, without blemish, and approximately 6 quarts (three tenths ***of an ephah***) of fine flour ***for*** a grain offering mixed with oil, and approximately 1/3 quart (one log) of oil. And the priest who pronounces clean shall set the man who is cleansing himself, and them, before the LORD ***at*** the entrance of the tent of meeting. And the priest shall take the one male lamb and bring it near for a guilt offering, and the log of oil, and he shall wave them ***as*** a wave offering before the LORD. And he shall slaughter the male lamb in the place where he slaughters the sin offering and the burnt offering, in the place of holiness; for like the sin offering, the guilt offering ***belongs*** to the priest; it ***is*** a holy of holies. And the priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering, and the priest shall put ***it*** on the lobe of the right ear of the one cleansing himself, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. And the priest shall take some of the log of oil and pour ***it*** on the left palm of the priest. And the priest shall dip his right finger in some of the oil which ***is*** on his left palm, and he shall spatter some of the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD. And some of the rest of the oil which ***is*** on his palm the priest shall put on the lobe of the right ear of the one cleansing himself, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the blood of the guilt offering. And the remainder of the oil which ***is*** on the palm of the priest he shall put on the head of the one cleansing himself; and the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD. And the priest shall offer the sin offering, and he shall make atonement for the one cleansing himself from his uncleanness; and afterward he shall slaughter the burnt offering. And the priest shall offer up the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar; and the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be clean.

14:21-32 "And if he ***is*** poor, and his hand is not attaining ***so much***, then he shall take one male lamb ***as*** a guilt offering for a wave offering, to make atonement for him, and approximately 2 quarts (one tenth ***of an ephah***) of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, and

approximately 1/3 quart (a log) of oil, and two turtledoves or two young of the dove, which his hand attains; and the one shall be a sin offering and the other a burnt offering. And he shall bring them on the eighth day for his cleansing to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, before the LORD. And the priest shall take the male lamb of the guilt offering and the log of oil, and the priest shall wave them ***as*** a wave offering before the LORD. And he shall slaughter the male lamb of the guilt offering, and the priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put ***it*** on the lobe of the right ear of the one cleansing himself, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. And the priest shall pour some of the oil on the left palm of the priest. And the priest shall spatter with his right finger some of the oil which ***is*** on his left palm seven times before the LORD. And the priest shall put some of the oil which ***is*** on his palm on the lobe of the right ear of the one cleansing himself, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the place of the blood of the guilt offering. And the rest of the oil which ***is*** on the palm of the priest he shall put on the head of the one cleansing himself, to make atonement for him before the LORD. And he shall offer one of the turtledoves or of the young of the dove, of that which his hand attains, that which his hand attains, the one ***as*** a sin offering and the other ***as*** a burnt offering, with the grain offering; and the priest shall make atonement for the one cleansing himself before the LORD. This ***is*** the law of ***him*** in whom ***is*** a plague of leprosy, whose hand does not attain ***what is required*** for his cleansing."

14:33-57 And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, "When you come into the land of Canaan, which I am giving to you for a possession, and I put a plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possession, then he to whom the house ***belongs*** shall come and tell the priest, saying, '***Something*** like a plague has appeared to me in the house.' And the priest shall command, and they shall clear out the house before the priest goes in to look at the plague, and all that ***is*** in the house shall not become unclean; and afterward the priest shall go in to look at the house. And he shall look at the plague, and look, ***if*** the plague ***is*** in the walls of the house, greenish or reddish hollows, and their appearance ***is*** lower than the wall, then the priest shall go out of the house to the entrance of the house, and he shall shut in the house seven days. And the priest shall return on the seventh day and look, and look, ***if*** the plague has spread in the walls of the house, then the priest shall command, and they shall tear out the stones in which the plague ***is***, and they shall throw them to the outside of the city, into an unclean place. And he shall have the house scraped inside all around, and they shall pour out the dust that they have scraped off to the outside of the city, into an unclean place. And they shall take other stones and bring ***them*** in place of the stones, and he shall take other dust and plaster the house. And if the plague returns and breaks out in the house after he has torn out the stones, and after the scraping of the house, and after ***it*** has been plastered, then the priest shall come in and look, and look, ***if*** the plague has spread in the house, it ***is*** a malignant leprosy in the house; it ***is*** unclean. And he shall tear down the house, its stones and its timbers and all the dust of the house, and he shall bring ***them*** out to the outside of the city, into an unclean place. And whoever goes into the house all the days ***that*** he has shut it in shall be unclean until the evening. And whoever lies down in the house shall wash his garments, and whoever eats in the house shall wash his garments. "And if the priest surely comes in and looks, and look, the plague has not spread in the house after the house has been plastered, then the priest shall pronounce the house clean, because the plague has been healed. And he shall take, to cleanse the house from sin, two birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet of a worm, and hyssop. And he

shall slaughter the one bird into an earthenware vessel over living water. And he shall take the cedar wood and the hyssop and the scarlet of the worm and the living bird, and he shall dip them in the blood of the slaughtered bird and in the living water, and he shall spatter ***it*** toward the house seven times. And he shall cleanse the house from sin with the blood of the bird and with the living water and with the living bird and with the cedar wood and with the hyssop and with the scarlet of the worm. And he shall let the living bird go to the outside of the city, onto the face of the field; and he shall make atonement for the house, and it shall be clean. "This ***is*** the law for every plague of leprosy, and for the scaly patch, and for the leprosy of the garment, and for the house, and for the swelling, and for the scab, and for the bright spot, to teach on the day of the unclean and on the day of the clean. This ***is*** the law of leprosy."

Chapter 14 Preview

Chapter 13 told the priest how to decide that a person had leprosy and must live outside the camp. Chapter 14 is the happy side of that law. It tells what to do on the day a leper was healed. The priest went out to him, two birds were used in a striking ceremony, and the healed man washed, shaved and came back into the camp. On the eighth day he brought offerings to the tent of meeting, and the priest put blood and oil on his ear, his thumb and his toe. A poor man could bring smaller offerings, so no one was kept out because he could not pay.

The second half of the chapter deals with "a plague of leprosy in a house," a spreading mold in the walls of a stone house in the land of Canaan. The priest inspected it the same careful way, and the house was repaired, cleansed or torn down. Jesus pointed to this very chapter when He healed lepers and sent them to the priest, "for a testimony to them" (Mark 1:44).

Chapter 14 Study

14:1-3 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "This shall be the law of the leper on the day of his cleansing: he shall be brought to the priest. And the priest shall go out to the outside of the camp, and the priest shall look, and look, **if** the plague of leprosy has been healed from the leper,*

"This shall be the law of the leper on the day of his cleansing." Notice that the law does not heal the leper. God heals. The law only tells how a healed person is declared clean and brought back. Healing came first. Cleansing and return came after.

"The priest shall go out to the outside of the camp." The leper could not come in, so the priest went out to him. That is a beautiful picture. The one who was cut off did not have to find his own way back. Someone came out to him. Jesus did the same thing on a much greater scale. He came to us while we were still outside, and He "suffered outside the gate" so that He could bring us in (Hebrews 13:12).

The priest looked to see "if the plague of leprosy has been healed from the leper." Only then could the ceremony begin.

14:4-7 *then the priest shall command, and he shall take for the one cleansing himself two living clean birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet of a worm, and hyssop. And the priest shall command, and he shall slaughter the one bird into an earthenware vessel over living water.* ***As for*** *the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood and the scarlet of the worm and the hyssop, and he shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the living water. And he shall spatter* ***it*** *on the one cleansing himself from the leprosy seven times, and he shall pronounce him clean, and he shall let the living bird go over the face of the field.*

The priest commanded that two "living clean birds" be brought, along with "cedar wood, and scarlet of a worm, and hyssop." Cedar is a lasting wood that does not rot easily. Scarlet of a worm was a red dye made from an insect, so it was red thread or cloth. Hyssop was a small plant with leafy stems, good for sprinkling. Israel had used hyssop to put the Passover blood on their doorposts (Exodus 12:22). David prayed, "Purify me from sin with hyssop, and I will be clean" (Psalm 51:7).

One bird was killed "into an earthenware vessel over living water." Living water means fresh, running water from a spring or stream, not water from a cistern. The living bird, with the cedar, scarlet and hyssop, was dipped in the blood of the slain bird. The priest spattered the blood "seven times" on the healed man and pronounced him clean. Then "he shall let the living bird go over the face of the field."

Imagine watching that bird fly away. One bird died. The other was dipped in its blood and set free. The New Testament does not explain this ceremony, so we should hold any meaning loosely. But many Bible teachers have seen in it a picture of Christ: one bird dying, the other rising up alive and free, carrying the mark of the blood. It is also a picture of the healed man himself. He had been as good as dead, cut off from God's people. Now he was free.

14:8-9 *And the one cleansing himself shall wash his garments, and shave all his hair, and bathe in water, and he shall be clean. And afterward he shall come into the camp, and he shall dwell outside his tent seven days. And it shall be on the seventh day* ***that*** *he shall shave all his hair: his head and his beard and the brows of his eyes, even all his hair he shall shave; and he shall wash his garments, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and he shall be clean.*

Then the man washed his clothes, shaved "all his hair," and bathed. He could come "into the camp," but he had to stay "outside his tent seven days." He was back among his people, but not yet home. On the seventh day he shaved again, head, beard and even "the brows of his eyes," washed his clothes, and bathed again.

Why all the shaving? It was a clean start. Every hair that might hide a trace of the disease was gone. He came back to his people like a newborn, with nothing left of the old uncleanness. God's cleansing is complete, not partial. When He makes us clean, "the old things have passed away; look, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

14:10-13 *"And on the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb, a daughter of its year, without blemish, and approximately 6 quarts (three tenths **of an ephah**) of fine flour **for** a grain offering mixed with oil, and approximately 1/3 quart (one log) of oil. And the priest who pronounces clean shall set the man who is cleansing himself, and them, before the LORD **at** the entrance of the tent of meeting. And the priest shall take the one male lamb and bring it near for a guilt offering, and the log of oil, and he shall wave them **as** a wave offering before the LORD. And he shall slaughter the male lamb in the place where he slaughters the sin offering and the burnt offering, in the place of holiness; for like the sin offering, the guilt offering **belongs** to the priest; it **is** a holy of holies.*

"On the eighth day" the man brought two male lambs and one ewe lamb, all "without blemish," with fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering and "one log" of oil, about a third of a quart. An ephah was a dry measure of a little over half a bushel, so "three tenths" of an ephah was about six quarts of flour.

The priest set the man "before the LORD" at the entrance of the tent of meeting. For the first time since his illness, he could come near God's house. The first lamb was a guilt offering, the offering that paid what was owed (chapter 5). It was waved with the oil before the LORD and killed in the holy place, and like the sin offering it belonged to the priest as "a holy of holies," most holy.

Why a guilt offering? The text does not say the man's disease came from any sin of his. But his long illness had kept him from bringing gifts to God and from His worship, and the guilt offering may have dealt with all that he had been unable to give. Many teachers see it that way. What is clear is that coming back to God was not only a matter of health. It was a matter of atonement.

14:14-18 *And the priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering, and the priest shall put **it** on the lobe of the right ear of the one cleansing himself, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. And the priest shall take some of the log of oil and pour **it** on the left palm of the priest. And the priest shall dip his right finger in some of the oil which **is** on his left palm, and he shall spatter some of the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD. And some of the rest of the oil which **is** on his palm the priest shall put on the lobe of the right ear of the one cleansing himself, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the blood of the guilt offering. And the remainder of the oil which **is** on the palm of the priest he shall put on the head of the one cleansing himself; and the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD.*

Now comes a scene like the ordination of the priests in chapter 8. The priest put blood from the guilt offering "on the lobe of the right ear of the one cleansing himself, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot." Then he poured oil in his own palm, spattered some "seven times before the LORD," and put oil on the same three places, right "on the blood of the guilt offering." The rest he put "on the head of the one cleansing himself."

Aaron and his sons received the same marks of blood when they were set apart for God (8:23-24). Now an ordinary Israelite, once a leper, received them too. Many teachers see the ear, hand and foot as hearing, doing and walking: the whole person, set apart for God. The oil came on top of the

blood. First the blood that atones, then the oil that sets apart. Many see the oil as a picture of the Holy Spirit, who comes to live in those Christ has cleansed (Titus 3:5-6).

14:19-20 *And the priest shall offer the sin offering, and he shall make atonement for the one cleansing himself from his uncleanness; and afterward he shall slaughter the burnt offering. And the priest shall offer up the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar; and the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be clean.*

Then the priest offered "the sin offering," then "the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar." The order matters. The sin offering dealt with uncleanness. The burnt offering was a gift of the whole life to God. The grain offering was a gift of thanks. "And the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be clean."

These last words must have sounded like music to a man who had called out "Unclean! Unclean!" for so long (13:45). He was clean. He could go home. He could worship with God's people. This is what Christ does for every sinner who comes to Him. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous so that He may forgive us the sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

14:21-32 *"And if he **is** poor, and his hand is not attaining **so much**, then he shall take one male lamb **as** a guilt offering for a wave offering, to make atonement for him, and approximately 2 quarts (one tenth **of an ephah**) of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, and approximately 1/3 quart (a log) of oil, and two turtledoves or two young of the dove, which his hand attains; and the one shall be a sin offering and the other a burnt offering. And he shall bring them on the eighth day for his cleansing to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, before the LORD. And the priest shall take the male lamb of the guilt offering and the log of oil, and the priest shall wave them **as** a wave offering before the LORD. And he shall slaughter the male lamb of the guilt offering, and the priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put **it** on the lobe of the right ear of the one cleansing himself, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. And the priest shall pour some of the oil on the left palm of the priest. And the priest shall spatter with his right finger some of the oil which **is** on his left palm seven times before the LORD. And the priest shall put some of the oil which **is** on his palm on the lobe of the right ear of the one cleansing himself, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the place of the blood of the guilt offering. And the rest of the oil which **is** on the palm of the priest he shall put on the head of the one cleansing himself, to make atonement for him before the LORD. And he shall offer one of the turtledoves or of the young of the dove, of that which his hand attains, that which his hand attains, the one **as** a sin offering and the other **as** a burnt offering, with the grain offering; and the priest shall make atonement for the one cleansing himself before the LORD. This **is** the law of **him** in whom **is** a plague of leprosy, whose hand does not attain **what is required** for his cleansing."*

"And if he is poor, and his hand is not attaining so much," he could bring one male lamb for the guilt offering and "two turtledoves or two young of the dove" for the sin offering and burnt offering, with a smaller amount of flour, about two quarts. The phrase "which his hand attains" means what he could afford.

The rest of the ceremony was the same: the eighth day, the entrance of the tent of meeting, the waving, the blood and oil on ear, thumb and toe, the oil on his head, the offerings, the atonement. The poor man was not cleansed with a lesser cleansing. He received the same blood, the same oil and the same words.

Why does God take twelve verses to say almost the same thing again? I think He wanted no poor leper to doubt that he could come home. Being poor did not keep anyone outside the camp. God has always cared for the poor. When Mary and Joseph presented Jesus at the temple, they brought "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons" (Luke 2:24), the offering of the poor (12:8). The Son of God was born into a family that used this very kind of law.

Verse 32 sums it up: "This is the law of him in whom is a plague of leprosy, whose hand does not attain what is required for his cleansing." The way back to God is open to everyone. It still is. Salvation through Christ costs us nothing, because it cost Him everything (Isaiah 55:1; Ephesians 2:8).

14:33-38 *And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, "When you come into the land of Canaan, which I am giving to you for a possession, and I put a plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possession, then he to whom the house* ***belongs*** *shall come and tell the priest, saying, '****Something*** *like a plague has appeared to me in the house.' And the priest shall command, and they shall clear out the house before the priest goes in to look at the plague, and all that* ***is*** *in the house shall not become unclean; and afterward the priest shall go in to look at the house. And he shall look at the plague, and look,* ***if*** *the plague* ***is*** *in the walls of the house, greenish or reddish hollows, and their appearance* ***is*** *lower than the wall, then the priest shall go out of the house to the entrance of the house, and he shall shut in the house seven days.*

The next law looked ahead: "When you come into the land of Canaan, which I am giving to you for a possession." Israel was still living in tents. God was already promising them houses in the land. Notice the words "I put a plague of leprosy in a house." God says plainly that He is sovereign even over the mold in the walls. It was not out of His hands.

This leprosy of a house was a spreading growth of mold or rot in the stone walls, showing as "greenish or reddish hollows" that went "lower than the wall." The owner came to the priest and said, "Something like a plague has appeared to me in the house." He did not claim to know. He let the priest decide.

Before the priest went in, the house was cleared out, so that "all that is in the house shall not become unclean." That was kind and sensible. If the house was declared unclean, the owner did not lose everything in it. Then the priest looked, and if the signs were there, he shut the house up "seven days."

14:39-42 *And the priest shall return on the seventh day and look, and look, **if** the plague has spread in the walls of the house, then the priest shall command, and they shall tear out the stones in which the plague **is**, and they shall throw them to the outside of the city, into an unclean place. And he shall have the house scraped inside all around, and they shall pour out the dust that they have scraped off to the outside of the city, into an unclean place. And they shall take other stones and bring **them** in place of the stones, and he shall take other dust and plaster the house.*

On the seventh day, if the plague had spread, the stones with the mold were torn out and thrown "into an unclean place" outside the city. The inside of the house was scraped, the scrapings were dumped outside the city too, and new stones and new plaster were put in.

This was hard, dirty work, but it saved the house. A small problem dealt with early could keep the whole house from being lost. That is true of sin in a life, a family or a church. Paul warns that "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" (1 Corinthians 5:6). Deal with it while it is small.

14:43-47 *And if the plague returns and breaks out in the house after he has torn out the stones, and after the scraping of the house, and after **it** has been plastered, then the priest shall come in and look, and look, **if** the plague has spread in the house, it **is** a malignant leprosy in the house; it **is** unclean. And he shall tear down the house, its stones and its timbers and all the dust of the house, and he shall bring **them** out to the outside of the city, into an unclean place. And whoever goes into the house all the days **that** he has shut it in shall be unclean until the evening. And whoever lies down in the house shall wash his garments, and whoever eats in the house shall wash his garments.*

If the plague came back after all that work, it was "a malignant leprosy in the house." Malignant here means spreading and destructive. The whole house had to be torn down, "its stones and its timbers and all the dust of the house," and carried out to an unclean place.

Anyone who went into the house while it was shut up was unclean until evening. Anyone who slept or ate there had to wash his clothes. The uncleanness spread to those who lived in it. Sin that is left alone and keeps coming back does not stay small. It can ruin the whole house.

14:48-53 *"And if the priest surely comes in and looks, and look, the plague has not spread in the house after the house has been plastered, then the priest shall pronounce the house clean, because the plague has been healed. And he shall take, to cleanse the house from sin, two birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet of a worm, and hyssop. And he shall slaughter the one bird into an earthenware vessel over living water. And he shall take the cedar wood and the hyssop and the scarlet of the worm and the living bird, and he shall dip them in the blood of the slaughtered bird and in the living water, and he shall spatter **it** toward the house seven times. And he shall cleanse the house from sin with the blood of the bird and with the living water and with the living bird and with the cedar wood and with the hyssop and with the scarlet of the worm. And he shall let the living bird go to the outside of the city, onto the face of the field; and he shall make atonement for the house, and it shall be clean.*

But if the plague had not spread after the new plaster, the priest pronounced the house clean, "because the plague has been healed." Then the house was cleansed with the same ceremony used

for the healed leper: two birds, cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop, the blood and the living water, the spattering "seven times," and the living bird set free "onto the face of the field." The verse says the priest would "make atonement for the house."

A house is not a person, and it cannot sin. So why atonement for a house? Atonement in Leviticus means more than forgiving a person. It also means cleansing what has been touched by uncleanness, so that it can again be part of the life of God's people. The same word is used for cleansing the altar and the tabernacle on the Day of Atonement (16:16-19). God cares about where His people live as well as about the people themselves.

14:54-57 *"This **is** the law for every plague of leprosy, and for the scaly patch, and for the leprosy of the garment, and for the house, and for the swelling, and for the scab, and for the bright spot, to teach on the day of the unclean and on the day of the clean. This **is** the law of leprosy."*

The chapter closes chapters 13 and 14 together: "This is the law for every plague of leprosy," for the scaly patch, for garments, for houses, for swellings, scabs and bright spots, "to teach on the day of the unclean and on the day of the clean."

The point of the law was to teach. The priests had to know the difference between clean and unclean and teach it to Israel (10:10-11). The same is true for us. We need to learn from God's Word what pleases Him and what does not.

What does this chapter teach us now? When Jesus healed a leper, He told him, "go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing the things which Moses commanded, for a testimony to them" (Mark 1:44). When He healed ten lepers, He told them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests" (Luke 17:14). Jesus was keeping the Law, and He was also sending a message. The priests had a law for cleansing a healed leper, but who could heal one? Only God (2 Kings 5:7). Every leper Jesus sent to the priest was a living testimony that God had come among His people. Christ has now fulfilled this law. He does more than declare us clean after we are healed. He heals us and cleanses us Himself, by His own blood, and brings us home.

Chapter 14 Summary

The LORD gave Moses the law for a healed leper. The priest went out of the camp to examine him, and if he was healed, one bird was killed over living water and the living bird, with cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop, was dipped in its blood. The man was spattered seven times and pronounced clean, and the living bird was set free. He washed, shaved and bathed, came into the camp, and after seven days shaved and washed again. On the eighth day he brought a guilt offering, a sin offering, a burnt offering and a grain offering, and the priest put blood and oil on his right ear, thumb and big toe and made atonement for him. A poor man brought birds in place of two of the lambs and was cleansed the same way. In the land of Canaan, a house with spreading mold was inspected, repaired, and either cleansed with the same bird ceremony or torn down. Jesus sent the lepers He healed to the priests as a testimony.

Chapter 14 Study Questions

1. Where did the priest go to examine the healed leper, and why? (14:3)

2. What was used in the ceremony with the two birds, and what happened to each bird? (14:4-7)

3. What did the man do before he came back into the camp, and where did he stay for seven days? (14:8-9)

4. Where did the priest put the blood and the oil, and where have we seen this before? (14:14-18; 8:23-24)

5. What could a poor man bring, and was his cleansing any different? (14:21-32)

6. What did the owner of a house with a plague tell the priest, and what was done first? (14:35-36)

7. What happened to a house when the plague kept coming back? (14:43-45)

8. Why do you think Jesus sent the lepers He healed to the priests (Mark 1:44; Luke 17:14)? What testimony did it give?

9. The priest went outside the camp to the leper. Who came to you when you were far from God, and how?

10. Is there a small sin in your life or home that should be dealt with now, before it spreads? What is one step you could take this week?

Chapter 15: Bodily Discharges

Scripture

15:1-15 And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'Any man, when he has a discharge from his flesh, his discharge ***is*** unclean. And this shall be his uncleanness in his discharge: ***whether*** his flesh runs with his discharge, or his flesh has sealed ***itself*** off from his discharge, it ***is*** his uncleanness. Every bed on which the one with the discharge lies shall be unclean, and every article on which he sits shall be unclean. And a man who touches his bed shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And whoever sits on the article on which the one with the discharge sat shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And whoever touches the flesh of the one with the discharge shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And if the one with the discharge spits on ***one who is*** clean, then he shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And every saddle on which the one with the discharge rides shall be unclean. And whoever touches anything that was under him shall be unclean until the evening; and whoever carries them shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And anyone whom the one with the discharge touches, and he has not rinsed his hands in water, then he shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And an earthenware vessel which the one with the discharge touches shall be broken, and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water. "'And when the one with the discharge becomes clean from his discharge, then he shall count for himself seven days for his cleansing, and he shall wash his garments and bathe his flesh in living water, and he shall be clean. And on the eighth day he shall take for himself two turtledoves or two young of the dove, and he shall come before the LORD to the entrance of the tent of meeting and give them to the priest. And the priest shall offer them, the one ***as*** a sin offering and the other ***as*** a burnt offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD for his discharge.

15:16-33 "'And a man, when an emission of seed goes out from him, then he shall bathe all his flesh in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And every garment and every leather ***thing*** on which there is an emission of seed shall be washed with water, and it shall be unclean until the evening. And a woman with whom a man lies ***with*** an emission of seed, they shall bathe in water, and they shall be unclean until the evening. "'And a woman, when she has a discharge, ***and*** her discharge in her flesh is blood, she shall be in her impurity seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening. And everything on which she lies in her impurity shall be unclean, and everything on which she sits shall be unclean. And whoever touches her bed shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And whoever touches any article on which she sits shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And if it ***is*** on the bed or on the article on which she is sitting, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until the evening. And if a man surely lies with her, and her impurity is on him, then he shall be unclean seven days, and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean. "'And a woman, when the discharge of her blood flows many days not at the time of her impurity, or when she has a discharge beyond her impurity, all the days of the discharge of

her uncleanness she shall be as ***in*** the days of her impurity; she ***is*** unclean. Every bed on which she lies all the days of her discharge shall be to her like the bed of her impurity; and every article on which she sits shall be unclean, like the uncleanness of her impurity. And whoever touches them shall be unclean, and he shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And if she becomes clean from her discharge, then she shall count for herself seven days, and afterward she shall be clean. And on the eighth day she shall take for herself two turtledoves or two young of the dove, and she shall bring them to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting. And the priest shall offer the one ***as*** a sin offering and the other ***as*** a burnt offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her before the LORD for the discharge of her uncleanness.' "And you shall keep the sons of Israel separate from their uncleanness, and they shall not die in their uncleanness by their making My tabernacle unclean, which ***is*** in their midst. This ***is*** the law of the one with a discharge, and of him from whom an emission of seed goes out, so that he is unclean by it, and of her who is sick in her impurity, and of the one who has a discharge, whether for the male or for the female, and for a man who lies with an unclean ***woman***."

Chapter 15 Preview

Chapter 15 finishes the laws of clean and unclean that began in chapter 11. It deals with discharges from the body, both of men and of women. Some were long-lasting conditions caused by illness. Others were the normal workings of a healthy body, such as a woman's monthly period or the marriage relationship between a husband and wife. Each made a person ceremonially unclean for a time, and the chapter explains how long, who else became unclean by touch, and how a person was made clean again.

This is a chapter to read with care and modesty, especially in a group. The language of the SLB is plain but not crude, and we will keep our comments the same way. The main point is stated near the end: God wanted Israel kept from uncleanness so that they would not defile His tabernacle by "making My tabernacle unclean, which is in their midst" (15:31). We will also meet a woman in the Gospels who had lived under this law for twelve years, until she touched the garment of Jesus.

Chapter 15 Study

15:1-3 *And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'Any man, when he has a discharge from his flesh, his discharge **is** unclean. And this shall be his uncleanness in his discharge: **whether** his flesh runs with his discharge, or his flesh has sealed **itself** off from his discharge, it **is** his uncleanness.*

"Any man, when he has a discharge from his flesh, his discharge is unclean." The first case is a man with an ongoing discharge from his body, which was most likely caused by an illness or infection. The word flesh here is a modest way of speaking about the private parts of the body. Whether the discharge was flowing or had stopped up, "it is his uncleanness."

Before we go further, let us remember what unclean means in Leviticus. It does not mean sinful. A man with an illness had not done anything wrong by being sick. Unclean meant not fit, for a

time, to come near God's tabernacle or to touch holy things. It was a matter of ritual status, not of moral guilt.

15:4-12 *Every bed on which the one with the discharge lies shall be unclean, and every article on which he sits shall be unclean. And a man who touches his bed shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And whoever sits on the article on which the one with the discharge sat shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And whoever touches the flesh of the one with the discharge shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And if the one with the discharge spits on* ***one who is*** *clean, then he shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And every saddle on which the one with the discharge rides shall be unclean. And whoever touches anything that was under him shall be unclean until the evening; and whoever carries them shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And anyone whom the one with the discharge touches, and he has not rinsed his hands in water, then he shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And an earthenware vessel which the one with the discharge touches shall be broken, and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water.*

While the man had his discharge, his uncleanness passed to things and people around him. His bed and anything he sat on became unclean. Anyone who touched his bed, sat where he sat, touched his body, or was spat on by him had to "wash his garments and bathe in water," and was "unclean until the evening." The same went for his saddle, and for anything that had been under him. If he touched someone without first rinsing his hands, that person became unclean too. A clay pot he touched had to be broken, and a wooden one rinsed.

These rules affected daily life a great deal. They reminded Israel all day long that uncleanness spreads by contact and that holiness does not. They also had a plain health benefit: washing, bathing and keeping apart from the sick helped stop disease from spreading through a crowded camp. That was not the main reason for the law, but it was a mercy in it.

Notice that the man's own hands mattered. If he rinsed his hands, he did not pass on uncleanness by touch. He was not helpless. He was given a simple way to care for others while he was sick.

15:13-15 *"'And when the one with the discharge becomes clean from his discharge, then he shall count for himself seven days for his cleansing, and he shall wash his garments and bathe his flesh in living water, and he shall be clean. And on the eighth day he shall take for himself two turtledoves or two young of the dove, and he shall come before the LORD to the entrance of the tent of meeting and give them to the priest. And the priest shall offer them, the one* ***as*** *a sin offering and the other* ***as*** *a burnt offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD for his discharge.*

When the man was healed, he counted seven days, washed his clothes, and bathed "in living water," fresh running water. On the eighth day he brought "two turtledoves or two young of the dove" to the priest, the smallest and cheapest offerings, one as a sin offering and one as a burnt offering. "And the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD for his discharge."

Why a sin offering if he had not sinned? The sin offering in Leviticus also dealt with uncleanness, cleansing the person and the holy things he had affected, so that he could come back to worship. His illness was a reminder that we live in a world broken by sin, where bodies get sick and die. The atonement brought him back near to God.

15:16-18 *"'And a man, when an emission of seed goes out from him, then he shall bathe all his flesh in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And every garment and every leather **thing** on which there is an emission of seed shall be washed with water, and it shall be unclean until the evening. And a woman with whom a man lies **with** an emission of seed, they shall bathe in water, and they shall be unclean until the evening.*

The next laws deal with normal life. When a man had "an emission of seed," he bathed and was unclean until evening, and any garment or leather it touched had to be washed. The same was true of a husband and wife after they came together in marriage: "they shall bathe in water, and they shall be unclean until the evening."

This is important. The marriage relationship is not sin. God created it and blessed it (Genesis 1:28; 2:24). Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage is to be honorable among all, and the bed undefiled." This law did not teach that sex in marriage is dirty. It taught that the powers of life and the presence of God were to be kept separate in Israel's worship. Many of Israel's neighbors mixed sexual acts with the worship of their gods. Israel's worship was to have nothing of that kind. A couple simply bathed and waited until evening before coming near holy things. No offering was needed, because nothing was wrong.

15:19-24 *"'And a woman, when she has a discharge, **and** her discharge in her flesh is blood, she shall be in her impurity seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening. And everything on which she lies in her impurity shall be unclean, and everything on which she sits shall be unclean. And whoever touches her bed shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And whoever touches any article on which she sits shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And if it **is** on the bed or on the article on which she is sitting, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until the evening. And if a man surely lies with her, and her impurity is on him, then he shall be unclean seven days, and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean.*

Next is "a woman, when she has a discharge," meaning her monthly period. "She shall be in her impurity seven days." The word impurity here has the idea of separation. Like the man in verses 4 to 12, she passed her uncleanness to her bed, the things she sat on, and anyone who touched them, who had to wash and was unclean until evening.

Again, this is not sin. A woman's monthly cycle is part of how God made her body, the way life is passed on. The text gives no offering at the end of her seven days, because there was nothing to atone for. The time simply passed and she was clean. A husband who lay with her in that time shared her uncleanness for seven days. Later in Leviticus that act during her period is forbidden outright (18:19; 20:18).

Some have used laws like this to look down on women. That is a misuse of God's Word. The same rules applied to men in verses 2 to 18, and the chapter is carefully balanced between the two. It ends with the words "whether for the male or for the female" (15:33).

15:25-30 *"'And a woman, when the discharge of her blood flows many days not at the time of her impurity, or when she has a discharge beyond her impurity, all the days of the discharge of her uncleanness she shall be as **in** the days of her impurity; she **is** unclean. Every bed on which she lies all the days of her discharge shall be to her like the bed of her impurity; and every article on which she sits shall be unclean, like the uncleanness of her impurity. And whoever touches them shall be unclean, and he shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening. And if she becomes clean from her discharge, then she shall count for herself seven days, and afterward she shall be clean. And on the eighth day she shall take for herself two turtledoves or two young of the dove, and she shall bring them to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting. And the priest shall offer the one **as** a sin offering and the other **as** a burnt offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her before the LORD for the discharge of her uncleanness.'*

The last case is a woman whose bleeding lasted "many days not at the time of her impurity," or went on beyond her normal time. This was an illness, not the normal cycle. For as long as it lasted she was unclean, and her bed and seat passed on uncleanness. When it stopped, she counted seven days and on the eighth brought two birds for a sin offering and a burnt offering, just as the man did in verses 13 to 15, and the priest made atonement for her.

Think of what such an illness meant. A woman with this condition could be unclean for months or years. She could not go to God's house. Anyone who touched her became unclean. She might feel cut off and alone.

Mark tells us about "a certain woman, being with a flow of blood twelve years" (Mark 5:25). She had spent all she had on doctors and only grew worse. Under this law she had been unclean for twelve years. She came up behind Jesus in a crowd and "touched His garment," and "immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up" (Mark 5:27, 29). Her touch did not make Jesus unclean. His power made her clean. Then He called her out of the crowd and said, "Daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Mark 5:34). He did not let her slip away in shame. He called her daughter.

15:31 *"And you shall keep the sons of Israel separate from their uncleanness, and they shall not die in their uncleanness by their making My tabernacle unclean, which **is** in their midst.*

Here is the reason for the whole chapter: "And you shall keep the sons of Israel separate from their uncleanness, and they shall not die in their uncleanness by their making My tabernacle unclean, which is in their midst."

God lived in the middle of His people. That was the great privilege of Israel, and it was also a serious matter. The holy God could not be treated as if He were common. These laws were not meant to shame anyone. They were meant to protect the people from coming near a holy God in an unclean state and dying. Every bath and every evening of waiting taught Israel that God is holy, and that nothing unclean can stand in His presence.

15:32-33 *This **is** the law of the one with a discharge, and of him from whom an emission of seed goes out, so that he is unclean by it, and of her who is sick in her impurity, and of the one who has a discharge, whether for the male or for the female, and for a man who lies with an unclean **woman**."*

The chapter closes with a summary of its laws, "whether for the male or for the female." This ends the long section on clean and unclean (chapters 11 to 15): food, childbirth, skin disease, mold, and the body.

What does this chapter teach us now? We are not under these laws. Jesus taught that what truly defiles a person comes from within: "That which goes out of the man, that defiles the man" (Mark 7:20), and He named "evil thoughts" and other sins of the heart (Mark 7:21). The uncleanness that keeps us from God is not in the body's normal workings. It is in our hearts. That is why we need more than a bath. Hebrews 10:22 invites us to "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our body washed with pure water." Through Christ we are clean before God, and we can come to Him any day, not only after seven days of waiting. This chapter also teaches us to treat our bodies with modesty and respect, as made by God, and to treat those who are sick, as Jesus did, with tenderness and not with shame.

Chapter 15 Summary

The LORD gave Moses and Aaron laws for discharges of the body. A man with an ongoing discharge was unclean, and his bed, seat, saddle and touch made others unclean until evening, so they had to wash and bathe. When he was healed, he waited seven days, bathed in living water, and on the eighth day brought two birds for a sin offering and a burnt offering. A man's emission and the marriage act made a person unclean only until evening, with washing. A woman during her monthly period was unclean seven days, and those who touched her bed or seat were unclean until evening. A woman with bleeding beyond her normal time was unclean as long as it lasted, and when it ended she waited seven days and brought two birds. These laws kept Israel from defiling God's tabernacle in their midst. Jesus healed a woman who had bled for twelve years and called her daughter.

Chapter 15 Study Questions

1. Does unclean in this chapter mean sinful? How do you know? (15:2, 16-19)

2. How did uncleanness spread from a man with a discharge to others, and how were they made clean? (15:4-11)

3. What did a healed man bring on the eighth day, and what did the priest do? (15:13-15)

4. What does this chapter say about a husband and wife, and how does Hebrews 13:4 help us read it? (15:18)

5. How long was a woman unclean during her monthly period, and was an offering required? (15:19-24)

6. How is the chapter balanced between men and women? (15:2-30, 33)

7. What reason does God give for all these laws? (15:31)

8. Read Mark 5:25-34. What had this woman's life been like under this law, and how did Jesus treat her?

9. Jesus said that what defiles a person comes from within (Mark 7:20-23). What does that mean for how you think about being clean before God?

10. How can you show the kind of tenderness Jesus showed to someone who is sick, or who feels ashamed or left out?

Chapter 16: The Day of Atonement

Scripture

16:1-10 And the LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died. And the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to Aaron your brother, and let him not come at every time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which ***is*** on the ark, and he will not die; for in the cloud I will appear over the mercy seat. With this Aaron shall come into the holy place: with a young bull, a son of the herd, for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. He shall put on a linen tunic of holiness, and linen undergarments shall be on his flesh, and with a linen sash he shall gird himself, and with a linen turban he shall wrap ***himself***; they ***are*** garments of holiness. And he shall bathe his flesh in water and put them on. And from the congregation of the sons of Israel he shall take two male goats of the goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering. And Aaron shall bring near the bull of the sin offering which ***is*** for himself, and he shall make atonement for himself and for his house. And he shall take the two goats and set them before the LORD ***at*** the entrance of the tent of meeting. And Aaron shall put lots on the two goats, one lot for the LORD and one lot for Azazel. And Aaron shall bring near the goat on which the lot for the LORD came up, and he shall offer it ***as*** a sin offering. And the goat on which the lot for Azazel came up shall be set alive before the LORD, to make atonement on it, to send it away to Azazel into the wilderness.

16:11-22 "And Aaron shall bring near the bull of the sin offering which ***is*** for himself, and he shall make atonement for himself and for his house, and he shall slaughter the bull of the sin offering which ***is*** for himself. And he shall take the fullness of the fire pan ***of*** coals of fire from on the altar, from before the LORD, and the fullness of his hands ***of*** fine incense of fragrances, and he shall bring ***it*** inside the veil. And he shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the cloud of the incense shall cover the mercy seat which ***is*** on the testimony, and he will not die. And he shall take some of the blood of the bull and spatter ***it*** with his finger on the face of the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat he shall spatter some of the blood with his finger seven times. "And he shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering which ***is*** for the people, and he shall bring its blood inside the veil, and he shall do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and he shall spatter it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. And he shall make atonement for the holy place because of the uncleannesses of the sons of Israel and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses. And no man shall be in the tent of meeting when he goes in to make atonement in the holy place, until he comes out; and he shall make atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel. And he shall go out to the altar that ***is*** before the LORD and make atonement for it, and he shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat and put ***it*** on the horns of the altar all around. And he shall spatter some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, and he shall cleanse it and sanctify it from the uncleannesses of the sons of Israel. "And he shall finish making atonement for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, and he shall bring near the living goat. And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the living goat, and he shall confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions, for all their sins; and he shall put them on the head of the goat

and send ***it*** away into the wilderness by the hand of a man ***who is*** ready. And the goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a land cut off; and he shall let the goat go in the wilderness.

16:23-34 "And Aaron shall come into the tent of meeting, and he shall strip off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the holy place, and he shall leave them there. And he shall bathe his flesh in water in a holy place and put on his garments, and he shall come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, and he shall make atonement for himself and for the people. And the fat of the sin offering he shall make smoke on the altar. And the one who lets the goat go for Azazel shall wash his garments and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp. And the bull of the sin offering and the goat of the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, he shall bring out to the outside of the camp, and they shall burn in the fire their skins and their flesh and their dung. And the one who burns them shall wash his garments and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp. "And it shall be for you a statute forever: in the seventh month, on the tenth of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and you shall not do any work, the native and the sojourner who sojourns in your midst. For on this day he shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins before the LORD you shall be clean. It ***is*** a Sabbath of Sabbath rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls; ***it is*** a statute forever. And the priest whom he anoints and whose hand he fills to serve as priest in place of his father shall make atonement; and he shall put on the linen garments, the garments of holiness. And he shall make atonement for the sanctuary of holiness; and for the tent of meeting and for the altar he shall make atonement; and for the priests and for all the people of the assembly he shall make atonement. And this shall be for you a statute forever, to make atonement for the sons of Israel for all their sins once in the year." And he did as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Chapter 16 Preview

Chapter 16 is the center of Leviticus and one of the great chapters of the whole Old Testament. It describes the Day of Atonement, the one day each year when the high priest went behind the veil into the Most Holy Place, where God's presence rested over the ark of the covenant. He went in with blood, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. Two goats were chosen. One was killed as a sin offering. The other, the goat "for Azazel," had all the sins of Israel confessed over its head and was led away into the wilderness, never to return.

The chapter begins by looking back at the death of Nadab and Abihu, who came near to God in their own way and died (chapter 10). Here God shows the right way to come near, and the only way. The book of Hebrews reads this chapter as a picture of Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, who entered not a tent made by hands "but into heaven itself" with "His own blood," "once for all" (Hebrews 9:12, 24). We will take our time with this chapter.

Chapter 16 Study

16:1 *And the LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died.*

"And the LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died." The setting is important. Nadab and Abihu had "drawn near" in a way God had not commanded (10:1-2). Aaron had lost two sons. Now God speaks, not to forbid all coming near, but to show how it could be done without dying.

That is the heart of this chapter and of the gospel. Sinful people cannot simply walk into the presence of a holy God. But God does not leave us outside. He provides a way. What Nadab and Abihu tried to do by their own fire, God would make possible by blood and by His own appointed priest.

16:2 *And the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to Aaron your brother, and let him not come at every time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which **is** on the ark, and he will not die; for in the cloud I will appear over the mercy seat.*

"Let him not come at every time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, and he will not die." The holy place here means the Most Holy Place, the inner room of the tabernacle. The veil was a heavy woven curtain that separated it from the outer room (Exodus 26:31-33). Inside stood the ark of the covenant, a gold-covered chest holding the tablets of the Law. Its lid was the mercy seat, a slab of pure gold with two cherubim on it, angels with wings spread over it (Exodus 25:17-22). God said, "in the cloud I will appear over the mercy seat."

Even Aaron, the high priest, could not go in whenever he wanted. If the high priest could not come and go freely, how much less could anyone else? The veil said plainly to every Israelite: God is holy, and the way into His presence is not yet open. Hebrews 9:8 says the Holy Spirit was showing by this "that the way into the holy places has not yet been made manifest while the first tabernacle still has standing."

The mercy seat is a key word. The Hebrew is kapporet, from the same root as the word for atonement. It was the place where atonement was made, where the blood was spattered. Paul says God set forth Jesus "as a propitiation through faith in His blood" (Romans 3:25). The Greek word Paul uses there is the same word Hebrews 9:5 uses for the mercy seat. A propitiation is a sacrifice that turns away God's just anger against sin. Jesus is the true mercy seat, the place where God meets sinners in mercy because the blood has been applied.

16:3-4 *With this Aaron shall come into the holy place: with a young bull, a son of the herd, for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. He shall put on a linen tunic of holiness, and linen undergarments shall be on his flesh, and with a linen sash he shall gird himself, and with a linen turban he shall wrap* ***himself****; they* ***are*** *garments of holiness. And he shall bathe his flesh in water and put them on.*

"With this Aaron shall come into the holy place: with a young bull, a son of the herd, for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering." Aaron could not come empty-handed. He came with blood.

Then he dressed in a way that surprises us. He did not wear his beautiful high priestly garments of gold, blue, purple and scarlet (Exodus 28). He put on "a linen tunic of holiness," linen undergarments, "a linen sash" and "a linen turban." These were plain white garments, simpler than even the ordinary priests' clothing. And first "he shall bathe his flesh in water and put them on."

Why plain linen on the greatest day of the year? Linen stood for purity. On this day the high priest came before God not in glory but in humility, as a servant. Many Bible teachers have seen in this a picture of Christ, who set aside His glory and took "the form of a slave" (Philippians 2:7), and who came to us in humility to make atonement. Hebrews does not draw that line, so I hold it loosely, but it fits what the New Testament says of Him.

16:5 *And from the congregation of the sons of Israel he shall take two male goats of the goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering.*

From the people Aaron took "two male goats of the goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering." Notice that both goats together are called "a sin offering." The two goats were one offering with two parts. One would die. The other would carry the sins away. Together they show the whole of what atonement means: sin paid for by death, and sin removed far away.

16:6-10 *And Aaron shall bring near the bull of the sin offering which* ***is*** *for himself, and he shall make atonement for himself and for his house. And he shall take the two goats and set them before the LORD* ***at*** *the entrance of the tent of meeting. And Aaron shall put lots on the two goats, one lot for the LORD and one lot for Azazel. And Aaron shall bring near the goat on which the lot for the LORD came up, and he shall offer it* ***as*** *a sin offering. And the goat on which the lot for Azazel came up shall be set alive before the LORD, to make atonement on it, to send it away to Azazel into the wilderness.*

Here is a short outline of the day before the details. Aaron would first offer "the bull of the sin offering which is for himself" and "make atonement for himself and for his house." The high priest was a sinner too, and he had to be cleansed before he could act for others.

Then he set the two goats "before the LORD" and cast lots over them, "one lot for the LORD and one lot for Azazel." Casting lots was a way of letting God make the choice (Proverbs 16:33). The goat for the LORD would be killed as a sin offering. The goat for Azazel would be "set alive before the LORD, to make atonement on it, to send it away to Azazel into the wilderness."

What is Azazel? The word appears only in this chapter, and Bible teachers are not agreed. Many older translations take it to mean the goat that goes away, which is where the English word scapegoat comes from. Others take it as the name of a place, a rough and remote place in the wilderness, which fits "a land cut off" in verse 22. Others think Azazel was the name of an evil spirit believed to live in the desert. If that is right, the goat was not an offering to him, since the LORD forbids that in the next chapter (17:7). The sins were simply sent back, so to speak, to the realm of evil where they belonged. Whatever the word means, the point of the ceremony is clear: Israel's sins were carried away, far out of God's camp, never to come back.

16:11-13 *"And Aaron shall bring near the bull of the sin offering which **is** for himself, and he shall make atonement for himself and for his house, and he shall slaughter the bull of the sin offering which **is** for himself. And he shall take the fullness of the fire pan **of** coals of fire from on the altar, from before the LORD, and the fullness of his hands **of** fine incense of fragrances, and he shall bring **it** inside the veil. And he shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the cloud of the incense shall cover the mercy seat which **is** on the testimony, and he will not die.*

Now the details. Aaron killed the bull for his own sin offering. Then he took "the fullness of the fire pan of coals of fire from on the altar," the bronze altar where God's own fire burned (9:24), and two handfuls of "fine incense of fragrances," and brought them "inside the veil." Here is the difference from Nadab and Abihu. They brought "strange fire" (10:1). Aaron brought fire "from on the altar," just as God commanded.

"And he shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the cloud of the incense shall cover the mercy seat which is on the testimony, and he will not die." The testimony means the tablets of the Law inside the ark. The cloud of incense filled the room and veiled God's glory, so that the high priest would not die. Incense in Scripture is often a picture of prayer (Psalm 141:2; Revelation 8:3-4). The high priest came into God's presence wrapped in a cloud of sweet smoke. Even so, no sinful man could look on God's full glory and live (Exodus 33:20).

16:14 *And he shall take some of the blood of the bull and spatter **it** with his finger on the face of the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat he shall spatter some of the blood with his finger seven times.*

Then "he shall take some of the blood of the bull and spatter it with his finger on the face of the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat he shall spatter some of the blood with his finger seven times."

Think about what lay under the mercy seat: the tablets of the Law, the Ten Commandments Israel had already broken. Above it was the glory of the holy God. Between the broken Law and the holy God, the blood was spattered. God would look on the blood, not on the broken Law. That is mercy. Seven times means complete. The atonement was full.

16:15 *"And he shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering which **is** for the people, and he shall bring its blood inside the veil, and he shall do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and he shall spatter it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat.*

Aaron then killed "the goat of the sin offering which is for the people" and did the same thing with its blood inside the veil, on the mercy seat and before it. The first blood was for the priest. The second was for the people.

Here Hebrews shows us how much greater Christ is. Aaron needed blood for his own sins first. Jesus did not. Hebrews 7:26-27 says He is "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners," and "does not have need every day, as the high priests do, to offer up sacrifices first for their own sins, then for those of the people; for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself." Aaron offered the blood of animals. Jesus offered Himself.

16:16-17 *And he shall make atonement for the holy place because of the uncleannesses of the sons of Israel and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses. And no man shall be in the tent of meeting when he goes in to make atonement in the holy place, until he comes out; and he shall make atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel.*

"And he shall make atonement for the holy place because of the uncleannesses of the sons of Israel and because of their transgressions, for all their sins." The sins of the people had, so to speak, made God's dwelling unclean through the year. The tent of meeting "dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses." God lived among a sinful people, and once a year His dwelling had to be cleansed so that He could go on living there.

"And no man shall be in the tent of meeting when he goes in to make atonement in the holy place, until he comes out." The high priest did this work alone. No one could help him. In the same way, Jesus made atonement alone. His disciples fled. No one shared in His work on the cross. He "made purification of our sins through Himself" (Hebrews 1:3).

16:18-19 *And he shall go out to the altar that **is** before the LORD and make atonement for it, and he shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat and put **it** on the horns of the altar all around. And he shall spatter some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, and he shall cleanse it and sanctify it from the uncleannesses of the sons of Israel.*

Then Aaron went out "to the altar that is before the LORD," the bronze altar in the courtyard, and put the blood of the bull and the goat "on the horns of the altar all around," and spattered blood on it "seven times." He would "cleanse it and sanctify it from the uncleannesses of the sons of Israel."

The whole place of worship was cleansed from the inside out: the Most Holy Place, the tent of meeting, and the altar. Hebrews 9:23 says these earthly things were "copies of the things in the heavens," purified with animal blood, "but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."

16:20-22 *"And he shall finish making atonement for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, and he shall bring near the living goat. And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the living goat, and he shall confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions, for all their sins; and he shall put them on the head of the goat and send* ***it*** *away into the wilderness by the hand of a man* ***who is*** *ready. And the goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a land cut off; and he shall let the goat go in the wilderness.*

Now came the second goat. "And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the living goat, and he shall confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions, for all their sins." Three words for sin are used here. Iniquities speaks of crookedness and guilt. Transgressions speaks of rebellion, crossing God's line. Sins speaks of missing the mark. Every kind of sin was named and laid on the goat. Usually the worshiper laid one hand on an animal. Here Aaron laid "both his hands," as if to press the whole weight of the nation's sin onto its head.

Then the goat was sent away "into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is ready." "And the goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a land cut off." The people could watch it go. Out of the camp, past the edge of the tents, into the empty wilderness, until it was gone.

What a picture of forgiveness. "As the east is far from the west, He has removed our transgressions far from us" (Psalm 103:12). God says He will "cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). The New Testament does not name the goat for Azazel, but it says the same thing about Jesus. Isaiah wrote, "the LORD has caused to fall on Him the iniquity of all of us" (Isaiah 53:6). John the Baptist said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). The first goat shows that sin must be paid for by death. The second goat shows that sin, once paid for, is taken away. Jesus did both.

16:23-25 *"And Aaron shall come into the tent of meeting, and he shall strip off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the holy place, and he shall leave them there. And he shall bathe his flesh in water in a holy place and put on his garments, and he shall come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, and he shall make atonement for himself and for the people. And the fat of the sin offering he shall make smoke on the altar.*

When the work behind the veil was done, Aaron came back into the tent of meeting, took off the linen garments, and left them there. He bathed "in a holy place," put on his regular high priestly garments, and came out to offer "his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people." He made atonement "for himself and for the people," and burned the fat of the sin offering on the altar.

The burnt offering was the offering of the whole life to God (chapter 1). Once sin had been dealt with, priest and people gave themselves wholly to God again. That is always the order. First forgiveness, then dedication. We do not give ourselves to God in order to be forgiven. We give ourselves to Him because we have been forgiven (Romans 12:1).

16:26 *And the one who lets the goat go for Azazel shall wash his garments and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp.*

"And the one who lets the goat go for Azazel shall wash his garments and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp." The man who led the goat away had been close to the sins laid on it. He had to be washed before he came back. Sin is unclean, even when it is being carried away.

16:27-28 *And the bull of the sin offering and the goat of the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, he shall bring out to the outside of the camp, and they shall burn in the fire their skins and their flesh and their dung. And the one who burns them shall wash his garments and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp.*

"And the bull of the sin offering and the goat of the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, he shall bring out to the outside of the camp." Their bodies were burned there, skin, flesh and all. The man who burned them washed and bathed before coming back.

Hebrews uses this very verse. "For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, so that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate" (Hebrews 13:11-12). Jesus was crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem, in the place of shame, where the sin offering was burned. Hebrews then calls us: "Therefore let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:13). We are not ashamed to stand with Him there.

16:29-31 *"And it shall be for you a statute forever: in the seventh month, on the tenth of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and you shall not do any work, the native and the sojourner who sojourns in your midst. For on this day he shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins before the LORD you shall be clean. It* ***is*** *a Sabbath of Sabbath rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls;* ***it is*** *a statute forever.*

Now God told the people their part. "It shall be for you a statute forever: in the seventh month, on the tenth of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and you shall not do any work." The seventh month in Israel's calendar falls in our September or October. To "afflict your souls" means to humble yourselves before God. In practice it came to mean fasting, going without food, along with sorrow over sin. By the time of the New Testament this day was simply called "the Fast" (Acts 27:9). Jews today still keep it as Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

The people did no work at all, "the native and the sojourner," the Israelite and the foreigner living among them. "For on this day he shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins before the LORD you shall be clean." They could not add anything to it. The priest did the work. They humbled themselves, rested, and received what God provided.

That is exactly how salvation works. We do not work for it. We stop trusting our own works, humble ourselves, and receive what Christ has done. "It is a Sabbath of Sabbath rest for you." The

Sabbath was the seventh day, Israel's day of rest from work (Exodus 20:8-11). This day was called the highest kind of Sabbath, a full rest.

16:32-34 *And the priest whom he anoints and whose hand he fills to serve as priest in place of his father shall make atonement; and he shall put on the linen garments, the garments of holiness. And he shall make atonement for the sanctuary of holiness; and for the tent of meeting and for the altar he shall make atonement; and for the priests and for all the people of the assembly he shall make atonement. And this shall be for you a statute forever, to make atonement for the sons of Israel for all their sins once in the year." And he did as the LORD had commanded Moses.*

The law looked ahead to the high priests after Aaron, "the priest whom he anoints and whose hand he fills to serve as priest in place of his father." Each one would wear the linen garments and make atonement for the sanctuary, the tent, the altar, the priests and "all the people of the assembly." "And this shall be for you a statute forever, to make atonement for the sons of Israel for all their sins once in the year." Then the chapter ends simply: "And he did as the LORD had commanded Moses."

Once in the year. Year after year, the same blood, the same goat, the same walk behind the veil. Hebrews says this repetition was itself a message. "But in these there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins" (Hebrews 10:3-4). If the sacrifices had truly finished the job, they would have stopped. They never stopped, because they were shadows of something better.

And then something better came. "But Christ, having appeared as high priest of the coming good things," entered "nor through blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood," "once for all into the holy places, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:11-12). Aaron went in once a year. Christ went in once for all. Aaron came out and had to go in again next year. Christ "sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12), because the work was finished. On the cross He said, "It has been finished" (John 19:30).

When Jesus died, "the veil of the temple was torn into two from top to bottom" (Matthew 27:51). From top to bottom: God tore it. The way into His presence that had been closed since this chapter was now open. That is why Hebrews can say, "Having therefore, brothers, confidence for the entrance into the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh," "let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10:19-20, 22). The high priest could go in once a year, trembling, in a cloud of incense. Every believer in Christ can now come to God any day, with confidence, through Him.

The Day of Atonement also looks ahead for the nation of Israel. Zechariah says that one day God will pour out on Jerusalem "a spirit of grace and supplications; and they will look to Me, to Him whom they have pierced; and they will mourn over Him" (Zechariah 12:10). "On that day there will be a fountain opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity" (Zechariah 13:1). Paul says "all Israel will be saved," when God will "take away their sins" (Romans 11:26-27). Many Bible teachers believe that the great national day of mourning and cleansing for Israel, when they turn to their Messiah at His return, is the final fulfillment of the Day of Atonement. We will look at this again in chapter 23.

What does this chapter teach us now? God is holy, and sin is serious enough that it takes blood and death to deal with it. But God loves sinners enough to make a way. We do not need a high priest on earth, a goat, or a yearly fast to be forgiven. We have "a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God" (Hebrews 4:14). He paid for our sins and took them away. "Let us therefore come with boldness to the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16).

Chapter 16 Summary

After the death of Nadab and Abihu, the LORD told Moses that Aaron could not come behind the veil whenever he wished, but only once a year on the Day of Atonement, with blood. Aaron bathed and put on plain linen garments. He offered a bull as a sin offering for himself and his house, brought coals from the altar and incense behind the veil so that the cloud covered the mercy seat, and spattered the bull's blood on and before the mercy seat. Lots were cast over two goats. One, for the LORD, was killed as a sin offering for the people, and its blood was brought behind the veil. The holy place, the tent of meeting and the altar were cleansed with the blood. Then Aaron laid both hands on the living goat, confessed all Israel's sins over it, and sent it away into the wilderness to a land cut off. Aaron changed his garments and offered burnt offerings, and the bodies of the sin offerings were burned outside the camp. On the tenth day of the seventh month every year, the people were to afflict their souls and do no work, for on that day atonement was made to cleanse them from all their sins. Hebrews shows that Christ, our great High Priest, entered heaven itself with His own blood once for all, and opened the way for us to come to God.

Chapter 16 Study Questions

1. What event does the chapter look back to, and why does that matter for what follows? (16:1-2)

2. What did Aaron wear on the Day of Atonement, and how was it different from his usual garments? (16:4)

3. What was the mercy seat, and what happened there on this day? (16:2, 14-15)

4. Why did Aaron have to offer a bull for himself first? How is Jesus different (Hebrews 7:26-27)? (16:6, 11)

5. What happened to each of the two goats? What does each one show about atonement? (16:8-10, 15, 20-22)

6. What did Aaron do with his hands over the living goat, and what did he confess? (16:21)

7. Where were the bodies of the sin offerings burned, and how does Hebrews 13:11-13 use this? (16:27)

8. What were the people told to do on this day, and what were they told not to do? What does that teach about how we receive salvation? (16:29-31)

9. Aaron went behind the veil once a year. Hebrews 10:19-22 says we can draw near with confidence. How should that change the way you pray?

10. Psalm 103:12 says God removes our sins as far as the east is from the west. Is there a sin you keep carrying that God has already taken away? What would it mean to leave it with Him?

Chapter 17: The Life Is in the Blood

Scripture

17:1-9 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and to his sons and to all the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'This ***is*** the thing which the LORD has commanded, saying, "Any man of the house of Israel who slaughters an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or who slaughters ***it*** outside the camp, and has not brought it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to bring ***it*** near ***as*** an offering to the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD, blood shall be counted to that man; he has shed blood, and that man shall be cut off from among his people, so that the sons of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they are sacrificing on the face of the field, and they shall bring them to the LORD, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, to the priest, and they shall sacrifice them ***as*** sacrifices of peace offerings to the LORD. And the priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the LORD ***at*** the entrance of the tent of meeting, and he shall make the fat smoke for a soothing aroma to the LORD. And they shall no longer sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat demons, after whom they prostitute themselves. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations."' And you shall say to them, 'Any man of the house of Israel, or of the sojourner who sojourns in their midst, who offers up a burnt offering or a sacrifice, and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to offer it to the LORD, then that man shall be cut off from his kinsmen.

17:10-16 And any man of the house of Israel, or of the sojourner who sojourns in their midst, who eats any blood, then I will set My face against the soul that eats the blood, and I will cut it off from among its people. For the life of the flesh ***is*** in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it ***is*** the blood ***that*** makes atonement by the life. Therefore I have said to the sons of Israel, "No soul of you shall eat blood, and the sojourner who sojourns in your midst shall not eat blood." And any man of the sons of Israel, or of the sojourner who sojourns in their midst, who hunts game, a living thing or a bird which may be eaten, then he shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust. For ***as for*** the life of all flesh, its blood ***is*** its life. And I have said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh ***is*** its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off." And every soul that eats a carcass or a torn ***animal***, whether among the native or among the sojourner, then he shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening, and he shall be clean. And if he does not wash ***them*** and does not bathe his flesh, then he shall bear his iniquity.'"

Chapter 17 Preview

Chapter 17 opens a new section of Leviticus. Chapters 1 to 16 dealt mostly with offerings, priests and cleansing. Chapters 17 to 26 are often called the Holiness Code, because they show how a redeemed people should live as holy in every part of life. It begins with blood.

Two commands stand at the center of this short chapter. First, animals offered as sacrifices had to be brought to the tent of meeting, not killed out in the field, and no Israelite was to sacrifice to "the goat demons" any longer. Second, no one, Israelite or foreigner, could eat blood. The reason is one of the key verses of the whole Bible: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it

to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls" (17:11). This verse explains why the Old Testament sacrifices required blood, and why the blood of Jesus Christ is precious.

Chapter 17 Study

17:1-2 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and to his sons and to all the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'This **is** the thing which the LORD has commanded, saying,*

"Speak to Aaron and to his sons and to all the sons of Israel." This message was for everyone: priests and people alike. "This is the thing which the LORD has commanded." What follows is not Moses' idea. It is God's command.

17:3-4 *"Any man of the house of Israel who slaughters an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or who slaughters **it** outside the camp, and has not brought it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to bring **it** near **as** an offering to the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD, blood shall be counted to that man; he has shed blood, and that man shall be cut off from among his people,*

"Any man of the house of Israel who slaughters an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or who slaughters it outside the camp," and did not bring it to the tent of meeting as an offering, "blood shall be counted to that man; he has shed blood."

This is a strong statement. Killing such an animal anywhere but at God's altar was counted like bloodshed, almost like murder. Why? While Israel lived in the wilderness, close together around the tabernacle, these animals were the kind used for offerings. Their life belonged to God. To kill one and treat its blood as nothing was to take for oneself what belonged to Him.

"And that man shall be cut off from among his people." To be cut off is a serious penalty that appears often in Leviticus. Bible teachers explain it in a few ways: being put out of the community, dying early by God's own hand, or having one's family line come to an end (see the note at 7:20). Whatever it meant exactly, it showed that this was no small matter.

Later, when Israel was spread across the land, God allowed them to kill animals for food at home, as long as they poured out the blood (Deuteronomy 12:15-16). So this rule fit Israel's life in the wilderness camp, when the tabernacle was close by.

17:5-7 *so that the sons of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they are sacrificing on the face of the field, and they shall bring them to the LORD, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, to the priest, and they shall sacrifice them **as** sacrifices of peace offerings to the LORD. And the priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the LORD **at** the entrance of the tent of meeting, and he shall make the fat smoke for a soothing aroma to the LORD. And they shall no longer sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat demons, after whom they prostitute themselves. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations."'*

Here is the reason. "So that the sons of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they are sacrificing on the face of the field," and bring them "to the LORD, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, to the priest." There they would offer them "as sacrifices of peace offerings," the shared meal with God

(chapter 3). The priest would sprinkle the blood on the altar and burn the fat as "a soothing aroma to the LORD."

"And they shall no longer sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat demons, after whom they prostitute themselves." The word goat demons refers to false gods or evil spirits that pagans of that time pictured in the form of goats and believed lived in desert places. The words "no longer" show that some Israelites had been doing this, perhaps habits picked up in Egypt (Joshua 24:14). To "prostitute themselves" is God's strong way of describing idolatry. Israel belonged to the LORD as a bride belongs to her husband. Worshiping other gods was unfaithfulness.

Paul says something very close to this. "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers with the demons" (1 Corinthians 10:20). Behind false worship there are real spiritual powers. God's people must not mix worship of Him with anything else.

17:8-9 *And you shall say to them, 'Any man of the house of Israel, or of the sojourner who sojourns in their midst, who offers up a burnt offering or a sacrifice, and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to offer it to the LORD, then that man shall be cut off from his kinsmen.*

This rule applied to "the sojourner who sojourns in their midst" as well. A sojourner was a foreigner living among Israel. Anyone who offered "a burnt offering or a sacrifice" had to bring it to the tent of meeting. There was one God, one altar and one place to come. The same is true for us in a far greater way. There is one God, and "one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). We cannot come to God by any way we choose.

17:10 *And any man of the house of Israel, or of the sojourner who sojourns in their midst, who eats any blood, then I will set My face against the soul that eats the blood, and I will cut it off from among its people.*

"Any man of the house of Israel, or of the sojourner who sojourns in their midst, who eats any blood, then I will set My face against the soul that eats the blood." This is one of the few places where God says He Himself will act against the one who breaks His law: "I will cut it off from among its people." The ban on eating blood goes back before Moses. God told Noah, "Only flesh with its life, its blood, you shall not eat" (Genesis 9:4).

17:11 *For the life of the flesh **is** in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it **is** the blood **that** makes atonement by the life.*

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life."

This verse explains the whole system of sacrifice. Let us take it in three parts.

First, "the life of the flesh is in the blood." Life depends on blood. When the blood is poured out, the life goes with it. So shed blood means a life given up in death.

Second, "I have given it to you on the altar." God gave the blood. The sacrifice was not man's clever way to buy God's favor. It was God's gift to sinners, a way He provided for them to be forgiven.

Third, "it is the blood that makes atonement by the life." The word for life here is the same as the word for soul. A life is given in place of a life. The animal died in the place of the sinner. This is what we call substitution. The soul that sins deserves to die (Ezekiel 18:4), but God accepted the life of the substitute in his place.

That is why Hebrews says, "apart from shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22). And that is why the blood of Jesus is at the center of the gospel. We were redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19). "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). At the Last Supper Jesus said, "this is My blood, the blood of the new covenant, which is being poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

This does not mean there is some magic power in blood itself. The blood stands for a life given up in death. When Scripture speaks of the blood of Christ, it means His death on the cross in our place.

17:12 *Therefore I have said to the sons of Israel, "No soul of you shall eat blood, and the sojourner who sojourns in your midst shall not eat blood."*

"Therefore I have said to the sons of Israel," God says, "No soul of you shall eat blood." The word therefore ties this rule to verse 11. Blood was holy because it was God's chosen means of atonement. Israel was not to treat it as food. Every time they drained an animal of its blood, they were reminded that life belongs to God and that atonement costs a life.

17:13-14 *And any man of the sons of Israel, or of the sojourner who sojourns in their midst, who hunts game, a living thing or a bird which may be eaten, then he shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust. For **as for** the life of all flesh, its blood **is** its life. And I have said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh **is** its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off."*

Even game killed in hunting, "a living thing or a bird which may be eaten," was covered by this law. Wild animals could not be offered on the altar, but the hunter still had to "pour out its blood and cover it with dust." He gave it back to the ground, as it were, with respect. The reason is repeated: "the life of all flesh is its blood."

Do these laws on blood apply to Christians? In Acts 15, the apostles asked Gentile believers "to abstain from things sacrificed to idols and blood and what is strangled and sexual immorality" (Acts 15:29). Some believe that rule about blood is still binding today, since it goes back to Noah. Others believe it was given so that Gentile and Jewish believers could share meals together in peace in that time, and that Jesus made all foods clean (Mark 7:19, "cleansing all the foods"). Believers differ, and we should be gracious with each other on it. What is not in doubt is the lesson: God treats life as precious, and He treats the blood of atonement as holy. We should never treat the blood of Christ lightly (Hebrews 10:29).

17:15-16 *And every soul that eats a carcass or a torn **animal**, whether among the native or among the sojourner, then he shall wash his garments and bathe in water, and he shall be unclean until the evening, and he shall be clean. And if he does not wash **them** and does not bathe his flesh, then he shall bear his iniquity.'"*

"And every soul that eats a carcass or a torn animal," an animal that died on its own or was killed by wild beasts, would not have been drained of blood properly. Eating it made the person unclean until evening. He had to wash his clothes and bathe. This was not a sin offering matter. It was a simple washing.

"And if he does not wash them and does not bathe his flesh, then he shall bear his iniquity." The uncleanness was small, and the remedy was easy. But if a person refused even that simple step, he became guilty. God's ways of cleansing are not hard. The danger is in ignoring them.

What does this chapter teach us now? We do not bring animals to an altar, and we are not under the Law of Moses. But this chapter teaches us the meaning of the cross. Life belongs to God. Sin costs a life. God Himself gave the blood for atonement, and He gave it in the end by giving His own Son. Jesus Christ is the one sacrifice to whom every drop of blood in Leviticus pointed. "To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood" (Revelation 1:5), be the glory.

Chapter 17 Summary

The LORD told Moses that any Israelite who killed an ox, lamb or goat without bringing it to the tent of meeting as an offering was guilty of bloodshed and would be cut off. Israel was to bring its sacrifices to the LORD's altar as peace offerings, and no longer sacrifice to the goat demons. Israelites and foreigners alike had to bring their offerings to the tent of meeting. No one could eat blood, because the life of the flesh is in the blood, and God had given it on the altar to make atonement for their souls. Hunters had to pour out the blood of game and cover it with dust. Anyone who ate an animal that died on its own or was torn by beasts had to wash and bathe, or bear his guilt.

Chapter 17 Study Questions

1. What did an Israelite have to do with an ox, lamb or goat he killed, and what happened if he did not? (17:3-4)

2. What were some Israelites doing that God told them to stop? (17:7)

3. Who besides Israelites had to bring their offerings to the tent of meeting? (17:8-9)

4. What reason does God give for not eating blood? (17:11, 14)

5. According to verse 11, who gave the blood for atonement, and for what purpose? (17:11)

6. What did a hunter have to do with the blood of an animal he killed? (17:13)

7. What happened to someone who would not wash after eating an animal that died on its own? (17:15-16)

8. How does Leviticus 17:11 help you understand why Jesus had to die? How do 1 Peter 1:18-19 and Hebrews 9:22 build on it?

9. Paul warns that behind false worship are real spiritual powers (1 Corinthians 10:20). What things in our culture can compete with God for worship?

10. What does it mean to you that your forgiveness cost the life of Jesus? How might that change the way you take the Lord's Supper?

Chapter 18: Unlawful Sexual Relations

Scripture

18:1-18 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'I ***am*** the LORD your God. According to the deeds of the land of Egypt, in which you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the deeds of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; and in their statutes you shall not walk. My judgments you shall do, and My statutes you shall keep, to walk in them. I ***am*** the LORD your God. And you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, which a man shall do and live by them. I ***am*** the LORD. "'Any man, to any kin of his flesh you shall not draw near to uncover nakedness. I ***am*** the LORD. The nakedness of your father and the nakedness of your mother you shall not uncover; she ***is*** your mother; you shall not uncover her nakedness. The nakedness of your father's wife you shall not uncover; it ***is*** your father's nakedness. The nakedness of your sister, the daughter of your father or the daughter of your mother, born ***in*** the house or born outside, their nakedness you shall not uncover. The nakedness of your son's daughter or of your daughter's daughter, their nakedness you shall not uncover; for they ***are*** your own nakedness. The nakedness of the daughter of your father's wife, born of your father, she ***is*** your sister; you shall not uncover her nakedness. The nakedness of your father's sister you shall not uncover; she ***is*** your father's kin. The nakedness of your mother's sister you shall not uncover, for she ***is*** your mother's kin. The nakedness of your father's brother you shall not uncover; to his wife you shall not draw near; she ***is*** your aunt. The nakedness of your daughter-in-law you shall not uncover; she ***is*** your son's wife; you shall not uncover her nakedness. The nakedness of your brother's wife you shall not uncover; it ***is*** your brother's nakedness. The nakedness of a woman and her daughter you shall not uncover; her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter you shall not take to uncover her nakedness; they ***are*** kinswomen; it ***is*** lewdness. And a woman to her sister you shall not take ***as*** a rival, to uncover her nakedness besides her, in her lifetime.

18:19-30 And to a woman in the impurity of her uncleanness you shall not draw near to uncover her nakedness. And to the wife of your neighbor you shall not give your intercourse for seed, to become unclean by her. And ***any*** of your seed you shall not give to make ***them*** pass over to Molech, and you shall not profane the name of your God. I ***am*** the LORD. And with a male you shall not lie ***as*** the lyings of a woman; it ***is*** an abomination. And with any animal you shall not give your intercourse, to become unclean by it; and a woman shall not stand before an animal to mate with it; it ***is*** perversion. "'Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations which I am sending away from before you have become unclean. And the land became unclean, and I visited its iniquity on it, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. And you, you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, and you shall not do any of all these abominations, the native or the sojourner who sojourns in your midst, for all these abominations the men of the land who ***were*** before you did, and the land became unclean, so that the land does not vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation which ***was*** before you. For whoever does any of all these abominations, the souls who do ***them*** shall be cut off from among their people. And you shall keep My charge, not to do any of the statutes of the abominations which

have been done before you, and you shall not make yourselves unclean by them. I ***am*** the LORD your God.'"

Chapter 18 Preview

Chapter 18 deals with sexual relationships that God forbade to Israel. Most of the chapter is about close family members: parents, stepparents, brothers and sisters, grandchildren, aunts and in-laws. Then it names adultery, the giving of children to the false god Molech, relations between two men, and relations with animals. The chapter begins and ends with the same warning: do not live like the people of Egypt, where you came from, or like the people of Canaan, where you are going. Their practices had made the land itself unclean.

The SLB uses the phrase "uncover nakedness," which is the Bible's modest way of speaking of sexual relations. This study will speak just as modestly. Some of these subjects are painful, and some readers will carry hurts from their own families or their own past. If that is you, please read on. The chapter is strict because God is good, and the New Testament shows that the same God who calls us to purity also washes, forgives and restores. Leaders using this chapter with a group should read it ahead of time, keep the discussion modest, and be ready to listen with care.

Chapter 18 Study

18:1-2 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'I **am** the LORD your God.*

"Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them," and the first words are "I am the LORD your God." The chapter begins not with a rule but with a relationship. Before God tells Israel what not to do, He tells them who He is. The words "I am the LORD" or "I am the LORD your God" are repeated six times in this chapter. God's commands rest on His character and on His covenant with His people. They obeyed because He was their God.

18:3 *According to the deeds of the land of Egypt, in which you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the deeds of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; and in their statutes you shall not walk.*

"According to the deeds of the land of Egypt, in which you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the deeds of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do." Israel was caught between two cultures. Behind them was Egypt. Ahead of them was Canaan. Both had ways of life that God called unclean. Ancient records show that marriages between brothers and sisters were known in Egypt, especially in the royal family. And the Old Testament itself tells us that the worship of the nations in Canaan included cult prostitutes (Deuteronomy 23:17; 1 Kings 14:24).

God's people were not to take their standards from the culture around them, the old one or the new one. That is still true. Paul says, "do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2).

18:4-5 *My judgments you shall do, and My statutes you shall keep, to walk in them. I **am** the LORD your God. And you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, which a man shall do and live by them. I **am** the LORD.*

"My judgments you shall do, and My statutes you shall keep, to walk in them." Then verse 5: "And you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, which a man shall do and live by them. I am the LORD."

What does "live by them" mean? For Israel, God's people already redeemed from Egypt, it meant that keeping His law was the way to a full and blessed life in the land God was giving them. These laws were not a cage. They were a path of life.

Paul quotes this verse twice (Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:12). His point is that if anyone tried to be made right with God by the law, he would have to do all of it, all the time, with no failures. No one has ever done that except Jesus Christ. So righteousness before God cannot come by keeping the law. It comes by faith in Christ, who kept the law perfectly and died for those who broke it (Galatians 3:13). We read this chapter, then, as God's good design for life, not as a ladder to climb up to Him.

18:6 *"'Any man, to any kin of his flesh you shall not draw near to uncover nakedness. I **am** the LORD.*

"Any man, to any kin of his flesh you shall not draw near to uncover nakedness." This is the heading for verses 7 to 18. Kin of his flesh means close relatives, family by blood or by marriage. The family was to be a safe place, where love was not confused with sexual desire.

18:7-11 *The nakedness of your father and the nakedness of your mother you shall not uncover; she **is** your mother; you shall not uncover her nakedness. The nakedness of your father's wife you shall not uncover; it **is** your father's nakedness. The nakedness of your sister, the daughter of your father or the daughter of your mother, born **in** the house or born outside, their nakedness you shall not uncover. The nakedness of your son's daughter or of your daughter's daughter, their nakedness you shall not uncover; for they **are** your own nakedness. The nakedness of the daughter of your father's wife, born of your father, she **is** your sister; you shall not uncover her nakedness.*

The list begins with the closest relationships. A man must not have relations with his mother, nor with "your father's wife," meaning a stepmother. He must not have relations with his sister or half-sister, "born in the house or born outside," whether raised in the same home or not. He must not with his granddaughter, "for they are your own nakedness," that is, they are part of his own family and his own flesh.

Paul was shocked that a man in the church at Corinth had "the wife of his father," a sin he said was not even accepted among pagans (1 Corinthians 5:1). God's standard did not change from Leviticus to the church.

You might ask whether Abraham married his half-sister Sarah (Genesis 20:12). He did, and Jacob married two sisters (Genesis 29). Those things happened before this law was given. Here God made His will plain for His people, and from now on those marriages were forbidden.

18:12-16 *The nakedness of your father's sister you shall not uncover; she **is** your father's kin. The nakedness of your mother's sister you shall not uncover, for she **is** your mother's kin. The nakedness of your father's brother you shall not uncover; to his wife you shall not draw near; she **is** your aunt. The nakedness of your daughter-in-law you shall not uncover; she **is** your son's wife; you shall not uncover her nakedness. The nakedness of your brother's wife you shall not uncover; it **is** your brother's nakedness.*

The list goes on to aunts, both a father's sister and a mother's sister, and an uncle's wife. Then it moves to in-laws: "your daughter-in-law" and "your brother's wife." Marriage made these women part of the family, and the same protection covered them.

The law against taking a brother's wife had one exception, given later. If a man died without a son, his brother was to marry the widow to carry on his name and care for her (Deuteronomy 25:5-6). That was a duty of family love, not a desire for another man's wife. John the Baptist told Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have the wife of your brother" (Mark 6:18), because Herod had taken his living brother's wife, and it cost John his life.

18:17-18 *The nakedness of a woman and her daughter you shall not uncover; her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter you shall not take to uncover her nakedness; they **are** kinswomen; it **is** lewdness. And a woman to her sister you shall not take **as** a rival, to uncover her nakedness besides her, in her lifetime.*

A man must not have relations with "a woman and her daughter," or with her granddaughter. "It is lewdness," a shameful wickedness. And "a woman to her sister you shall not take as a rival" while the first wife was alive.

Jacob's life shows what kind of rivalry this verse means. Leah and Rachel were sisters married to the same man, and their home was full of jealousy and pain (Genesis 29 to 30). Most teachers read verse 18 as forbidding a man to marry his wife's sister while his wife lives. Some read it more broadly as speaking against having more than one wife at all. Either way, God's plan from the beginning was one man and one woman, joined as one flesh (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6).

18:19-20 *And to a woman in the impurity of her uncleanness you shall not draw near to uncover her nakedness. And to the wife of your neighbor you shall not give your intercourse for seed, to become unclean by her.*

The next laws move beyond the family. A husband was not to come to his wife "in the impurity of her uncleanness," that is, during her monthly period (15:19-24). And "to the wife of your neighbor you shall not give your intercourse." This is adultery, already forbidden in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:14). It is a sin against God, against one's own marriage, and against the neighbor whose marriage is broken. "Marriage is to be honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers" (Hebrews 13:4).

18:21 *And **any** of your seed you shall not give to make **them** pass over to Molech, and you shall not profane the name of your God. I **am** the LORD.*

"And any of your seed you shall not give to make them pass over to Molech, and you shall not profane the name of your God." Seed here means children. Molech was a god worshiped by the Ammonites and other peoples of the region, and the worship of Molech involved making children "pass over," through fire, as an offering (2 Kings 23:10). It was child sacrifice.

Why is this law in a chapter about sexual sin? Both sins twist God's gift of life and family into something evil. Both were part of the pagan religion of Canaan. And both treat other people, a spouse, a child, as things to be used for one's own ends. Sadly, Israel later did this very thing (2 Kings 16:3; Jeremiah 32:35). Every generation has its own ways of sacrificing children for the sake of what adults want. God sees, and He calls it evil.

18:22 *And with a male you shall not lie **as** the lyings of a woman; it **is** an abomination.*

"And with a male you shall not lie as the lyings of a woman; it is an abomination." This verse forbids sexual relations between two men. An abomination is something God finds detestable. The same word is used for many sins in Scripture, including dishonest scales (Deuteronomy 25:16), pride and lying (Proverbs 6:16-19). So it is not a word used for this sin alone.

I want to handle this verse plainly and kindly. Plainly, because God's Word is clear, and the New Testament says the same thing. Paul writes that men who lie with males will not inherit the kingdom of God, in a list that also includes the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, the greedy and drunkards (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). He says the same in Romans 1:26-27 and 1 Timothy 1:10. God's design for sexual love is between a husband and wife in marriage. That is not one culture's idea. It goes back to creation, "male and female" (Matthew 19:4).

Kindly, because the very next words Paul writes are these: "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 and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). There were people in the church at Corinth who had lived this way, and others who had been thieves, drunkards and adulterers. They were all washed by the same blood. No one is beyond the reach of the gospel, and no one is saved by being better than his neighbor.

Notice also what the verse speaks about: an act. Many people feel desires they did not choose, and some fight them faithfully for years. Feeling a temptation is not the same as giving in to it. Jesus "has been tempted in all things according to likeness, without sin" (Hebrews 4:15), and He is able to help. Christians should be the first to welcome anyone who is struggling, to listen, and to walk with them. We should never mock or single out one sin while excusing our own. The ground at the foot of the cross is level.

18:23 *And with any animal you shall not give your intercourse, to become unclean by it; and a woman shall not stand before an animal to mate with it; it **is** perversion.*

"And with any animal you shall not give your intercourse," and a woman must not do so either. "It is perversion," a confusion of God's created order. Such acts were known in the religions of the region. God simply forbids them. This is the end of the list.

18:24-25 *"'Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations which I am sending away from before you have become unclean. And the land became unclean, and I visited its iniquity on it, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.*

"Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations which I am sending away from before you have become unclean." Then God gives a striking picture: "the land became unclean, and I visited its iniquity on it, and the land vomited out its inhabitants."

The land is pictured as a body made sick by what it has swallowed. God had waited a long time with the Canaanites. Centuries before, He told Abraham that "the iniquity of the Amorite" was "not yet complete" (Genesis 15:16). Now it was. When Israel went into the land, it would be God's judgment on those nations for these sins. This is a hard truth. But it shows that God does not judge quickly or without cause, and that sin has real effects even on the land.

18:26-28 *And you, you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, and you shall not do any of all these abominations, the native or the sojourner who sojourns in your midst, for all these abominations the men of the land who **were** before you did, and the land became unclean, so that the land does not vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation which **was** before you.*

"And you, you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, and you shall not do any of all these abominations, the native or the sojourner." Then comes the warning: if Israel did the same things, "the land does not vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation which was before you." In other words, keep these laws so that it will not happen to you.

God had no favorites when it came to sin. Israel was not given the land because they were better than the Canaanites (Deuteronomy 9:5). If they lived the same way, they would be treated the same way. Sadly, that is what happened centuries later, when first Israel and then Judah were carried off into exile.

18:29-30 *For whoever does any of all these abominations, the souls who do **them** shall be cut off from among their people. And you shall keep My charge, not to do any of the statutes of the abominations which have been done before you, and you shall not make yourselves unclean by them. I **am** the LORD your God.'"*

"For whoever does any of all these abominations, the souls who do them shall be cut off from among their people." The chapter ends as it began: "And you shall keep My charge," and "I am the LORD your God."

What does this chapter teach us now? The laws about sacrifice were fulfilled in Christ, but God's standard for sexual purity was not set aside. The New Testament repeats it again and again. "Flee sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18). "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you" (1 Corinthians 6:19). God gave these limits to protect families, children, marriages and the weak. A home where these lines are kept is a safe home.

If you have broken these laws, or if someone has broken them against you, there is hope. Jesus did not come to condemn but to save. To the woman caught in adultery He said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more" (John 8:11). He forgives the guilty who repent, and He is near to the one who has been harmed. If you have been harmed by a family member, it was not your fault, and you should not carry it alone. Please talk to a pastor, a counselor or someone you trust, and if anyone is in danger, get help right away.

Chapter 18 Summary

The LORD told Israel, "I am the LORD your God," and warned them not to live by the practices of Egypt or of Canaan, but to keep His statutes and live by them. He forbade sexual relations with close relatives: mother and stepmother, sister and half-sister, granddaughter, aunts, the wife of an uncle, daughter-in-law, brother's wife, a woman and her daughter or granddaughter, and a wife's sister as a rival during the wife's life. He forbade relations during a woman's period, adultery with a neighbor's wife, giving children to Molech, relations between two men, and relations with animals. These were the sins that had made the land of Canaan unclean, so that it vomited out its people. If Israel did the same, the land would vomit them out too. The New Testament keeps the same standard of purity, and it also proclaims that sinners of every kind can be washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Chapter 18 Study Questions

1. What two lands did God tell Israel not to copy, and why? (18:3)

2. What does God say about the person who keeps His statutes? How does Paul use this verse in Galatians 3:12? (18:5)

3. Why do you think God gave such a careful list of family relationships? (18:6-18)

4. What was Molech worship, and why do you think it appears in this chapter? (18:21)

5. What does verse 22 forbid, and where does the New Testament say the same thing? (18:22; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

6. What picture does God use for what the Canaanites' sins did to the land? (18:24-25)

7. Did God treat Israel differently from the Canaanites when it came to these sins? (18:26-28)

8. What did Paul say right after his list of sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10? What does verse 11 mean for people with a past?

9. In what ways does our culture today shape how people think about sex and marriage? Where do you need God's Word to renew your mind (Romans 12:2)?

10. How can you and your church show both God's standard and God's welcome to people who struggle with sexual sin?

Chapter 19: Be Holy, for I Am Holy

Scripture

19:1-18 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for holy ***am*** I, the LORD your God. Each man, his mother and his father you shall fear, and My Sabbaths you shall keep. I ***am*** the LORD your God. Do not turn to the worthless idols, and gods of molten metal you shall not make for yourselves. I ***am*** the LORD your God. "'And when you sacrifice a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD, for your acceptance you shall sacrifice it. On the day of your sacrifice it shall be eaten, and on the next day; and what remains until the third day shall be burned with fire. And if it is eaten at all on the third day, it ***is*** a foul thing; it shall not be accepted. And everyone who eats it shall bear his iniquity, for he has profaned the holy thing of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from its kinsmen. "'And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not finish the edge of your field in reaping, and the gleaning of your harvest you shall not gather. And your vineyard you shall not glean, and the fallen grapes of your vineyard you shall not gather; for the poor and for the sojourner you shall leave them. I ***am*** the LORD your God. "'You shall not steal, and you shall not deceive, and you shall not deal falsely, each man with his fellow. And you shall not swear by My name for falsehood, and ***so*** profane the name of your God. I ***am*** the LORD. "'You shall not oppress your neighbor, and you shall not rob ***him***. The wages of a hired laborer shall not stay overnight with you until morning. You shall not curse a deaf ***person***, and before a blind ***person*** you shall not put a stumbling block; and you shall fear your God. I ***am*** the LORD. "'You shall not do injustice in judgment; you shall not lift up the face of a poor ***person***, and you shall not honor the face of a great ***person***; in righteousness you shall judge your fellow. You shall not go about ***as*** a slanderer among your people; you shall not stand against the blood of your neighbor. I ***am*** the LORD. "'You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall surely rebuke your fellow, and you shall not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, and you shall not keep ***a grudge*** against the sons of your people; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I ***am*** the LORD.

19:19-37 "'My statutes you shall keep. Your livestock you shall not make mate ***with*** two kinds; your field you shall not sow ***with*** two kinds; and a garment of two kinds, of mixed material, shall not go up on you. "'And a man, when he lies with a woman ***with*** an emission of seed, and she ***is*** a female slave betrothed to a man, and she has not at all been ransomed, or freedom has not been given to her, ***there*** shall be an inquiry; they shall not be put to death, because she was not freed. And he shall bring his guilt offering to the LORD, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, a ram of guilt offering. And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering before the LORD for his sin which he has sinned; and it shall be forgiven him, from his sin which he has sinned. "'And when you come into the land and plant every tree for food, then you shall treat its foreskin as uncircumcised, its fruit; three years it shall be uncircumcised to you; it shall not be eaten. And in the fourth year all its fruit shall be a holy thing, praises to the LORD. And in the fifth year you shall eat its fruit, to increase its produce for you. I ***am*** the LORD your God. "'You shall not eat ***anything*** with the blood. You shall not practice divination, and you shall not practice soothsaying. You shall not round off the edge of your head, and you shall not ruin the edge of your beard. And a cutting for a soul you shall not put in your flesh, and the writing of a

tattoo you shall not put on yourselves. I ***am*** the LORD. "'Do not profane your daughter by making her a prostitute, so that the land does not prostitute itself and the land become full of lewdness. My Sabbaths you shall keep, and My sanctuary you shall fear. I ***am*** the LORD. "'Do not turn to the mediums and to the spiritists; do not seek ***them*** out, to become unclean by them. I ***am*** the LORD your God. "'Before gray hair you shall rise up, and you shall honor the face of an old ***man***; and you shall fear your God. I ***am*** the LORD. "'And when a sojourner sojourns with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. Like the native among you shall the sojourner who sojourns with you be to you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. I ***am*** the LORD your God. "'You shall not do injustice in judgment, in measurement, in weight, and in volume. Balances of righteousness, weights of righteousness, an ephah of righteousness, and a hin of righteousness you shall have. I ***am*** the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt. And you shall keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and do them. I ***am*** the LORD.'"

Chapter 19 Preview

Chapter 19 may be the best known chapter in Leviticus, because it holds the words Jesus called the second great commandment: "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (19:18). It begins with God's call, "You shall be holy, for holy am I, the LORD your God," and then shows what holiness looks like in everyday life. It covers honoring parents, keeping the Sabbath, leaving grain for the poor, paying workers on time, treating the deaf and the blind with care, judging fairly, loving the foreigner, respecting the elderly and using honest weights.

At first the chapter seems to jump from one subject to another. Worship and farming, business and mourning customs, idols and tattoos all sit side by side. But that is the point. Holiness is not only for the tabernacle. It reaches into the field, the courtroom, the marketplace and the family. Again and again the chapter ends a command with "I am the LORD." These laws rest on who God is.

Chapter 19 Study

19:1-2 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for holy* ***am*** *I, the LORD your God.*

"Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel." This chapter was for everyone, not just the priests. "You shall be holy, for holy am I, the LORD your God."

To be holy is to be set apart for God, different from the world around us because we belong to Him. This is the key verse of Leviticus (see also 11:44-45; 20:26). Peter quotes it to the church: "as the One who called you is holy, you yourselves also be holy in all your conduct, because it has been written," and then, "Be holy, because I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16). God's call to holiness did not end with the Law. It is still His call to us, now made possible by His Spirit living in us.

19:3 *Each man, his mother and his father you shall fear, and My Sabbaths you shall keep. I **am** the LORD your God.*

"Each man, his mother and his father you shall fear, and My Sabbaths you shall keep." To fear one's parents here means to honor and respect them, not to be afraid of them. Notice that mother is named first, which is unusual in the Bible. Both parents are to be honored equally. This is the fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12), which Paul calls "the first commandment with a promise" (Ephesians 6:2).

The Sabbath was the seventh day of the week, Saturday, a day of rest from work for Israel, given as a sign of God's covenant with them (Exodus 31:13). Israel was commanded to keep it holy. Believers today differ on how the Sabbath applies to Christians. Some keep Saturday. Many worship on Sunday, the Lord's day, the day of Christ's resurrection, and see in it a day of rest and worship. Others believe the Sabbath was a shadow fulfilled in Christ, who gives us rest (Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 4:9-10). Paul says, "Let each be fully assured in his own mind" (Romans 14:5).

19:4 *Do not turn to the worthless idols, and gods of molten metal you shall not make for yourselves. I **am** the LORD your God.*

"Do not turn to the worthless idols, and gods of molten metal you shall not make for yourselves." These are the first and second commandments in short form (Exodus 20:3-4). The word for idols here has the sense of nothings. Idols are empty. They cannot see, hear or save. Anything we put in God's place is just as empty in the end.

19:5-8 *"'And when you sacrifice a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD, for your acceptance you shall sacrifice it. On the day of your sacrifice it shall be eaten, and on the next day; and what remains until the third day shall be burned with fire. And if it is eaten at all on the third day, it **is** a foul thing; it shall not be accepted. And everyone who eats it shall bear his iniquity, for he has profaned the holy thing of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from its kinsmen.*

A peace offering, the fellowship meal with God (chapter 3), had to be eaten on the day it was offered or the next day. Anything left until the third day had to be burned. If someone ate it on the third day, "it is a foul thing; it shall not be accepted," and the eater was cut off, "for he has profaned the holy thing of the LORD."

Why this rule? Meat spoiled quickly in the desert heat, so it may have been a matter of health. But the reason God gives is holiness. This meat had been offered to God. It was not to be kept around and eaten carelessly like common leftovers. Worship is not to be treated lightly.

19:9-10 *"'And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not finish the edge of your field in reaping, and the gleaning of your harvest you shall not gather. And your vineyard you shall not glean, and the fallen grapes of your vineyard you shall not gather; for the poor and for the sojourner you shall leave them. I **am** the LORD your God.*

"And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not finish the edge of your field in reaping, and the gleaning of your harvest you shall not gather." Farmers were to leave the corners of their

fields unharvested, and not go back over the field to pick up what was missed. The same went for vineyards. "For the poor and for the sojourner you shall leave them."

This was Israel's way of caring for the poor. It was not a handout. The poor came and worked, gathering for themselves. It kept their dignity. The book of Ruth shows this law in action: Ruth, a poor foreign widow, gleaned in the field of Boaz (Ruth 2:2-3), and through that law God brought her into the family line of King David and of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5).

What does this mean for us? God expects His people to leave room in their lives, their money and their work for the poor. We do not have to squeeze every last dollar out of everything.

19:11-12 *"'You shall not steal, and you shall not deceive, and you shall not deal falsely, each man with his fellow. And you shall not swear by My name for falsehood, and **so** profane the name of your God. I **am** the LORD.*

"You shall not steal, and you shall not deceive, and you shall not deal falsely, each man with his fellow." Then: "you shall not swear by My name for falsehood." These echo the eighth, ninth and third commandments. To swear a false oath in God's name was to use His holy name to cover a lie. Jesus said that His followers should simply be people whose yes means yes and whose no means no (Matthew 5:37).

19:13-14 *"'You shall not oppress your neighbor, and you shall not rob **him**. The wages of a hired laborer shall not stay overnight with you until morning. You shall not curse a deaf **person**, and before a blind **person** you shall not put a stumbling block; and you shall fear your God. I **am** the LORD.*

"You shall not oppress your neighbor, and you shall not rob him. The wages of a hired laborer shall not stay overnight with you until morning." A day laborer lived on what he earned that day. If his pay was held back, his family might go hungry. James warns the rich that "the wage of the workers who mowed your fields, which has been fraudulently kept back by you, cries out" to the Lord (James 5:4). Pay people what you owe them, and pay them on time.

"You shall not curse a deaf person, and before a blind person you shall not put a stumbling block." The deaf could not hear the curse. The blind could not see the stumbling block. No one would know, except God. "And you shall fear your God." Holiness shows most clearly in how we treat people who cannot defend themselves or fight back.

19:15-16 *"'You shall not do injustice in judgment; you shall not lift up the face of a poor **person**, and you shall not honor the face of a great **person**; in righteousness you shall judge your fellow. You shall not go about **as** a slanderer among your people; you shall not stand against the blood of your neighbor. I **am** the LORD.*

"You shall not do injustice in judgment; you shall not lift up the face of a poor person, and you shall not honor the face of a great person." Judges were not to favor the poor out of pity or the rich out of fear. Justice must be fair to everyone. James says the same about favoritism in the church (James 2:1).

"You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people; you shall not stand against the blood of your neighbor." A slanderer spreads damaging talk about others. To stand against the blood of your neighbor probably means to put his life in danger, perhaps by false testimony in court, or to stand by and do nothing when his life is at risk. Gossip can do real harm. God takes our words seriously.

19:17-18 *"'You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall surely rebuke your fellow, and you shall not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, and you shall not keep **a grudge** against the sons of your people; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I **am** the LORD.*

"You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall surely rebuke your fellow, and you shall not bear sin because of him." Notice that the law reaches into the heart. Hatred is forbidden, even if it never shows. The cure is honest, loving correction. If my neighbor has done wrong, I should go to him rather than let resentment grow, or I share in the guilt. Jesus taught the same: "if your brother sins against you, go and reprove him between you and him alone" (Matthew 18:15).

"You shall not take vengeance, and you shall not keep a grudge against the sons of your people; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD."

Here is the great command. When a lawyer asked Jesus which commandment was greatest, He named loving God with all your heart (Deuteronomy 6:5), and then He said, "the second is like it," and He quoted this verse, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). Paul says, "the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in this," and he quotes the same words (Galatians 5:14). James calls it "the royal law" (James 2:8).

In Leviticus, "neighbor" here means a fellow Israelite. But just a few verses later, God tells Israel to love the foreigner as themselves too (19:34). And when someone asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" He told the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37). Our neighbor is anyone God puts in our path who needs mercy. Jesus went further still: "love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44).

19:19 *"'My statutes you shall keep. Your livestock you shall not make mate **with** two kinds; your field you shall not sow **with** two kinds; and a garment of two kinds, of mixed material, shall not go up on you.*

"My statutes you shall keep." Israel was not to breed two kinds of animals together, sow a field with two kinds of seed, or wear "a garment of two kinds, of mixed material." Deuteronomy 22:11 says this meant wool and linen woven together.

Why would God care about mixed seed or fabric? Scripture does not say. Many teachers believe these rules taught Israel, in the details of daily life, to respect the order God set in creation, where everything was made "according to its kind" (Genesis 1:11-12, 24-25), and to stay separate from what was unholy. Some note that the priests' garments did mix wool and linen (Exodus 28:6; 39:29), so mixed cloth may have been kept for holy use. These laws were part of the shadow that Christ fulfilled, and Christians are not bound by them. But the lesson of being distinct as God's people remains (2 Corinthians 6:14-17).

19:20-22 *"'And a man, when he lies with a woman **with** an emission of seed, and she **is** a female slave betrothed to a man, and she has not at all been ransomed, or freedom has not been given to her, **there** shall be an inquiry; they shall not be put to death, because she was not freed. And he shall bring his guilt offering to the LORD, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, a ram of guilt offering. And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering before the LORD for his sin which he has sinned; and it shall be forgiven him, from his sin which he has sinned.*

This law deals with a man who slept with a female slave who was "betrothed to a man," promised in marriage, but not yet "ransomed" or freed. Normally, sleeping with a betrothed woman was treated like adultery and punished by death (Deuteronomy 22:23-24). Here "they shall not be put to death, because she was not freed." There was to be "an inquiry." The man had to bring a guilt offering, a ram, and the priest made atonement for him.

Why the difference? Because she was a slave, she was not yet fully under the protection of marriage, and she may have had little power to refuse. The law did not punish her as if she were a free woman with a free choice. The man was not excused. He had sinned, and he had to bring a guilt offering. The word for inquiry may also mean that payment had to be made.

This is a hard law to read today. Slavery in Israel was not the same as the race-based slavery of later history, and the Law put limits on it (chapter 25). Still, it shows how vulnerable such a woman was in that world. The law here protected her from the death penalty and held the man accountable before God. In Christ, "there is not slave nor free" (Galatians 3:28), and every person has equal worth before God.

19:23-25 *"'And when you come into the land and plant every tree for food, then you shall treat its foreskin as uncircumcised, its fruit; three years it shall be uncircumcised to you; it shall not be eaten. And in the fourth year all its fruit shall be a holy thing, praises to the LORD. And in the fifth year you shall eat its fruit, to increase its produce for you. I **am** the LORD your God.*

"And when you come into the land and plant every tree for food," its fruit was to be treated as "uncircumcised" for three years. That means forbidden, not yet given to God. In the fourth year all its fruit was "a holy thing, praises to the LORD." Only in the fifth year could the farmer eat it himself.

This took patience and faith. For four years a farmer worked and waited. But it taught him that the first and best belong to God, and that God would bless him for it: "to increase its produce for you." Good farmers also know that young trees grow stronger if their early fruit is removed. God's law and His creation work together.

19:26 *"'You shall not eat **anything** with the blood. You shall not practice divination, and you shall not practice soothsaying.*

"You shall not eat anything with the blood" (17:10-14). "You shall not practice divination, and you shall not practice soothsaying." Divination was trying to learn the future or hidden things by reading signs, such as the insides of animals or the flight of birds. Soothsaying was similar, the

reading of omens. Israel was to seek God and His Word, not secret powers (Deuteronomy 18:10-12).

19:27-28 *You shall not round off the edge of your head, and you shall not ruin the edge of your beard. And a cutting for a soul you shall not put in your flesh, and the writing of a tattoo you shall not put on yourselves. I **am** the LORD.*

"You shall not round off the edge of your head, and you shall not ruin the edge of your beard." "And a cutting for a soul you shall not put in your flesh, and the writing of a tattoo you shall not put on yourselves."

A cutting for a soul means cutting the body in mourning for the dead. These were pagan mourning customs. People cut their hair in certain ways, cut themselves, and marked their skin to honor the dead or the gods of the dead. Israel was to grieve, but not like that. They belonged to the LORD, even in their sorrow. Paul says we grieve, but not "just as also the rest who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

Many people ask about tattoos today. In this verse the setting is pagan mourning and worship. Believers differ on whether the verse forbids all tattoos for Christians or only marks tied to false religion and the dead. All agree that our bodies belong to God, and whatever we do should be done "to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

19:29 *"'Do not profane your daughter by making her a prostitute, so that the land does not prostitute itself and the land become full of lewdness.*

"Do not profane your daughter by making her a prostitute." The worship of false gods around Israel included cult prostitutes (Deuteronomy 23:17; 1 Kings 14:24), and poverty could tempt a father to sell his daughter. God forbade it absolutely. A father's duty was to protect his daughter, not use her. If this sin spread, "the land become full of lewdness." Sin in families spreads to the whole nation.

19:30 *My Sabbaths you shall keep, and My sanctuary you shall fear. I **am** the LORD.*

"My Sabbaths you shall keep, and My sanctuary you shall fear." The sanctuary is the tabernacle, God's holy dwelling. To fear it is to come with reverence. The Sabbath was holy time. The sanctuary was holy space. Israel was to honor both.

19:31 *"'Do not turn to the mediums and to the spiritists; do not seek **them** out, to become unclean by them. I **am** the LORD your God.*

"Do not turn to the mediums and to the spiritists; do not seek them out, to become unclean by them." Mediums and spiritists claimed to speak with the dead. God says that turning to them makes a person unclean. Isaiah asks, "should not a people consult its God? On behalf of the living should they consult the dead?" (Isaiah 8:19). King Saul died after consulting a medium (1 Samuel 28; 1 Chronicles 10:13). Christians today should stay far away from fortune tellers, seances, horoscopes and anything like them. We have God's Word and His Spirit.

19:32 *"'Before gray hair you shall rise up, and you shall honor the face of an old **man**; and you shall fear your God. I **am** the LORD.*

"Before gray hair you shall rise up, and you shall honor the face of an old man; and you shall fear your God." To stand up when an older person came in was a sign of respect. Our culture often prizes youth and pushes the elderly aside. God says to honor them. Their years and their wisdom are a gift, and how we treat them shows whether we fear God.

19:33-34 *"'And when a sojourner sojourns with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. Like the native among you shall the sojourner who sojourns with you be to you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. I **am** the LORD your God.*

"And when a sojourner sojourns with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him." The foreigner was to be treated "like the native among you," and "you shall love him as yourself, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt."

Israel knew what it was to be a foreigner, poor and mistreated. They were not to do the same to others. The love of verse 18 is now extended beyond Israel's own people. Remember where you came from, and treat others the way you wished you had been treated. As believers, we were once "strangers" too, far from God, before Christ brought us near (Ephesians 2:12-13).

19:35-37 *"'You shall not do injustice in judgment, in measurement, in weight, and in volume. Balances of righteousness, weights of righteousness, an ephah of righteousness, and a hin of righteousness you shall have. I **am** the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt. And you shall keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and do them. I **am** the LORD.'"*

"You shall not do injustice in judgment, in measurement, in weight, and in volume." Merchants weighed goods on balance scales with stones as weights. A dishonest merchant kept two sets, one heavy for buying and one light for selling. God says, "Balances of righteousness, weights of righteousness, an ephah of righteousness, and a hin of righteousness you shall have." An ephah was a dry measure of a little over half a bushel. A hin was a liquid measure of about a gallon. Proverbs says, "Scales of deceit are an abomination of the LORD, and a perfect weight is His delight" (Proverbs 11:1).

Honest business is holy business. God cares about the price on the tag, the hours on the time sheet and the numbers on the tax form. And again the reason: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt." God had saved them. Now they were to live as His people. "And you shall keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and do them. I am the LORD."

What does this chapter teach us now? Holiness is not only about church. It is how we treat our parents, the poor, our workers, the disabled, the foreigner, the elderly and our customers. We are not saved by keeping these laws. But a people saved by grace should look like this. Jesus summed it up, and He lived it perfectly. He loved His neighbor, and He loved His enemies, all the way to the cross. Now His Spirit lives in us so that "the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:4).

Chapter 19 Summary

The LORD called all Israel to be holy because He is holy. He told them to honor mother and father, keep His Sabbaths, and turn from idols. Peace offerings had to be eaten within two days. Farmers were to leave the edges of their fields and the gleanings for the poor and the foreigner. Israel was not to steal, lie, swear falsely, oppress a neighbor, hold back a worker's wages, curse the deaf or trip the blind. Judges were to judge fairly, favoring neither poor nor rich. Slander, hatred and grudges were forbidden, and Israel was to love their neighbor as themselves. They were not to mix kinds of animals, seed or cloth. A man who slept with a betrothed slave woman brought a guilt offering. Fruit trees were not harvested for three years, and the fourth year's fruit was holy to the LORD. Divination, pagan mourning marks, tattoos, prostituting a daughter and consulting mediums were forbidden. Israel was to honor the elderly, love the foreigner as themselves, and use honest weights and measures, because the LORD had brought them out of Egypt.

I would not call it a grudge, but there are people I would rather not talk to or be around. Leviticus 19 asks for more than avoiding them. It asks for love. That is a step I still have to take with God's help.

Chapter 19 Study Questions

1. What is the main command of the chapter, and why does God give it? How does Peter use it? (19:2; 1 Peter 1:15-16)

2. What were farmers told to leave in their fields, and for whom? (19:9-10)

3. What was the rule about a hired worker's wages, and why did it matter? (19:13)

4. How were the deaf and the blind to be treated? Why do you think God added "you shall fear your God"? (19:14)

5. What was a judge not to do, toward either the poor or the great? (19:15)

6. What does verse 17 tell us to do instead of hating someone in our heart? (19:17-18)

7. How were the foreigner and the elderly to be treated? (19:32-34)

8. Jesus called "love your neighbor as yourself" the second great commandment (Matthew 22:39). Who does He say is our neighbor in Luke 10:29-37?

9. Which of the everyday commands in this chapter (wages, honest weights, gossip, honoring parents, respecting the elderly) speaks most to your life right now?

10. Is there someone you are holding a grudge against? What would it look like this week to go to them in love instead (19:17-18; Matthew 18:15)?

Chapter 20: Penalties for Sin

Scripture

20:1-16 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "And to the sons of Israel you shall say, 'Any man of the sons of Israel or of the sojourners who sojourn in Israel, who gives ***any*** of his seed to Molech, shall surely be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones. And I, I will set My face against that man, and I will cut him off from among his people, because he has given ***some*** of his seed to Molech, so as to make My sanctuary unclean and to profane the name of My holiness. And if the people of the land at all hide their eyes from that man when he gives ***any*** of his seed to Molech, so as not to put him to death, then I, I will set My face against that man and against his clan, and I will cut him off, and all who prostitute themselves after him, to prostitute themselves after Molech, from among their people. "'And the soul who turns to the mediums and to the spiritists, to prostitute itself after them, I will set My face against that soul, and I will cut him off from among his people. And you shall sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy, for I ***am*** the LORD your God. And you shall keep My statutes and do them. I ***am*** the LORD who sanctifies you. "'For any man who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death; his father or his mother he has cursed; his blood ***is*** on him. "'And a man who commits adultery with the wife of a man, who commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. And a man who lies with his father's wife, he has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood ***is*** on them. And a man who lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death; they have done perversion; their blood ***is*** on them. And a man who lies with a male ***as*** the lyings of a woman, both of them have done an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood ***is*** on them. And a man who takes a woman and her mother, it ***is*** lewdness; they shall burn him and them with fire, so that there may not be lewdness in your midst. And a man who gives his intercourse with an animal shall surely be put to death, and the animal you shall kill. And a woman who draws near to any animal to mate with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they shall surely be put to death; their blood ***is*** on them.

20:17-27 "'And a man who takes his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother, and he sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it ***is*** a disgrace; and they shall be cut off before the eyes of the sons of their people; he has uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity. And a man who lies with a menstruous woman and uncovers her nakedness, he has laid bare her fountain, and she has uncovered the fountain of her blood; and both of them shall be cut off from among their people. And the nakedness of your mother's sister or of your father's sister you shall not uncover, for he has laid bare his kin; they shall bear their iniquity. And a man who lies with his aunt, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness; they shall bear their sin; they shall die childless. And a man who takes his brother's wife, it ***is*** impurity; he has uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless. "'And you shall keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and do them, so that the land where I am bringing you to dwell in it may not vomit you out. And you shall not walk in the statutes of the nation which I am sending away from before you; for they did all these ***things***, and I loathed them. And I said to you, "You, you shall possess their ground, and I, I will give it to you to possess it, a land flowing ***with*** milk and

honey." I ***am*** the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples. And you shall separate between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; and you shall not make your souls detestable by animal or by bird or by anything that moves on the ground, which I have separated for you to declare unclean. And you shall be holy to Me, for I, the LORD, ***am*** holy, and I have separated you from the peoples to be Mine. "'And a man or a woman, when there is among them a medium or a spiritist, they shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones; their blood ***is*** on them.'"

Chapter 20 Preview

Chapter 18 named sexual sins and other evils that God forbade. Chapter 20 gives the penalties. Many of the same sins appear again: giving children to Molech, turning to mediums, adultery, relations with close family members, relations between two men, and relations with animals. For many of them the penalty is death. For others it is being cut off from the people, or dying childless. In the middle of the list stands a law about cursing father or mother. The chapter closes with God's call to be holy and to be separate, because He has separated Israel to be His own.

This is a hard chapter to read. We live in a very different world, and the penalties seem severe. We need to read it carefully: what it meant for Israel then, why God gave such strong penalties, and what the New Testament says to us now. Leaders should prepare ahead of time for this chapter and keep the discussion modest and kind. Some in the room may carry guilt or hurt from these very sins, and the gospel has a word for them.

Chapter 20 Study

20:1-2 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "And to the sons of Israel you shall say, 'Any man of the sons of Israel or of the sojourners who sojourn in Israel, who gives **any** of his seed to Molech, shall surely be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones.*

"Any man of the sons of Israel or of the sojourners who sojourn in Israel, who gives any of his seed to Molech, shall surely be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones." Giving children to Molech meant offering them as sacrifices, often by fire (18:21). The penalty was death by stoning, carried out by "the people of the land," the community as a whole.

Before we go further, we should understand what these penalties were. Israel was a nation with God as its King. The Law of Moses was its civil law as well as its religious law, and these penalties were carried out by the nation's courts after a fair trial. The Law required at least two or three witnesses before anyone could be put to death (Deuteronomy 17:6). These were not private acts of revenge. They were the judgments of a nation under God.

20:3-5 *And I, I will set My face against that man, and I will cut him off from among his people, because he has given **some** of his seed to Molech, so as to make My sanctuary unclean and to profane the name of My holiness. And if the people of the land at all hide their eyes from that man when he gives **any** of his seed to Molech, so as not to put him to death, then I, I will set My face against that man and against his clan, and I will cut him off, and all who prostitute themselves after him, to prostitute themselves after Molech, from among their people.*

God Himself would act as well. "I, I will set My face against that man, and I will cut him off from among his people." The sin made God's "sanctuary unclean" and profaned "the name of My holiness." To sacrifice a child to a false god was to drag God's name through the worst kind of evil.

Notice verse 4: "if the people of the land at all hide their eyes from that man." If the community looked the other way and did nothing, God would set His face against the man "and against his clan," and against "all who prostitute themselves after him." To ignore evil against children is to share in it. That is still true. When a church or a community covers up harm done to children, God sees, and He holds them to account.

20:6 *"'And the soul who turns to the mediums and to the spiritists, to prostitute itself after them, I will set My face against that soul, and I will cut him off from among his people.*

"The soul who turns to the mediums and to the spiritists, to prostitute itself after them, I will set My face against that soul, and I will cut him off." Here the one who goes to a medium is punished by God Himself. Seeking the dead or the spirits for guidance is spiritual unfaithfulness, like a wife running after other men. Verse 27 will give the penalty for the medium.

20:7-8 *And you shall sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy, for I **am** the LORD your God. And you shall keep My statutes and do them. I **am** the LORD who sanctifies you.*

In the middle of the penalties, God gives the reason for them all. "And you shall sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy, for I am the LORD your God." To sanctify means to set apart as holy. "And you shall keep My statutes and do them. I am the LORD who sanctifies you."

Notice both sides. Israel was to sanctify themselves, and the LORD was the one who sanctified them. Holiness is God's work in us, and it is also our work as we obey. Paul says the same thing: "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," for "God is the One who is working in you" (Philippians 2:12-13).

20:9 *"'For any man who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death; his father or his mother he has cursed; his blood **is** on him.*

"For any man who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death; his father or his mother he has cursed; his blood is on him."

This is one of the hardest verses in the chapter for us. Does it mean a child who says something angry to his parents should be killed? No. The word curse here means far more than a rude word. It means to treat with contempt, to call down evil on, to reject utterly. In Israel the family was the foundation of the nation, and parents stood in God's place to teach His law to their children

(Deuteronomy 6:6-7). A grown son who cursed his parents was rejecting God's order at its root. Deuteronomy 21:18-21 describes such a case: a son who is "stubborn and rebellious," a "glutton and a drunkard," who would not listen after long discipline. His parents had to bring him before the elders of the city, not punish him on their own. It was a public trial, not a private act.

The Old Testament records no case of this penalty being carried out. But the law showed how seriously God takes the honor of parents. Jesus quoted this law to rebuke the religious leaders, who found ways to avoid caring for their parents (Matthew 15:4-6). The command to honor father and mother is repeated for Christians (Ephesians 6:1-3), though the death penalty is not. And Paul also tells fathers, "do not provoke your children to anger" (Ephesians 6:4). Honor in the family runs both ways.

"His blood is on him" means he is responsible for his own death. It is his own fault, not the fault of those who carry out the sentence.

20:10 *"'And a man who commits adultery with the wife of a man, who commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.*

"And a man who commits adultery with the wife of a man, who commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." Both were punished equally. The law did not punish the woman and excuse the man.

When the religious leaders brought a woman caught in adultery to Jesus, they quoted this law, but they had not brought the man (John 8:3-5). Jesus said, "The sinless one among you, let him first cast the stone at her" (John 8:7). One by one they left. Then He told her, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more" (John 8:11). Jesus did not say adultery was not sin. He told her to stop. But He offered her mercy, which is what every one of us needs.

20:11-12 *And a man who lies with his father's wife, he has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood **is** on them. And a man who lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death; they have done perversion; their blood **is** on them.*

A man who lay with "his father's wife," his stepmother, and a man who lay with "his daughter-in-law" were both to be put to death, along with the woman. "They have done perversion." These sins broke apart the family from the inside.

20:13 *And a man who lies with a male **as** the lyings of a woman, both of them have done an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood **is** on them.*

"And a man who lies with a male as the lyings of a woman, both of them have done an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is on them."

This verse gives the penalty for the act forbidden in 18:22. I said there that the New Testament repeats God's standard (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Timothy 1:10). It does not repeat the death penalty. The New Testament never tells the church to put anyone to death for any sin. When a man in the church at Corinth was living in sexual sin, Paul told the church to remove him

from their fellowship (1 Corinthians 5:13), with the hope that he would repent and be restored (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

So what do we do with this verse? We let it show us how serious sin is to a holy God. That is the same for every sin in this chapter, and for our own. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Then we look at the cross, where Jesus took that death on Himself. Paul wrote to people who had lived in the very sins listed here: "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 and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). Christians must never use this verse to hate, mock or harm anyone. We are to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) and offer the same mercy we have received.

20:14 *And a man who takes a woman and her mother, it **is** lewdness; they shall burn him and them with fire, so that there may not be lewdness in your midst.*

"And a man who takes a woman and her mother, it is lewdness; they shall burn him and them with fire." This was the most severe penalty in the chapter. Some teachers believe the burning came after death by stoning, as with Achan, when "all Israel stoned him with stones, and they burned them with fire" (Joshua 7:25). The text does not say. Either way, the purpose is given: "so that there may not be lewdness in your midst." The punishment was meant to stop the sin from spreading in Israel.

20:15-16 *And a man who gives his intercourse with an animal shall surely be put to death, and the animal you shall kill. And a woman who draws near to any animal to mate with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they shall surely be put to death; their blood **is** on them.*

A man or a woman who had relations with an animal was to be put to death, and the animal killed as well. The animal had done no moral wrong. But it was killed so that the shameful act would not be remembered, and the reminder of it would be gone from the camp.

20:17-21 *"'And a man who takes his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother, and he sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it **is** a disgrace; and they shall be cut off before the eyes of the sons of their people; he has uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity. And a man who lies with a menstruous woman and uncovers her nakedness, he has laid bare her fountain, and she has uncovered the fountain of her blood; and both of them shall be cut off from among their people. And the nakedness of your mother's sister or of your father's sister you shall not uncover, for he has laid bare his kin; they shall bear their iniquity. And a man who lies with his aunt, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness; they shall bear their sin; they shall die childless. And a man who takes his brother's wife, it **is** impurity; he has uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless.*

The next penalties are lighter. A man who married his sister or half-sister was to be "cut off before the eyes of the sons of their people." "It is a disgrace." A man who lay with his wife during her period, and the woman with him, were to be cut off (15:24; 18:19). For relations with an aunt, "they shall bear their iniquity," and "they shall die childless." The same was true for a man who took "his brother's wife": "they shall be childless."

To die childless may mean that God would not give them children, or that any children would not be counted as their heirs. Either way it meant the end of their family line in Israel, a great loss in a culture where family and inheritance mattered so much. The difference between these penalties and the death penalty shows that God's law made distinctions. Not every sin was punished in the same way.

20:22-24 *"'And you shall keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and do them, so that the land where I am bringing you to dwell in it may not vomit you out. And you shall not walk in the statutes of the nation which I am sending away from before you; for they did all these **things**, and I loathed them. And I said to you, "You, you shall possess their ground, and I, I will give it to you to possess it, a land flowing **with** milk and honey." I **am** the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples.*

"And you shall keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and do them, so that the land where I am bringing you to dwell in it may not vomit you out." This repeats the warning of chapter 18. The nations of Canaan "did all these things, and I loathed them."

Then God reminds them of His promise: "You, you shall possess their ground, and I, I will give it to you to possess it, a land flowing with milk and honey." Milk and honey is a picture of a rich and fruitful land. "I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples." The laws of holiness were not a burden placed on a people who had to earn God's love. They were the way of life for a people God had already chosen and loved.

20:25-26 *And you shall separate between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; and you shall not make your souls detestable by animal or by bird or by anything that moves on the ground, which I have separated for you to declare unclean. And you shall be holy to Me, for I, the LORD, **am** holy, and I have separated you from the peoples to be Mine.*

"And you shall separate between the clean animal and the unclean." The food laws of chapter 11 were a daily reminder of this separation. Every meal reminded Israel that they were set apart. "And you shall be holy to Me, for I, the LORD, am holy, and I have separated you from the peoples to be Mine."

To be Mine. This is the heart of holiness. God did not separate Israel only to keep them away from something. He separated them to Himself. The New Testament says the same of believers: "a people for His possession" (1 Peter 2:9). The food laws themselves were fulfilled in Christ. In Acts 10 God showed Peter that the separation between Jew and Gentile had come to an end in the gospel (Acts 10:15, 28). But we are still called to belong wholly to God.

20:27 *"'And a man or a woman, when there is among them a medium or a spiritist, they shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones; their blood **is** on them.'"*

"And a man or a woman, when there is among them a medium or a spiritist, they shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones; their blood is on them." The chapter ends where it began, with false religion. Mediums led people away from the living God into darkness. In Israel, that was treason against their King.

What does this chapter teach us now? We are not the nation of Israel under the Law of Moses, and the church does not carry out these penalties. The New Testament gives the sword to governments to punish evil (Romans 13:4), and Christians differ on how far that should go today. But this chapter still speaks to us. It shows that God takes sin seriously, much more seriously than we do. It shows that He cares deeply about children, families, marriage and true worship. And it shows us what we deserve, every one of us, because "all sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

That is why we need the cross. Jesus did not come to lower God's standard. He came to bear the penalty for those who broke it. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). God says, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked man, but in a wicked man turning back from his way" (Ezekiel 33:11). If this chapter has shown you your sin, do not run from God. Run to Him.

Chapter 20 Summary

The LORD told Moses the penalties for the sins named in chapter 18. Anyone who gave a child to Molech was to be stoned, and if the people looked away, God would set His face against the man and his family. God would cut off anyone who turned to mediums. Israel was to sanctify themselves and be holy, for the LORD sanctified them. Anyone who cursed father or mother was to be put to death. Adultery, relations with a stepmother or daughter-in-law, relations between two men, and relations with an animal were punished by death, and a man who took a woman and her mother was to be burned with fire. Marrying a sister, relations during a woman's period, and relations with an aunt or a brother's wife were punished by being cut off or dying childless. Israel was to keep God's laws so that the land would not vomit them out, and to separate clean from unclean, because God had separated them to be His. A medium or spiritist was to be stoned. The New Testament keeps God's standard, gives the church no sword, and offers forgiveness through Christ, who bore the penalty of sin.

Chapter 20 Study Questions

1. What was the penalty for giving a child to Molech, and what would happen if the people ignored it? (20:2-5)

2. What does God say about who makes Israel holy? (20:7-8)

3. What does "curse" mean in verse 9, and how does Deuteronomy 21:18-21 help us understand it? (20:9)

4. How were the man and woman treated in the law on adultery? How did Jesus handle this law in John 8:3-11? (20:10)

5. Which penalties in this chapter were lighter than death, and what were they? (20:17-21)

6. What reason does God give for separating Israel from the other peoples? (20:24-26)

7. What was the penalty for a medium or spiritist? Why was this so serious for Israel? (20:27)

8. The New Testament repeats God's standard on many of these sins but not the death penalty. How did Paul tell the church to handle sexual sin in 1 Corinthians 5:13 and 2 Corinthians 2:6-8?

9. Verse 4 warns against looking the other way when children are harmed. What does that mean for families and churches today?

10. Romans 6:23 says the wages of sin is death. How does this chapter help you understand what Jesus took on Himself for you?

Chapter 21: The Holiness of the Priests

Scripture

21:1-15 And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them, 'For a soul he shall not make himself unclean among his kinsmen, except for his kin who ***is*** near to him: for his mother and for his father and for his son and for his daughter and for his brother, and for his sister, the virgin, who ***is*** near to him, who has not belonged to a husband; for her he may make himself unclean. He shall not make himself unclean, a husband among his kinsmen, to profane himself. They shall not make baldness on their head, and the edge of their beard they shall not shave, and in their flesh they shall not cut a cutting. They shall be holy to their God, and they shall not profane the name of their God; for the fire offerings of the LORD, the food of their God, they are bringing near; and they shall be holy. A woman ***who is*** a prostitute or profaned they shall not take, and a woman divorced from her husband they shall not take; for he ***is*** holy to his God. And you shall sanctify him, for the food of your God he is bringing near; he shall be holy to you, for holy ***am*** I, the LORD, who sanctifies you. And the daughter of a man ***who is*** a priest, when she profanes herself by prostituting herself, she is profaning her father; she shall be burned with fire. "'And the priest ***who is*** great among his brothers, on whose head the oil of the anointing was poured, and who has filled his hand to wear the garments, he shall not let loose ***the hair of*** his head, and he shall not tear his garments. And he shall not go in to any souls of ***the*** dead; for his father or for his mother he shall not make himself unclean. And from the sanctuary he shall not go out, and he shall not profane the sanctuary of his God, for the consecration of the oil of the anointing of his God ***is*** on him. I ***am*** the LORD. And he, a woman in her virginity he shall take. A widow or a divorced ***woman*** or a profaned ***woman***, a prostitute, these he shall not take; but only a virgin of his kinsmen he shall take ***as*** a wife, and he shall not profane his seed among his kinsmen; for I ***am*** the LORD who sanctifies him.'"

21:16-24 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron, saying, 'Any man of your seed throughout their generations in whom there is a blemish shall not draw near to bring near the food of his God. For any man in whom ***is*** a blemish shall not draw near: a man blind or lame or slit-nosed or overgrown ***in limb***, or a man in whom there is a fracture of a foot or a fracture of a hand, or hunchbacked, or withered, or ***with*** a defect in his eye, or eczema, or scabs, or crushed ***in*** testicle. Any man of the seed of Aaron the priest in whom ***is*** a blemish shall not come near to bring near the fire offerings of the LORD; a blemish ***is*** in him; he shall not come near to bring near the food of his God. The food of his God, from the holy ***things*** of the holies and from the holy things, he may eat. Only to the veil he shall not go in, and to the altar he shall not come near, for a blemish in him; and he shall not profane My sanctuaries, for I ***am*** the LORD who sanctifies them.'" And Moses spoke to Aaron and to his sons and to all the sons of Israel.

Chapter 21 Preview

Chapters 18 to 20 called all Israel to be holy. Chapters 21 and 22 turn to the priests, who served closest to God and so were held to a higher standard. Chapter 21 deals with three things. First, when a priest could make himself unclean by touching the dead, which was allowed only for his closest family. Second, whom a priest could marry, and how his family's conduct reflected on

him. Third, the high priest, who was held to an even stricter standard, and the rule that a descendant of Aaron with a physical blemish could not offer sacrifices at the altar, though he could still eat the holy food.

The last part of this chapter may be painful for anyone who lives with a disability or loves someone who does. We will read it carefully. It was never a statement that such a person was worth less to God. It was part of a picture, pointing to the perfect High Priest who was to come, and the New Testament shows how Jesus welcomed "the poor and crippled and lame and blind" (Luke 14:21).

Chapter 21 Study

21:1-3 *And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them, 'For a soul he shall not make himself unclean among his kinsmen, except for his kin who **is** near to him: for his mother and for his father and for his son and for his daughter and for his brother, and for his sister, the virgin, who **is** near to him, who has not belonged to a husband; for her he may make himself unclean.*

"Say to the priests, the sons of Aaron," God told Moses: "For a soul he shall not make himself unclean among his kinsmen." Here "a soul" means a dead person. Touching a dead body, or even being in the same tent, made a person unclean for seven days (Numbers 19:11-14). An ordinary Israelite could become unclean in this way and then be cleansed. But a priest had to stay clean to serve.

There was an exception: "his kin who is near to him," his mother, father, son, daughter, brother, and "his sister, the virgin," who was unmarried and still part of his household. For them he could become unclean. God did not ask a priest to stay away from the funeral of his own mother or child. He allowed room for grief and love in the family.

21:4-6 *He shall not make himself unclean, a husband among his kinsmen, to profane himself. They shall not make baldness on their head, and the edge of their beard they shall not shave, and in their flesh they shall not cut a cutting. They shall be holy to their God, and they shall not profane the name of their God; for the fire offerings of the LORD, the food of their God, they are bringing near; and they shall be holy.*

"He shall not make himself unclean, a husband among his kinsmen, to profane himself." This short verse is not easy to translate. Many take it to mean that a priest, as a leading man among his people, must not become unclean for others outside his close family. Others take it to mean he must not become unclean for his wife's relatives, his in-laws. Either way, the circle was small.

Priests also must not mourn like the pagans, by shaving their heads bald, shaving the edges of their beards, or cutting their bodies (19:27-28). "They shall be holy to their God, and they shall not profane the name of their God." Why? "For the fire offerings of the LORD, the food of their God, they are bringing near." The offerings are called God's food, not because God needed to eat, but because they were like a meal presented at His table. Those who served at His table had to be holy.

21:7-8 *A woman **who is** a prostitute or profaned they shall not take, and a woman divorced from her husband they shall not take; for he **is** holy to his God. And you shall sanctify him, for the food of your God he is bringing near; he shall be holy to you, for holy **am** I, the LORD, who sanctifies you.*

A priest could not marry "a woman who is a prostitute or profaned," or "a woman divorced from her husband." "Profaned" probably refers to a woman who had lost her purity in some way. A priest could marry a widow, but not a divorced woman. The reason given is "for he is holy to his God."

This law was not saying that a divorced woman was worse than other people, or that she could not be forgiven. Many divorced women in Israel had done no wrong at all. The law was about the priest's household as a picture of purity, set apart for God's service. The people were to honor the priest: "you shall sanctify him," "he shall be holy to you, for holy am I, the LORD, who sanctifies you."

The New Testament also asks that church leaders be "the husband of one wife" and "above reproach" (1 Timothy 3:2), and that their homes be in good order (Titus 1:6). Those who lead God's people are watched closely, and their families matter.

21:9 *And the daughter of a man **who is** a priest, when she profanes herself by prostituting herself, she is profaning her father; she shall be burned with fire.*

"And the daughter of a man who is a priest, when she profanes herself by prostituting herself, she is profaning her father; she shall be burned with fire." A priest's daughter who became a prostitute brought shame not only on herself but on her father's holy office and on God's name. The penalty was severe. As in 20:14, some teachers believe the burning followed death by stoning. The text does not say.

This is a hard verse, and we should not soften it. In a land where the worship of false gods included cult prostitutes (1 Kings 14:24), a priest's daughter doing this would bring pagan worship right to the door of God's house. The verse shows how seriously God took the honor of His priesthood. Like the other death penalties of the Law, it belonged to Israel as a nation under God, and the church does not carry it out. But it reminds us that what we do affects our families and the name of the Lord we serve.

21:10-12 *"'And the priest **who is** great among his brothers, on whose head the oil of the anointing was poured, and who has filled his hand to wear the garments, he shall not let loose **the hair of** his head, and he shall not tear his garments. And he shall not go in to any souls of **the** dead; for his father or for his mother he shall not make himself unclean. And from the sanctuary he shall not go out, and he shall not profane the sanctuary of his God, for the consecration of the oil of the anointing of his God **is** on him. I **am** the LORD.*

Now comes "the priest who is great among his brothers," the high priest, "on whose head the oil of the anointing was poured," His standard was higher still. He could not let his hair hang loose or tear his garments in mourning. He could not "go in to any souls of the dead," not even "for his

father or for his mother." And he could not leave the sanctuary to mourn, "consecration of the oil of the anointing of his God is on him."

That is a hard command. The high priest could not attend even his own parents' funerals in the usual way. We saw something like it when Aaron and his sons could not mourn Nadab and Abihu (10:6-7). The high priest belonged wholly to God. The high priest's first duty was always to God's house and to the people he served there.

Jesus once said to a man who wanted to bury his father first, "Follow Me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead" (Matthew 8:22). He was not teaching us to neglect our families. He was teaching that following Him comes first, before every other love. The high priest's life was a picture of that kind of complete devotion.

21:13-15 *And he, a woman in her virginity he shall take. A widow or a divorced **woman** or a profaned **woman**, a prostitute, these he shall not take; but only a virgin of his kinsmen he shall take **as** a wife, and he shall not profane his seed among his kinsmen; for I **am** the LORD who sanctifies him.'"*

"And he, a woman in her virginity he shall take." The high priest could not marry a widow, a divorced woman, or a woman who was "profaned" or a prostitute, "but only a virgin of his kinsmen," a young woman of Israel. The reason: "he shall not profane his seed among his kinsmen." His children would carry on the high priesthood, so his marriage had to be above question.

Many Bible teachers see here a picture of Christ and His church. Paul says Christ will present the church to Himself "not having spot or wrinkle or any of such things, but that she might be holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:27). The church is not pure because of her own past. She is made pure by the blood of her Husband.

21:16-21 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron, saying, 'Any man of your seed throughout their generations in whom there is a blemish shall not draw near to bring near the food of his God. For any man in whom **is** a blemish shall not draw near: a man blind or lame or slit-nosed or overgrown **in limb**, or a man in whom there is a fracture of a foot or a fracture of a hand, or hunchbacked, or withered, or **with** a defect in his eye, or eczema, or scabs, or crushed **in** testicle. Any man of the seed of Aaron the priest in whom **is** a blemish shall not come near to bring near the fire offerings of the LORD; a blemish **is** in him; he shall not come near to bring near the food of his God.*

"Any man of your seed throughout their generations in whom there is a blemish shall not draw near to bring near the food of his God." A descendant of Aaron who had a physical blemish or defect could not serve at the altar. The list includes blindness, lameness, a deformed face or limb, a broken foot or hand, a hunched back, a withered body, an eye defect, skin disease, and an injury to the private parts. "A blemish is in him; he shall not come near."

Why would God make such a rule? The animals offered to God had to be "without blemish" (22:19-21). The priests who offered them had to be whole in body as well. Everything at the altar

was meant to be a picture of perfection, pointing ahead to the perfect sacrifice and the perfect Priest. Jesus is that Priest: "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26). He "offered Himself unblemished to God" (Hebrews 9:14).

This law was never meant to say that people with disabilities were sinful, unclean or worth less to God. Jesus rejected that idea when His disciples asked whether a man was born blind because of sin. He said, "Neither this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be revealed in him" (John 9:3).

21:22-24 *The food of his God, from the holy **things** of the holies and from the holy things, he may eat. Only to the veil he shall not go in, and to the altar he shall not come near, for a blemish **is** in him; and he shall not profane My sanctuaries, for I **am** the LORD who sanctifies them.'" And Moses spoke to Aaron and to his sons and to all the sons of Israel.*

Here is the grace in this law. "The food of his God, from the holy things of the holies and from the holy things, he may eat." A priest with a blemish was still a priest. He was still a son of Aaron. He still ate the most holy food, which only priests could eat. He was not cast out of the family or left without support. He simply could not go "to the veil" or "to the altar" to offer the sacrifices.

"And Moses spoke to Aaron and to his sons and to all the sons of Israel." This law was spoken openly to everyone. Nothing about the priesthood was secret.

What does this chapter teach us now? In Christ, every believer is part of "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). The picture of physical perfection has been fulfilled by the perfect High Priest. In His church, no one is shut out because of a body that does not work the way others do. Jesus told His followers to invite "the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind" to the feast (Luke 14:13). Paul said the Lord told him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

This chapter does still teach that those who lead and serve God's people are held to a higher standard (James 3:1). Holiness in the home, in grief and in daily life matters for every believer, and especially for those who lead.

Chapter 21 Summary

The LORD told Moses that priests must not make themselves unclean for the dead, except for their closest family: mother, father, son, daughter, brother, and unmarried sister. They must not mourn with pagan customs, because they offered the food of their God and must be holy. A priest could not marry a prostitute, a profaned woman or a divorced woman, and the people were to honor him as holy. A priest's daughter who became a prostitute was to be burned. The high priest could not mourn even for his father or mother, nor leave the sanctuary, and he had to marry a virgin of Israel. A descendant of Aaron with a physical blemish could not offer sacrifices at the altar or go to the veil, but he could still eat the holy food. Jesus Christ is the perfect High Priest, and in His church all believers are a holy priesthood.

Chapter 21 Study Questions

1. For whom could a priest make himself unclean by touching the dead? (21:1-3)

2. What reason does God give for the priests being holy? (21:6)

3. Whom could a priest not marry, and why? (21:7-8)

4. How was the high priest's standard different from that of other priests? (21:10-15)

5. What could a priest with a blemish not do, and what could he still do? (21:17-23)

6. How does Hebrews 7:26 and 9:14 describe Jesus as our High Priest and sacrifice?

7. What did Jesus say about the man born blind in John 9:3? How does that help us read verses 16 to 23?

8. Why do you think God holds those who lead His people to a higher standard (James 3:1)?

9. 1 Peter 2:5 says all believers are a holy priesthood. What spiritual sacrifices can you offer to God this week?

10. How can your church welcome and include people with disabilities more fully, as Jesus did (Luke 14:13, 21)?

Chapter 22: Holy Gifts and Acceptable Offerings

Scripture

22:1-16 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and to his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things of the sons of Israel, and that they not profane the name of My holiness, which they are sanctifying to Me. I ***am*** the LORD. Say to them, 'Throughout your generations, any man of all your seed who draws near to the holy things which the sons of Israel sanctify to the LORD, while his uncleanness ***is*** on him, that soul shall be cut off from before Me. I ***am*** the LORD. Any man of the seed of Aaron who ***is*** leprous or has a discharge shall not eat of the holy things until he is clean. And whoever touches anything unclean ***by*** a soul, or a man from whom an emission of seed goes out, or a man who touches any swarming thing by which he becomes unclean, or a man by whom he becomes unclean, in regard to any of his uncleanness, the soul who touches it shall be unclean until the evening, and he shall not eat of the holy things unless he has bathed his flesh in water. And ***when*** the sun goes in, then he shall be clean, and afterward he may eat of the holy things, for it ***is*** his food. A carcass or a torn ***animal*** he shall not eat, to become unclean by it. I ***am*** the LORD. And they shall keep My charge, and they shall not bear sin for it and die by it, because they profane it. I ***am*** the LORD who sanctifies them. And no stranger shall eat a holy thing; a settler of a priest or a hired laborer shall not eat a holy thing. And a priest, when he buys a soul, the purchase of his silver, he may eat of it; and the one born in his house, they may eat of his food. And a priest's daughter, when she belongs to a man ***who is*** a stranger, she shall not eat of the contribution of the holy things. And a priest's daughter, when she becomes a widow or divorced, and she has no seed, and she returns to her father's house as in her youth, she may eat of her father's food; and no stranger shall eat of it. And a man, when he eats a holy thing unintentionally, then he shall add its fifth to it, and he shall give the holy thing to the priest. And they shall not profane the holy things of the sons of Israel, which they lift up to the LORD, and cause them to bear the iniquity of guilt when they eat their holy things; for I ***am*** the LORD who sanctifies them.'"

22:17-33 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and to his sons and to all the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'Any man of the house of Israel or of the sojourners in Israel who brings near his offering, for any of their vows or for any of their freewill offerings which they bring near to the LORD for a burnt offering, for your acceptance ***it shall be*** a male without blemish from the herd, from the lambs, and from the goats. Anything in which ***is*** a blemish you shall not bring near, for it shall not be for acceptance for you. And a man, when he brings near a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD to fulfill a vow or for a freewill offering, from the herd or from the flock, it shall be without blemish for acceptance; there shall not be any blemish in it. Blind or broken or maimed or ***having*** a wart or eczema or scabs, these you shall not bring near to the LORD, and a fire offering of them you shall not give on the altar to the LORD. And an ox or a sheep overgrown or stunted ***in limb***, a freewill offering you may make it, but for a vow it shall not be accepted. And ***one*** bruised or crushed or torn or cut you shall not bring near to the LORD; and in your land you shall not do ***it***. And from the hand of a son of a foreign ***land*** you shall not bring near the food of your God from any of these, for their corruption ***is*** in them, a blemish ***is*** in them; they shall not be accepted for you.'" And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "When an ox or a lamb or a goat is born,

then it shall be seven days under its mother; and from the eighth day and onward it shall be accepted for an offering, a fire offering to the LORD. And an ox or a sheep, it and its young you shall not slaughter in one day. And when you sacrifice a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the LORD, for your acceptance you shall sacrifice it. On that day it shall be eaten; you shall not leave any of it until morning. I ***am*** the LORD. And you shall keep My commandments and do them. I ***am*** the LORD. And you shall not profane the name of My holiness, and I will be sanctified in the midst of the sons of Israel. I ***am*** the LORD who sanctifies you, who brought you out from the land of Egypt to be God to you. I ***am*** the LORD."

Chapter 22 Preview

Chapter 21 dealt with the holiness of the priests themselves. Chapter 22 deals with the holy things they handled: the portions of the offerings that the priests and their families ate, and the animals the people brought to the altar. The first half tells who could eat the holy food. A priest who was unclean could not eat it until he was clean again, and outsiders could not eat it at all, though a priest's slaves and his widowed daughter could. The second half tells what kind of animal God would accept. It had to be "without blemish." A blind, lame or sick animal was not good enough for the LORD.

The chapter ends with a strong statement of why this matters: "you shall not profane the name of My holiness, and I will be sanctified in the midst of the sons of Israel" (22:32). How we handle holy things, and what we give to God, shows what we think of Him.

Chapter 22 Study

22:1-3 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and to his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things of the sons of Israel, and that they not profane the name of My holiness, which they are sanctifying to Me. I* ***am*** *the LORD. Say to them, 'Throughout your generations, any man of all your seed who draws near to the holy things which the sons of Israel sanctify to the LORD, while his uncleanness* ***is*** *on him, that soul shall be cut off from before Me. I* ***am*** *the LORD.*

"Speak to Aaron and to his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things of the sons of Israel." The holy things were the gifts the people brought to God, part of which was given to the priests to eat. The priests had to treat them with care, "that they not profane the name of My holiness." To profane is to treat as common what God has made holy.

"Any man of all your seed who draws near to the holy things which the sons of Israel sanctify to the LORD, while his uncleanness is on him, that soul shall be cut off from before Me." Being a priest did not give a man the right to treat holy things carelessly. In fact, his closeness to them made it more serious.

22:4-7 *Any man of the seed of Aaron who **is** leprous or has a discharge shall not eat of the holy things until he is clean. And whoever touches anything unclean **by** a soul, or a man from whom an emission of seed goes out, or a man who touches any swarming thing by which he becomes unclean, or a man by whom he becomes unclean, in regard to any of his uncleanness, the soul who touches it shall be unclean until the evening, and he shall not eat of the holy things unless he has bathed his flesh in water. And **when** the sun goes in, then he shall be clean, and afterward he may eat of the holy things, for it **is** his food.*

A priest who was "leprous or has a discharge" could not eat the holy things "until he is clean" (chapters 13 to 15). Neither could one who had touched a dead body, had an emission of seed, or touched a swarming creature or an unclean person. He had to bathe and wait. "And when the sun goes in, then he shall be clean, and afterward he may eat of the holy things, for it is his food."

That last phrase is kind. The holy food was the priest's living. God did not shut him out for long. The priest bathed, waited until sundown, and then he could eat again. Uncleanness was taken seriously, but the way back was simple and quick.

22:8-9 *A carcass or a torn **animal** he shall not eat, to become unclean by it. I **am** the LORD. And they shall keep My charge, and they shall not bear sin for it and die by it, because they profane it. I **am** the LORD who sanctifies them.*

A priest must not eat "a carcass or a torn animal," an animal that died on its own or was killed by wild beasts. For other Israelites this made a person unclean until evening (17:15). For a priest it was forbidden outright. "And they shall keep My charge, and they shall not bear sin for it and die by it, because they profane it." The memory of Nadab and Abihu was still fresh (chapter 10). Carelessness with holy things could be deadly.

22:10-13 *And no stranger shall eat a holy thing; a settler of a priest or a hired laborer shall not eat a holy thing. And a priest, when he buys a soul, the purchase of his silver, he may eat of it; and the one born in his house, they may eat of his food. And a priest's daughter, when she belongs to a man **who is** a stranger, she shall not eat of the contribution of the holy things. And a priest's daughter, when she becomes a widow or divorced, and she has no seed, and she returns to her father's house as in her youth, she may eat of her father's food; and no stranger shall eat of it.*

Who could eat the holy food? "No stranger shall eat a holy thing." A stranger here means anyone outside the priest's family, even an Israelite. "A settler of a priest or a hired laborer" could not eat it either. These were people who lived or worked with the priest for a time but were not part of his household.

But "when he buys a soul," a slave bought with his money, that person "may eat of it," along with "the one born in his house." A slave in a priest's house was counted as a member of the household, and shared the holy food with the family. In this way the law treated the servant as family rather than as an outsider. We will look more closely at the servant laws in chapter 25.

A priest's daughter who married outside the priestly family could not eat the holy food. She now belonged to another household. But if she became "a widow or divorced," had "no seed," no

children to support her, and came back to her father's house "as in her youth," she could eat her father's food again. God made a place at the table for the woman with nowhere else to go.

22:14-16 *And a man, when he eats a holy thing unintentionally, then he shall add its fifth to it, and he shall give the holy thing to the priest. And they shall not profane the holy things of the sons of Israel, which they lift up to the LORD, and cause them to bear the iniquity of guilt when they eat their holy things; for I **am** the LORD who sanctifies them.'"*

"And a man, when he eats a holy thing unintentionally," had to repay it and "add its fifth to it," a fifth more, twenty percent, and give it to the priest. This is the same rule as the guilt offering (5:16). Even a mistake with holy things had to be made right, with something extra.

The priests were also responsible not to "profane the holy things of the sons of Israel," and not to cause the people "to bear the iniquity of guilt when they eat their holy things." In other words, the priests had to guard the holy things so that no one ate them wrongly and became guilty. Leaders are responsible for how they lead others, not only for themselves.

22:17-20 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and to his sons and to all the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'Any man of the house of Israel or of the sojourners in Israel who brings near his offering, for any of their vows or for any of their freewill offerings which they bring near to the LORD for a burnt offering, for your acceptance **it shall be** a male without blemish from the herd, from the lambs, and from the goats. Anything in which **is** a blemish you shall not bring near, for it shall not be for acceptance for you.*

The second half of the chapter is for "Aaron and to his sons and to all the sons of Israel," and also for "the sojourners in Israel." Anyone bringing a burnt offering, whether to keep a vow or as a freewill offering, a gift given simply out of a willing heart, had to bring "a male without blemish from the herd, from the lambs, and from the goats." "Anything in which is a blemish you shall not bring near, for it shall not be for acceptance for you."

God wanted the best. The worshiper might be tempted to keep his best animals for breeding and give God the one that was lame or blind. God said no. An offering that cost nothing was not an offering. King David said, "I will not offer up to the LORD my God burnt offerings without cost" (2 Samuel 24:24).

Centuries later, the priests in Malachi's day did exactly what this chapter forbids. God asked them, "when you bring near a blind animal to sacrifice, is it not evil?" and told them to try offering such a gift "to your governor" (Malachi 1:8). They would not dare give a governor what they gave God.

22:21-22 *And a man, when he brings near a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD to fulfill a vow or for a freewill offering, from the herd or from the flock, it shall be without blemish for acceptance; there shall not be any blemish in it. Blind or broken or maimed or* ***having*** *a wart or eczema or scabs, these you shall not bring near to the LORD, and a fire offering of them you shall not give on the altar to the LORD.*

The same was true of peace offerings, "to fulfill a vow or for a freewill offering." "It shall be without blemish for acceptance; there shall not be any blemish in it." Then God names the blemishes: "blind or broken or maimed or having a wart or eczema or scabs." None of these could be given "on the altar to the LORD."

Why did God require perfect animals? Because each one was a picture of Christ. He was the true sacrifice, "a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19). He "offered Himself unblemished to God" (Hebrews 9:14). Only a perfect sacrifice could take the place of sinners. If Jesus had had one sin of His own, He could not have died for ours.

22:23-25 *And an ox or a sheep overgrown or stunted* ***in limb****, a freewill offering you may make it, but for a vow it shall not be accepted. And* ***one*** *bruised or crushed or torn or cut you shall not bring near to the LORD; and in your land you shall not do* ***it****. And from the hand of a son of a foreign* ***land*** *you shall not bring near the food of your God from any of these, for their corruption* ***is*** *in them, a blemish* ***is*** *in them; they shall not be accepted for you.'"*

There was one exception. An ox or sheep "overgrown or stunted in limb" could be a freewill offering, a voluntary gift. "But for a vow it shall not be accepted." A vow was a promise made to God, and a promise to God had to be kept with the best.

Animals that were "bruised or crushed or torn or cut" could not be offered. This seems to refer to the private parts of the animal, and the words "in your land you shall not do it" are understood by many to mean that Israel was not to neuter their animals at all. Others take it to mean only that such animals were not to be offered in the land.

Even an animal bought "from the hand of a son of a foreign land" had to meet the same standard. If it had a blemish, it was not accepted. It did not matter where the animal came from. God's standard did not change.

22:26-28 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "When an ox or a lamb or a goat is born, then it shall be seven days under its mother; and from the eighth day and onward it shall be accepted for an offering, a fire offering to the LORD. And an ox or a sheep, it and its young you shall not slaughter in one day.*

A newborn ox, lamb or goat had to stay "seven days under its mother." From "the eighth day and onward" it could be offered. And "an ox or a sheep, it and its young you shall not slaughter in one day."

These rules show God's care even for animals. A mother and her young were not to be killed together. A newborn was to have its time with its mother. The law taught Israel to be gentle and to respect the life God had given, even in the act of sacrifice. A similar law forbade boiling a young

goat "in the milk of its mother" (Exodus 23:19). A people who learn tenderness toward animals are more likely to show it toward people.

22:29-30 *And when you sacrifice a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the LORD, for your acceptance you shall sacrifice it. On that day it shall be eaten; you shall not leave any of it until morning. I **am** the LORD.*

"And when you sacrifice a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the LORD, for your acceptance you shall sacrifice it." The thanksgiving offering was a kind of peace offering (7:12-15). It had to be eaten "on that day," with nothing left "until morning." This was stricter than the vow and freewill offerings, which could be eaten on the second day (19:6). Thanksgiving was meant to be enjoyed right away, with others, while the joy was fresh.

22:31-33 *And you shall keep My commandments and do them. I **am** the LORD. And you shall not profane the name of My holiness, and I will be sanctified in the midst of the sons of Israel. I **am** the LORD who sanctifies you, who brought you out from the land of Egypt to be God to you. I **am** the LORD."*

The chapter ends with God's reasons. "And you shall keep My commandments and do them. I am the LORD." "And you shall not profane the name of My holiness, and I will be sanctified in the midst of the sons of Israel."

To sanctify God's name means to treat Him as holy, to honor Him as He truly is. Jesus taught us to pray, "let Your name be sanctified" (Matthew 6:9). God's people sanctify His name by how they worship and how they live. They profane it when they treat Him carelessly.

"I am the LORD who sanctifies you, who brought you out from the land of Egypt to be God to you." Again, everything rests on what God had already done. He saved them. He made them His own. He was making them holy. Their offerings were a response to His grace, not a way to earn it.

What does this chapter teach us now? We do not bring animals to an altar. Christ, the unblemished Lamb, was offered once for all. But we still bring offerings to God. Paul says, "present your bodies as a living, holy sacrifice, well-pleasing to God" (Romans 12:1). Hebrews says, "let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually," and "do not forget doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:15-16).

So ask yourself: what am I giving God? My best time, or what is left over? My best energy, or the scraps at the end of the day? This is not about the size of the gift. Jesus said a poor widow who gave two small coins gave "more than all those having cast into the treasury;" because she gave all she had (Mark 12:43-44). It is about the heart. God deserves our best, because He gave us His best.

Chapter 22 Summary

The LORD told Moses that the priests must treat the holy things of Israel with care and not profane His holy name. A priest who was unclean from leprosy, a discharge, a dead body or other causes could not eat the holy food until he had bathed and the sun had set. Priests must not eat an animal that died on its own or was torn. No outsider could eat the holy food, but a priest's bought

slave, those born in his house, and his widowed or divorced daughter with no children could eat it. Anyone who ate a holy thing by mistake had to repay it with a fifth added. Offerings for vows and freewill offerings had to be without blemish. Blind, broken, maimed or diseased animals could not be offered, though a deformed animal could be a freewill offering. A newborn animal stayed with its mother seven days, and a mother and its young were not to be killed on the same day. Thanksgiving offerings had to be eaten the same day. Israel was to keep God's commands and sanctify His name, for He had brought them out of Egypt to be their God.

Chapter 22 Study Questions

1. What did a priest have to do before eating the holy food if he had become unclean? (22:4-7)

2. Who could not eat the holy food, and who could, even though they were not born priests? (22:10-13)

3. What happened if someone ate a holy thing by mistake? (22:14)

4. What kind of animal did God require for an offering, and what kinds were not accepted? (22:19-22)

5. What was the one exception to the rule about blemishes? (22:23)

6. What rules show God's care for animals? (22:27-28)

7. What does God say about His name at the end of the chapter? (22:32-33)

8. How do 1 Peter 1:19 and Hebrews 9:14 connect the unblemished sacrifices to Jesus?

9. What did the priests in Malachi 1:8 do wrong? In what ways might we give God less than our best?

10. Romans 12:1 and Hebrews 13:15-16 describe the sacrifices God wants from us now. What is one offering you could give Him this week?

Chapter 23: The Appointed Feasts of the LORD

Scripture

23:1-14 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'The appointed times of the LORD, which you shall proclaim ***as*** convocations of holiness, these, they ***are*** My appointed times. Six days work shall be done, and on the seventh day ***is*** a Sabbath of Sabbath rest, a convocation of holiness; you shall not do any work; it ***is*** a Sabbath to the LORD in all your dwellings. "'These ***are*** the appointed times of the LORD, convocations of holiness, which you shall proclaim at their appointed time. In the first month, on the fourteenth ***day*** of the month, between the two evenings, ***is*** a Passover to the LORD. And on the fifteenth day of this month ***is*** the Festival of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day a convocation of holiness shall be for you; you shall not do any work of labor. And you shall bring near a fire offering to the LORD seven days. On the seventh day ***is*** a convocation of holiness; you shall not do any work of labor.'" And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'When you come into the land which I am giving to you, and you reap its harvest, then you shall bring the sheaf of the first of your harvest to the priest. And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for your acceptance; on the next day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. And on the day of your waving the sheaf you shall offer a male lamb without blemish, a son of its year, for a burnt offering to the LORD, and its grain offering, approximately 4 quarts (two tenths ***of an ephah***) of fine flour mixed with oil, a fire offering to the LORD, a soothing aroma; and its drink offering, wine, approximately 1 quart (a fourth of the hin). And bread and roasted grain and fresh grain you shall not eat until this very day, until you have brought the offering of your God; ***it is*** a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

23:15-25 "'And you shall count for yourselves from the next day after the Sabbath, from the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven complete Sabbaths they shall be. Until the next day after the seventh Sabbath you shall count fifty days; and you shall bring near a new grain offering to the LORD. From your dwellings you shall bring bread of a wave offering, two ***loaves***; of approximately 4 quarts (two tenths ***of an ephah***) of fine flour they shall be; leavened they shall be baked, firstfruits to the LORD. And you shall bring near with the bread seven male lambs without blemish, sons of a year, and one young bull, a son of the herd, and two rams; they shall be a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, a fire offering of a soothing aroma to the LORD. And you shall offer one male goat of the goats for a sin offering, and two male lambs, sons of a year, for a sacrifice of peace offerings. And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits ***as*** a wave offering before the LORD, with the two male lambs; they shall be a holy thing to the LORD for the priest. And you shall proclaim on this very day, a convocation of holiness it shall be for you; you shall not do any work of labor; ***it is*** a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. "'And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not finish the edge of your field in your reaping, and the gleaning of your harvest you shall not gather; for the poor and for the sojourner you shall leave them. I ***am*** the LORD your God.'" And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'In the seventh month, on the first ***day*** of the month, ***there*** shall be for you a Sabbath rest, a

memorial of a loud blast, a convocation of holiness. You shall not do any work of labor, and you shall bring near a fire offering to the LORD.'"

23:26-44 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Surely on the tenth of this seventh month, it ***is*** the Day of Atonement; a convocation of holiness it shall be for you, and you shall afflict your souls, and you shall bring near a fire offering to the LORD. And you shall not do any work on this very day, for it ***is*** a Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God. For any soul who is not afflicted on this very day shall be cut off from its kinsmen. And any soul who does any work on this very day, I will destroy that soul from among its people. You shall not do any work; ***it is*** a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It ***is*** a Sabbath of Sabbath rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth of the month in the evening, from evening until evening, you shall rest ***for*** your Sabbath." And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'On the fifteenth day of this seventh month ***is*** the Festival of Booths, seven days to the LORD. On the first day ***is*** a convocation of holiness; you shall not do any work of labor. Seven days you shall bring near a fire offering to the LORD; on the eighth day a convocation of holiness shall be for you, and you shall bring near a fire offering to the LORD; it ***is*** a solemn assembly; you shall not do any work of labor. "'These ***are*** the appointed times of the LORD which you shall proclaim ***as*** convocations of holiness, to bring near a fire offering to the LORD, a burnt offering and a grain offering, a sacrifice and drink offerings, the matter of a day on its day, besides the Sabbaths of the LORD, and besides your gifts, and besides all your vows, and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD. "'Surely on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the festival of the LORD seven days; on the first day ***is*** a Sabbath rest, and on the eighth day ***is*** a Sabbath rest. And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of trees of splendor, fronds of palm trees, and branches of leafy trees, and poplars of the wadi; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. And you shall celebrate it ***as*** a festival to the LORD seven days in the year; ***it is*** a statute forever throughout your generations; in the seventh month you shall celebrate it. In booths you shall dwell seven days; every native in Israel shall dwell in booths, so that your generations may know that in booths I made the sons of Israel dwell when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I ***am*** the LORD your God.'" And Moses spoke the appointed times of the LORD to the sons of Israel.

Chapter 23 Preview

Chapter 23 gives Israel its calendar of holy days. God calls them "My appointed times," set times when Israel would meet with Him. The chapter begins with the weekly Sabbath and then lists the yearly feasts in order through the year. In the spring came Passover, the Festival of Unleavened Bread, and the waving of the firstfruits sheaf. Fifty days later came the Festival of Weeks, which the New Testament calls Pentecost. In the fall, in the seventh month, came the day of the loud blast of trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Festival of Booths, when Israel lived in shelters made of branches for seven days.

These feasts followed Israel's harvests and remembered how God had saved them. But the New Testament shows that they also pointed to Jesus Christ. Paul calls them "a shadow of the things coming, but the body is of Christ" (Colossians 2:16-17). The spring feasts were fulfilled at His first

coming, in His death, His resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit, at the very times of the feasts. Many Bible teachers believe the fall feasts point to events still ahead, at His return. We will take each feast in turn.

Chapter 23 Study

23:1-2 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'The appointed times of the LORD, which you shall proclaim **as** convocations of holiness, these, they **are** My appointed times.*

"The appointed times of the LORD, which you shall proclaim as convocations of holiness, these, they are My appointed times." An appointed time is a set meeting, like an appointment on a calendar. A convocation of holiness means a holy gathering, a day when the people were called together to worship.

Notice whose feasts these are. They are not Israel's holidays first of all. They are "the appointed times of the LORD." He set them. He invited His people to meet Him on these days. That is a wonderful thought. The holy God made appointments to meet with His people.

23:3 *Six days work shall be done, and on the seventh day **is** a Sabbath of Sabbath rest, a convocation of holiness; you shall not do any work; it **is** a Sabbath to the LORD in all your dwellings.*

"Six days work shall be done, and on the seventh day is a Sabbath of Sabbath rest, a convocation of holiness; you shall not do any work." The weekly Sabbath comes first, before the yearly feasts. It was the rhythm of Israel's whole life. Every week they stopped, rested and remembered that God had made the world in six days and rested on the seventh (Exodus 20:11), and that He had set them free from slavery in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15).

As we noted in chapter 19, believers today differ on how the Sabbath applies to Christians. Hebrews says, "there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9), a rest we enter by faith in Christ.

23:4-5 *"'These **are** the appointed times of the LORD, convocations of holiness, which you shall proclaim at their appointed time. In the first month, on the fourteenth **day** of the month, between the two evenings, **is** a Passover to the LORD.*

"In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, between the two evenings, is a Passover to the LORD." The first month, later called Nisan, falls in our March or April. Between the two evenings means at twilight, late in the afternoon. On that day each family killed a lamb, remembering the night in Egypt when the LORD passed over every house marked with the blood of a lamb and struck the firstborn of Egypt (Exodus 12). Passover was the feast of redemption, the night God set Israel free.

The New Testament tells us plainly what Passover pointed to: "For also our Passover was sacrificed for us: Christ" (1 Corinthians 5:7). Jesus died at Passover. He ate the Passover with His disciples the night before (Mark 14:12), and He gave it new meaning in the Lord's Supper. Like the Passover lamb, not a bone of His was broken (Exodus 12:46; John 19:36). His blood, applied by

faith, means God's judgment passes over us. This was not a coincidence. God set this appointment fifteen centuries ahead, and Jesus kept it.

23:6-8 *And on the fifteenth day of this month **is** the Festival of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day a convocation of holiness shall be for you; you shall not do any work of labor. And you shall bring near a fire offering to the LORD seven days. On the seventh day **is** a convocation of holiness; you shall not do any work of labor.'"*

"And on the fifteenth day of this month is the Festival of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread." Unleavened bread is bread made without yeast. When Israel left Egypt, they left in such a hurry that their dough had no time to rise (Exodus 12:39). For seven days after Passover they ate only unleavened bread and removed all leaven from their homes. The first and seventh days were holy gatherings, with no ordinary work.

In the Bible, leaven is often a picture of sin, because a little of it spreads through the whole lump of dough. Paul makes the connection right after he calls Christ our Passover: "So then 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 5:8). Passover and Unleavened Bread go together. First comes the blood of the Lamb, which saves. Then comes a life of putting away sin. Jesus, the sinless one, was in the grave during this feast. He is the bread of life without any leaven of sin.

23:9-11 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'When you come into the land which I am giving to you, and you reap its harvest, then you shall bring the sheaf of the first of your harvest to the priest. And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for your acceptance; on the next day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.*

"When you come into the land which I am giving to you, and you reap its harvest, then you shall bring the sheaf of the first of your harvest to the priest." This feast looked ahead to life in the land. A sheaf is a bundle of grain stalks. The first barley harvest came in the spring, during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Before anyone ate from the new harvest, the first sheaf was brought to the priest, and "he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for your acceptance."

When? "On the next day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it." Jewish teachers in later times disagreed about which Sabbath was meant. Some said it was the first day of Unleavened Bread, a special rest day. Others said it was the weekly Sabbath during the feast, so that firstfruits always fell on the first day of the week, our Sunday.

Here is why it matters. Jesus died at Passover, and He rose from the dead "as it was dawning toward the first day of the week" (Matthew 28:1), during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Paul writes, "But now Christ has been raised from the dead; He became the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). The first sheaf was the promise that the whole harvest was coming. Christ's resurrection is the promise that all who belong to Him will be raised too: "Christ the firstfruits, after that those of Christ at His coming" (1 Corinthians 15:23).

23:12-14 *And on the day of your waving the sheaf you shall offer a male lamb without blemish, a son of its year, for a burnt offering to the LORD, and its grain offering, approximately 4 quarts (two tenths **of an ephah**) of fine flour mixed with oil, a fire offering to the LORD, a soothing aroma; and its drink offering, wine, approximately 1 quart (a fourth of the hin). And bread and roasted grain and fresh grain you shall not eat until this very day, until you have brought the offering of your God; **it is** a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.*

With the sheaf came "a male lamb without blemish" as a burnt offering, a grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil, and "its drink offering, wine." A drink offering was wine poured out at the altar. Then: "bread and roasted grain and fresh grain you shall not eat until this very day, until you have brought the offering of your God."

God got the first of the harvest before anyone else ate. Giving God the first is an act of faith. It says that all of it comes from God, and that we trust Him for the rest. The same principle is true for us: "Honor the LORD from your wealth, and from the first of all your yield" (Proverbs 3:9).

23:15-16 *"'And you shall count for yourselves from the next day after the Sabbath, from the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven complete Sabbaths they shall be. Until the next day after the seventh Sabbath you shall count fifty days; and you shall bring near a new grain offering to the LORD.*

"And you shall count for yourselves from the next day after the Sabbath, from the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven complete Sabbaths they shall be." Seven weeks were counted, "fifty days," and then "you shall bring near a new grain offering to the LORD." Because of the seven weeks, this feast is called the Festival of Weeks elsewhere (Deuteronomy 16:16). Because of the fifty days, it came to be called Pentecost, from the Greek word for fiftieth. It marked the end of the wheat harvest, in late May or June.

23:17-20 *From your dwellings you shall bring bread of a wave offering, two **loaves**; of approximately 4 quarts (two tenths **of an ephah**) of fine flour they shall be; leavened they shall be baked, firstfruits to the LORD. And you shall bring near with the bread seven male lambs without blemish, sons of a year, and one young bull, a son of the herd, and two rams; they shall be a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, a fire offering of a soothing aroma to the LORD. And you shall offer one male goat of the goats for a sin offering, and two male lambs, sons of a year, for a sacrifice of peace offerings. And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits **as** a wave offering before the LORD, with the two male lambs; they shall be a holy thing to the LORD for the priest.*

This time the people brought "bread of a wave offering, two loaves," made of fine flour. "Leavened they shall be baked, firstfruits to the LORD." With the bread came burnt offerings, a sin offering and peace offerings, and the priest waved them all "before the LORD."

Notice something surprising. Leaven was forbidden on the altar (2:11). This bread was not burned on the altar. It was waved before the LORD and given to the priests. And it was baked with leaven on purpose. That is why a sin offering was brought with it.

Here is how the New Testament fills in the picture. "And when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled, they were all with one accord together" (Acts 2:1). On that very feast day, fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came on the believers in Jerusalem, and "there were added on that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). That was the beginning of the church. The firstfruits sheaf was Christ, raised alone. Fifty days later came the first great harvest of people.

Many Bible teachers see in the two leavened loaves a picture of the church: Jew and Gentile made into one body (Ephesians 2:14-16), and still not free of sin in themselves, which is why the bread was leavened and a sin offering came with it. Some have also noticed that when the Law was given at Sinai, about three thousand people died after the golden calf (Exodus 32:28), and when the Spirit was given at Pentecost, about three thousand were saved. "The letter kills," Paul says, "but the Spirit makes alive" (2 Corinthians 3:6). These are pictures, and the New Testament does not spell them out, so I hold them loosely. What it does say plainly is that the Spirit came on the day of Pentecost.

23:21-22 *And you shall proclaim on this very day, a convocation of holiness it shall be for you; you shall not do any work of labor; **it is** a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. "'And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not finish the edge of your field in your reaping, and the gleaning of your harvest you shall not gather; for the poor and for the sojourner you shall leave them. I **am** the LORD your God.'"*

The day of the Festival of Weeks was a holy gathering, with no ordinary work, "a statute forever." Then, right in the middle of the feast calendar, God repeated the law of gleaning: "you shall not finish the edge of your field in your reaping," but leave it "for the poor and for the sojourner" (19:9-10).

Why put it here? Because a harvest festival is when people are tempted to think only of their own plenty. God reminded them that worship and care for the poor go together. The joy of the harvest was to be shared. A feast that forgets the poor is not a feast God enjoys.

23:23-25 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'In the seventh month, on the first **day** of the month, **there** shall be for you a Sabbath rest, a memorial of a loud blast, a convocation of holiness. You shall not do any work of labor, and you shall bring near a fire offering to the LORD.'"*

Now we come to the fall feasts, in the seventh month, Tishri, our September or October. "In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, there shall be for you a Sabbath rest, a memorial of a loud blast, a convocation of holiness." The loud blast was the sound of trumpets, usually the ram's horn called the shofar. Numbers 29:1 calls it "a day of a loud blast." It is often called the Feast of Trumpets. Later Jewish tradition made it the start of the new civil year, Rosh Hashanah.

Leviticus says very little about this day. It does not say what the blast was for. It was a memorial, a reminder, perhaps calling Israel to get ready for the Day of Atonement ten days later. In the prophets, the trumpet is the sound of God's call: to gather His people, to warn of judgment, and to announce the day of the LORD (Joel 2:1; Isaiah 27:13).

What does this feast point to? The New Testament does not tie it to an event by name, so we need to be careful. The spring feasts were fulfilled at Christ's first coming, in order. Many Bible teachers believe the fall feasts will be fulfilled at His second coming, also in order. Among dispensational teachers who hold, as I do, that Christ will come for His church before the Tribulation, many see the Feast of Trumpets as a picture of the rapture, when "the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16), "at the last trumpet" (1 Corinthians 15:52). Others link it to the great trumpet that gathers Israel back to the Lord at the end of the Tribulation, when Christ "will send His angels with a trumpet of great sound, and they will gather together His elect" (Matthew 24:31; Isaiah 27:13).

Whichever is right, we should not use this feast to set a date. Jesus said, "concerning that day and the hour no one knows" (Matthew 24:36). The trumpet is a call to be ready.

23:26-28 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Surely on the tenth of this seventh month, it **is** the Day of Atonement; a convocation of holiness it shall be for you, and you shall afflict your souls, and you shall bring near a fire offering to the LORD. And you shall not do any work on this very day, for it **is** a Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God.*

"Surely on the tenth of this seventh month, it is the Day of Atonement." We studied this day in chapter 16, where the high priest went behind the veil with blood and the goat carried Israel's sins into the wilderness. Here we see the people's part. "You shall afflict your souls," humbling themselves before God, usually by fasting. "And you shall not do any work on this very day, for it is a Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God."

23:29-32 *For any soul who is not afflicted on this very day shall be cut off from its kinsmen. And any soul who does any work on this very day, I will destroy that soul from among its people. You shall not do any work; **it is** a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It **is** a Sabbath of Sabbath rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth of the month in the evening, from evening until evening, you shall rest **for** your Sabbath."*

The warnings are strong. "Any soul who is not afflicted on this very day shall be cut off." "Any soul who does any work on this very day, I will destroy that soul." Why so severe? Because this was the one day when the whole nation was cleansed of all its sins. To treat it lightly, to go on with business as usual, was to say that one did not need atonement. A person who refuses the forgiveness God offers shuts himself out from it.

"It is a Sabbath of Sabbath rest for you," from "the ninth of the month in the evening, from evening until evening." The Hebrew day began at sundown, so the Day of Atonement ran from the evening of the ninth to the evening of the tenth.

For believers, the Day of Atonement was fulfilled when Christ entered heaven "through His own blood" "once for all" (Hebrews 9:12). But many Bible teachers believe it also looks ahead to a day for the nation of Israel. Paul says "a hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:25-26). Zechariah describes that day: God will pour out "a spirit of grace and supplications; and they will look to Me, to Him

whom they have pierced; and they will mourn over Him" (Zechariah 12:10). That national day of mourning and cleansing, when Israel turns to Jesus as Messiah at His return, would be the full meaning of afflicting their souls on the Day of Atonement.

23:33-36 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'On the fifteenth day of this seventh month **is** the Festival of Booths, seven days to the LORD. On the first day **is** a convocation of holiness; you shall not do any work of labor. Seven days you shall bring near a fire offering to the LORD; on the eighth day a convocation of holiness shall be for you, and you shall bring near a fire offering to the LORD; it **is** a solemn assembly; you shall not do any work of labor.*

"On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the Festival of Booths, seven days to the LORD." A booth was a simple shelter made of branches. This is also called the Feast of Tabernacles or Sukkot. The first day was a holy gathering, and offerings were brought each day for seven days. "On the eighth day a convocation of holiness shall be for you," "a solemn assembly." This was the last and most joyful feast of the year.

23:37-38 *"'These **are** the appointed times of the LORD which you shall proclaim **as** convocations of holiness, to bring near a fire offering to the LORD, a burnt offering and a grain offering, a sacrifice and drink offerings, the matter of a day on its day, besides the Sabbaths of the LORD, and besides your gifts, and besides all your vows, and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD.*

Verses 37 and 38 sum up the list. These are "the appointed times of the LORD," with their offerings, "the matter of a day on its day." They were in addition to the weekly Sabbaths and to the gifts, vows and freewill offerings the people brought throughout the year. The feasts did not replace daily faithfulness. They were added to it.

23:39-41 *"'Surely on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the festival of the LORD seven days; on the first day **is** a Sabbath rest, and on the eighth day **is** a Sabbath rest. And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of trees of splendor, fronds of palm trees, and branches of leafy trees, and poplars of the wadi; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. And you shall celebrate it **as** a festival to the LORD seven days in the year; **it is** a statute forever throughout your generations; in the seventh month you shall celebrate it.*

Now God gives more detail about the Festival of Booths. It came "when you have gathered the produce of the land," at the end of the whole harvest, the grapes, olives and fruit. "And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of trees of splendor, fronds of palm trees, and branches of leafy trees, and poplars of the wadi; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days."

Notice the command: rejoice. God commanded His people to celebrate. Holiness is not gloomy. After the solemn fasting of the Day of Atonement came seven days of joy. Forgiveness leads to rejoicing. The order is worth noticing: first atonement, then joy.

23:42-43 *In booths you shall dwell seven days; every native in Israel shall dwell in booths, so that your generations may know that in booths I made the sons of Israel dwell when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I* ***am*** *the LORD your God.'"*

"In booths you shall dwell seven days; every native in Israel shall dwell in booths, so that your generations may know that in booths I made the sons of Israel dwell when I brought them out from the land of Egypt." Every year, even after they lived in houses in the land, Israel would move out into rough shelters for a week. Children would ask why, and parents would tell them how God cared for their fathers in the wilderness for forty years. They would remember that they were once homeless wanderers, and that everything they had came from God.

This feast also points to Christ. John says, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). The word dwelt in Greek has the idea of pitching a tent, living in a tabernacle. God came to live among us in a body, as Israel lived in booths. At this very feast Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink" (John 7:37).

And the feast looks ahead. Zechariah says that in the coming kingdom, the nations "will go up from year to year to bow down to the King, the LORD of armies, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths" (Zechariah 14:16). I believe this will be fulfilled in the thousand-year kingdom, when Christ reigns on the earth from Jerusalem. And beyond that, John heard a voice say, "Look, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them" (Revelation 21:3). The last feast of the year points to the last chapter of history: God living with His people forever, and the joy of the final harvest.

23:44 *And Moses spoke the appointed times of the LORD to the sons of Israel.*

"And Moses spoke the appointed times of the LORD to the sons of Israel." The chapter closes simply. Moses passed on what God had said.

What does this chapter teach us now? Christians are not bound to keep these feasts (Colossians 2:16-17), though many find it helpful to learn about them, and some Jewish believers in Jesus keep them as part of their heritage. What we must not miss is their meaning. Look at the whole calendar together:

- Passover: Christ our Passover Lamb was sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7).
- Unleavened Bread: we are called to put away sin and live in sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:8).
- Firstfruits: Christ was raised from the dead as the firstfruits of all who will rise (1 Corinthians 15:20).
- Weeks, or Pentecost: the Holy Spirit came and the church was born (Acts 2:1-4).
- Trumpets: the trumpet will sound, and the Lord will gather His people (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Matthew 24:31).
- Day of Atonement: Israel will look on Him whom they pierced and be cleansed (Zechariah 12:10; Romans 11:26).

- Booths: God will dwell with His people in His kingdom (Zechariah 14:16; Revelation 21:3).

God keeps His appointments. He kept the first four, at the very feasts He set. We can be sure He will keep the rest.

Chapter 23 Summary

The LORD gave Moses His appointed times, holy gatherings for Israel. The weekly Sabbath was a day of complete rest. In the first month came Passover on the fourteenth day and the seven-day Festival of Unleavened Bread from the fifteenth. In the land, the first sheaf of the harvest was to be waved before the LORD on the day after the Sabbath, with offerings, before anyone ate the new grain. Fifty days later came the Festival of Weeks, with two leavened loaves of firstfruits and many offerings, and the reminder to leave the edges of the field for the poor. In the seventh month came a day of the loud blast of trumpets on the first day, the Day of Atonement on the tenth, when the people afflicted their souls and did no work, and the seven-day Festival of Booths from the fifteenth, with an eighth day of solemn assembly, when Israel rejoiced and lived in booths to remember the wilderness. The New Testament shows Christ fulfilling the spring feasts in His death, resurrection and the sending of the Spirit, and many believe the fall feasts point to His return and His kingdom.

Chapter 23 Study Questions

1. What does God call these feasts, and whose are they? (23:2, 4)

2. What happened on Passover, and how does 1 Corinthians 5:7 tell us it points to Christ? (23:5)

3. Why did Israel eat unleavened bread for seven days, and what does Paul say it teaches us? (23:6-8; 1 Corinthians 5:8)

4. What was done with the first sheaf of the harvest, and how does 1 Corinthians 15:20 use this picture? (23:10-14)

5. How many days were counted to the Festival of Weeks, and what happened on that day in Acts 2? (23:15-21)

6. Why do you think the law of gleaning for the poor appears in the middle of the feasts? (23:22)

7. What were the people commanded to do on the Day of Atonement, and why were the warnings so strong? (23:27-32)

8. What did Israel do during the Festival of Booths, and why? (23:40-43)

9. The spring feasts were fulfilled at the very feasts God set. How does that strengthen your trust that He will keep His promises about Christ's return?

10. The Festival of Booths was a command to rejoice. How can you make room for real joy in your worship and in your week?

Chapter 24: The Lamp, the Bread, and the Blasphemer

Scripture

24:1-9 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Command the sons of Israel, that they bring to you pure olive oil, beaten, for the light, to cause a lamp to go up continually. Outside the veil of the testimony, in the tent of meeting, Aaron shall arrange it from evening until morning before the LORD continually; ***it is*** a statute forever throughout your generations. On the pure lampstand he shall arrange the lamps before the LORD continually. "And you shall take fine flour and bake it ***into*** twelve cakes; the one cake shall be approximately 4 quarts (two tenths ***of an ephah***). And you shall set them ***in*** two rows, six ***in*** the row, on the pure table before the LORD. And you shall put pure frankincense on the row, and it shall be for the bread for a memorial portion, a fire offering to the LORD. On the day of the Sabbath, on the day of the Sabbath, he shall arrange it before the LORD continually, from the sons of Israel, a covenant forever. And it shall be for Aaron and for his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, for it ***is*** a holy of holies to him from the fire offerings of the LORD, a due forever."

24:10-23 And the son of an Israelite woman went out, and he ***was*** the son of an Egyptian man, in the midst of the sons of Israel; and the son of the Israelite ***woman*** and the Israelite man struggled together in the camp. And the son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name, and he cursed; and they brought him to Moses. And the name of his mother ***was*** Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan. And they put him in custody, to make ***it*** clear to them according to the mouth of the LORD. And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Bring the one who cursed outside the camp, and all who heard shall lay their hands on his head, and all the congregation shall stone him. And to the sons of Israel you shall speak, saying, 'Any man, when he curses his God, shall bear his sin. And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall surely stone him; as the sojourner, ***so*** the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death. And a man, when he strikes down any life of mankind, shall surely be put to death. And whoever strikes down the life of an animal shall repay it, life for life. And a man, when he puts a blemish on his fellow, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as he puts a blemish on a man, so it shall be put on him. And whoever strikes down an animal shall repay it; and whoever strikes down a man shall be put to death. One judgment shall be for you; as the sojourner, ***so*** the native it shall be; for I ***am*** the LORD your God.'" And Moses spoke to the sons of Israel, and they brought the one who had cursed outside the camp, and they stoned him ***with*** stones. And the sons of Israel did just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Chapter 24 Preview

Chapter 23 gave Israel's yearly feasts. Chapter 24 begins with the daily and weekly service inside the tent of meeting: the oil for the lampstand, which was to burn "continually" before the LORD, and the twelve loaves of bread set out on the golden table every Sabbath. These were quiet, steady acts of worship that went on day after day, in the holy place, out of sight of the people.

Then the chapter turns suddenly to a story. A man whose mother was an Israelite and whose father was an Egyptian got into a fight in the camp and "blasphemed the Name," cursing God. Moses did not know what to do, so they waited for the LORD's answer. God commanded that the man be stoned, and He gave laws on blasphemy, murder and injury, including the well-known words "eye for eye, tooth for tooth." This is a hard passage, and we will look carefully at what it meant then, and at what Jesus said about it.

Chapter 24 Study

24:1-4 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Command the sons of Israel, that they bring to you pure olive oil, beaten, for the light, to cause a lamp to go up continually. Outside the veil of the testimony, in the tent of meeting, Aaron shall arrange it from evening until morning before the LORD continually;* ***it is*** *a statute forever throughout your generations. On the pure lampstand he shall arrange the lamps before the LORD continually.*

"Command the sons of Israel, that they bring to you pure olive oil, beaten, for the light, to cause a lamp to go up continually." Beaten oil was the finest oil, made by crushing olives gently in a mortar rather than pressing them in a big press. It burned clean and bright, with little smoke. The people supplied it. The lamp in God's house was kept burning by the gifts of ordinary Israelites.

The lampstand stood in the holy place, "outside the veil of the testimony," the outer room of the tent of meeting (Exodus 25:31-40). It was made of pure gold, with seven lamps. "Aaron shall arrange it from evening until morning before the LORD continually." The priest tended it every evening and morning so that it never went out. The holy place had no windows. Without the lamp, it would have been dark.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. The one following Me will certainly not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). He also told His followers, "You are the light of the world," and told us not to hide our light but to let it "shine before men" (Matthew 5:14-16). In Revelation, John saw the risen Christ standing "in the midst of the seven lampstands," which stand for the churches (Revelation 1:12-13, 20). The light that burns continually is a picture of a faithful witness, kept bright by daily care.

24:5-7 *"And you shall take fine flour and bake it* ***into*** *twelve cakes; the one cake shall be approximately 4 quarts (two tenths* ***of an ephah****). And you shall set them* ***in*** *two rows, six* ***in*** *the row, on the pure table before the LORD. And you shall put pure frankincense on the row, and it shall be for the bread for a memorial portion, a fire offering to the LORD.*

"And you shall take fine flour and bake it into twelve cakes." Each cake used about four quarts of flour, so these were large loaves. They were set "in two rows, six in the row, on the pure table before the LORD." This is the bread Exodus calls "bread of the Presence" (Exodus 25:30), because it was set before God's presence. "Pure frankincense" was put on each row, a fragrant resin, and it was burned as "a memorial portion."

Twelve loaves stood for the twelve tribes of Israel. Every tribe was represented before God, all the time. None was forgotten. Many have seen in this a picture of how God keeps His people before

Him. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). He is the one who feeds us, and He is the one who keeps us before the Father.

24:8-9 *On the day of the Sabbath, on the day of the Sabbath, he shall arrange it before the LORD continually, from the sons of Israel, a covenant forever. And it shall be for Aaron and for his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, for it* ***is*** *a holy of holies to him from the fire offerings of the LORD, a due forever."*

"On the day of the Sabbath, on the day of the Sabbath, he shall arrange it before the LORD continually." Every Sabbath, fresh bread replaced the old. This was "a covenant forever." The old bread was for "Aaron and for his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, for it is a holy of holies."

Jesus once mentioned this bread. When the Pharisees criticized His disciples for picking grain on the Sabbath, He reminded them that David, when he was hungry, "entered into the house of God and ate the loaves of the presentation, which it was not lawful for him to eat" (Matthew 12:4; 1 Samuel 21:1-6). Jesus' point was that God's laws were given for the good of people, and mercy matters to Him more than outward ritual (Matthew 12:7).

24:10-11 *And the son of an Israelite woman went out, and he* ***was*** *the son of an Egyptian man, in the midst of the sons of Israel; and the son of the Israelite* ***woman*** *and the Israelite man struggled together in the camp. And the son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name, and he cursed; and they brought him to Moses. And the name of his mother* ***was*** *Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan.*

Now comes the story. "And the son of an Israelite woman went out, and he was the son of an Egyptian man, in the midst of the sons of Israel." He was of mixed parents. He may have been part of the "mixed multitude" that left Egypt with Israel (Exodus 12:38). He got into a fight with an Israelite man in the camp.

In the fight, "the son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name, and he cursed." To blaspheme is to speak against God with contempt. The Name means the name of the LORD, God's holy personal name. He did not just lose his temper. He cursed God Himself, by name. That was a direct attack on Israel's King.

Moses records his mother's name: "Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan." Why name her? It may be to make the account exact and honest. It also reminds us that sin affects families. A mother's name is now remembered in Scripture because of her son's sin.

24:12 *And they put him in custody, to make* ***it*** *clear to them according to the mouth of the LORD.*

"And they put him in custody, to make it clear to them according to the mouth of the LORD." Moses did not act in anger. He did not decide on his own. He waited for God's answer. This is a good example for anyone in authority. When a case is serious and the way forward is unclear, slow down, pray and seek God's will.

24:13-14 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Bring the one who cursed outside the camp, and all who heard shall lay their hands on his head, and all the congregation shall stone him.*

"Bring the one who cursed outside the camp, and all who heard shall lay their hands on his head, and all the congregation shall stone him." Those who heard him blaspheme were the witnesses. By laying their hands on his head, they were saying that they had heard it and that his guilt was on his own head. Then the whole community carried out the sentence.

24:15-16 *And to the sons of Israel you shall speak, saying, 'Any man, when he curses his God, shall bear his sin. And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall surely stone him; as the sojourner, **so** the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.*

Then God gave a law for the future. "Any man, when he curses his God, shall bear his sin. And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death." And it applied to everyone: "as the sojourner, so the native." It did not matter whether the man was a full Israelite or a foreigner living among them. All were under the same King.

This is a very hard passage for us. A man is put to death for words. How should we understand it? First, Israel was a nation with God as its King, and to curse Him openly was treason against the throne. Second, the third commandment had already said that God would not leave unpunished anyone who lifts up His name "to emptiness" (Exodus 20:7). Third, God was teaching Israel, at the very beginning of their life as a nation, that His name is holy. Like Nadab and Abihu in chapter 10, this was a warning at the start.

But notice something important in the New Testament. Jesus Himself was accused of blasphemy. The religious leaders said, "for blasphemy, and because You, being a man, make Yourself God" (John 10:33). At His trial the high priest tore his garments and cried, "He has blasphemed!" (Matthew 26:65). They used this very law to condemn the Son of God. And as He was dying, Jesus prayed for them, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Jesus also said, "every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven to men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven" (Matthew 12:31). Even blasphemy can be forgiven when a person repents. Paul said he himself was once "a blasphemer" and received mercy (1 Timothy 1:13). The church does not stone blasphemers. We answer them with the gospel. But we still treat God's name as holy. The day is coming when "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Philippians 2:10).

24:17-18 *And a man, when he strikes down any life of mankind, shall surely be put to death. And whoever strikes down the life of an animal shall repay it, life for life.*

"And a man, when he strikes down any life of mankind, shall surely be put to death." Murder was punished by death. This goes back to God's word to Noah, that whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, because man is made in God's image (Genesis 9:6). A human life is worth so much that taking one unlawfully cost the murderer his own.

"And whoever strikes down the life of an animal shall repay it, life for life." Killing someone's animal required paying back its value. Notice the difference. An animal could be paid for. A human life could not. People are not property, and no amount of money could make up for a murder (Numbers 35:31).

24:19-20 *And a man, when he puts a blemish on his fellow, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as he puts a blemish on a man, so it shall be put on him.*

"And a man, when he puts a blemish on his fellow, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth." This is often called the law of retaliation, or in Latin, lex talionis. It is also in Exodus 21:23-25 and Deuteronomy 19:21.

Many people think this law is cruel. In fact it was a limit on cruelty. In the ancient world, if someone knocked out your tooth, you might kill him, and his family might kill yours. Revenge grew and grew. This law said: the punishment must fit the crime, and no more. Not a life for an eye. An eye for an eye. It also meant that a rich man paid the same as a poor man. Justice was equal.

It was a law for the courts, for judges to apply, not for private revenge (Deuteronomy 19:18-21). Many teachers believe that in practice it was often settled by payment of the value of the injury, since Numbers 35:31 forbids taking a ransom only for a murderer, which suggests ransom could be paid for lesser harm. Scripture does not say this directly.

Jesus quoted this law in the Sermon on the Mount: "You heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I say to you, not to resist the evil person; but whoever will strike you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:38-39). Jesus was not overturning justice in the courts. He was speaking to His followers about their personal lives. People had taken a law meant to limit punishment and turned it into a right to get even. Jesus said: do not insist on your rights. Leave vengeance to God (Romans 12:19). Paul says, "Repaying no one evil for evil" (Romans 12:17).

24:21-22 *And whoever strikes down an animal shall repay it; and whoever strikes down a man shall be put to death. One judgment shall be for you; as the sojourner, **so** the native it shall be; for I **am** the LORD your God.'"*

"And whoever strikes down an animal shall repay it; and whoever strikes down a man shall be put to death." The law is repeated to make the difference clear. Then: "One judgment shall be for you; as the sojourner, so the native it shall be; for I am the LORD your God." The same law for everyone. No special treatment for the native-born, and no harsher treatment for the foreigner. God's justice is fair to all.

24:23 *And Moses spoke to the sons of Israel, and they brought the one who had cursed outside the camp, and they stoned him **with** stones. And the sons of Israel did just as the LORD had commanded Moses.*

"And Moses spoke to the sons of Israel, and they brought the one who had cursed outside the camp, and they stoned him with stones. And the sons of Israel did just as the LORD had commanded Moses." The sentence was carried out. It is told plainly, without any detail. It was a sad day in the camp.

What does this chapter teach us now? The lamp and the bread remind us that worship is daily and steady, not only on special occasions. God's light should burn continually in our lives, kept by faithful care. The story of the blasphemer reminds us that God's name is holy. We should never use it carelessly, as a curse word or a joke. We live in a world where God's name is used that way every day. Let it not be so among us.

And the law of "eye for eye" reminds us that God cares about justice. But in Christ, we have received not justice but mercy. We deserved the penalty. Jesus took it. So we, who have been forgiven so much, can turn the other cheek and leave our wrongs in God's hands.

Chapter 24 Summary

The LORD commanded Israel to bring pure beaten olive oil so that Aaron could keep the lamps on the golden lampstand burning continually before the LORD. Twelve large loaves were set in two rows on the pure table with frankincense, renewed every Sabbath, and eaten by the priests in a holy place. The son of an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father fought with an Israelite and blasphemed and cursed the name of the LORD. He was held until the LORD made His will known, and the LORD commanded that the witnesses lay their hands on his head and the congregation stone him outside the camp. God declared that anyone who blasphemed His name, foreigner or native, would be put to death; that a murderer would be put to death; that a killed animal must be repaid; and that injury would be punished in kind, eye for eye and tooth for tooth, with one law for foreigner and native alike. The people did as the LORD commanded. Jesus is the light of the world and the bread of life, and He taught His followers not to take personal revenge.

Chapter 24 Study Questions

1. What did the people bring for the lampstand, and how often was it to burn? (24:2-4)

2. What was set on the golden table, how many, and how often was it renewed? (24:5-8)

3. What did the son of the Israelite woman do, and how did Moses respond? (24:10-12)

4. What did the witnesses do before the man was stoned, and what did it mean? (24:14)

5. What was the difference between killing a person and killing an animal under this law? (24:17-18, 21)

6. What does "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" mean, and how did it limit revenge? (24:19-20)

7. Did the law treat the foreigner differently from the native Israelite? (24:16, 22)

8. Jesus was accused of blasphemy and condemned (Matthew 26:65). How did He respond to those who killed Him (Luke 23:34)?

9. How do people use God's name carelessly today? How can you honor His name in your words this week?

10. Jesus said to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:38-39). Is there someone you want to get even with? What would it look like to leave that with God?

Chapter 25: The Sabbath Year and the Jubilee

Scripture

25:1-17 And the LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'When you come into the land which I am giving to you, then the land shall rest a Sabbath to the LORD. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and you shall gather its produce. And in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of Sabbath rest for the land, a Sabbath to the LORD; your field you shall not sow, and your vineyard you shall not prune. The self-sown ***growth*** of your harvest you shall not reap, and the grapes of your untrimmed vine you shall not pick; it shall be a year of Sabbath rest for the land. And the Sabbath of the land shall be for you for food: for you and for your male slave and for your female slave and for your hired laborer and for your settler who sojourn with you, and for your livestock and for the living things that ***are*** in your land all its produce shall be to eat. "'And you shall count for yourself seven Sabbaths of years, seven years seven times; and the days of the seven Sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. And you shall cause a ram's horn of loud blast to pass through in the seventh month, on the tenth of the month; on the Day of Atonement you shall cause a ram's horn to pass through in all your land. And you shall sanctify the year of the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty in the land to all its inhabitants; it shall be a jubilee for you, and you shall return each man to his possession, and each man to his clan you shall return. It shall be a jubilee for you, the year of the fiftieth year; you shall not sow, and you shall not reap its self-sown ***growth***, and you shall not pick ***the grapes of*** its untrimmed vines. For it ***is*** a jubilee; it shall be holiness to you; from the field you shall eat its produce. In this year of the jubilee you shall return each man to his possession. "'And when you sell a sale to your fellow, or buy from the hand of your fellow, do not mistreat, each man his brother. According to the number of years after the jubilee you shall buy from your fellow; according to the number of the years of produce he shall sell to you. According to the abundance of the years you shall increase its price, and according to the fewness of the years you shall decrease its price; for ***it is*** a number of produce ***years*** he is selling to you. And you shall not mistreat, each man his fellow, and you shall fear your God; for I ***am*** the LORD your God.

25:18-34 "'And you shall do My statutes, and My judgments you shall keep and do them; and you shall dwell on the land in security. And the land shall give its fruit, and you shall eat to satisfaction, and you shall dwell in security on it. And when you say, "What shall we eat in the seventh year? Look, we shall not sow, and we shall not gather our produce," then I will command My blessing for you in the sixth year, and it shall make the produce for the three years. And you shall sow in the eighth year, and you shall eat of the produce, old ***produce***, until the ninth year; until its produce comes in, you shall eat old ***produce***. "'And the land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land ***is*** Mine; for you ***are*** sojourners and settlers with Me. And in all the land of your possession you shall give redemption for the land. "'When your brother becomes poor and sells some of his possession, then his redeemer who ***is*** near to him shall come and redeem what his brother sold. And a man, when he has no redeemer, and his hand attains and he finds according to the sufficiency of its redemption, then he shall calculate the years of its sale, and repay the surplus to the man to whom he sold ***it***, and he shall return to his possession. And if his

hand has not found sufficiency to repay to him, then what he sold shall be in the hand of the one who bought it until the year of the jubilee; and it shall go out in the jubilee, and he shall return to his possession. "'And a man, when he sells a dwelling house of a walled city, then its redemption shall be until the completion of the year of its sale; its redemption shall be ***for*** days. And if it is not redeemed until a complete year is fulfilled for it, then the house which ***is*** in the city that has a wall shall stand in perpetuity for the one who bought it, throughout his generations; it shall not go out in the jubilee. And the houses of the villages which have no wall around them shall be reckoned with the field of the land; redemption shall be for it, and in the jubilee it shall go out. And the cities of the Levites, the houses of the cities of their possession, a redemption forever shall be for the Levites. And what one of the Levites redeems, then the sale of the house and the city of his possession shall go out in the jubilee; for the houses of the cities of the Levites, it ***is*** their possession in the midst of the sons of Israel. And the field of the pasture land of their cities shall not be sold, for it ***is*** a possession forever for them.

25:35-55 "'And when your brother becomes poor, and his hand slips with you, then you shall strengthen him; ***as*** a sojourner and a settler, and he shall live with you. Do not take from him interest and increase, and you shall fear your God, and your brother shall live with you. Your silver you shall not give to him at interest, and at increase you shall not give your food. I ***am*** the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be God to you. "'And when your brother becomes poor with you and sells himself to you, you shall not work him ***with*** the work of a slave. As a hired laborer, as a settler he shall be with you; until the year of the jubilee he shall work with you. And he shall go out from you, he and his sons with him, and he shall return to his clan, and to the possession of his fathers he shall return. For they ***are*** My slaves whom I brought out from the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold ***with*** the sale of a slave. You shall not have dominion over him with harshness, and you shall fear your God. And your male slave and your female slave who shall be yours, from the nations that ***are*** around you, from them you may buy a male slave and a female slave. And also from the sons of the settlers who sojourn with you, from them you may buy, and from their clan that ***is*** with you, which they have fathered in your land; and they shall be for you for a possession. And you may take them as an inheritance for your sons after you, to possess ***as*** a possession; forever you may work them; but over your brothers, the sons of Israel, each man over his brother, you shall not have dominion over him with harshness. "'And when the hand of a sojourner or a settler with you attains ***means***, and your brother with him becomes poor and sells himself to a sojourner, a settler with you, or to an offshoot of the clan of a sojourner, after he has sold himself, redemption shall be for him; one of his brothers may redeem him, or his uncle or the son of his uncle may redeem him, or any of the kin of his flesh from his clan may redeem him; or ***if*** his hand has attained, then he may redeem himself. And he shall calculate with the one who bought him from the year he sold himself to him until the year of the jubilee; and the silver of his sale shall be according to the number of years; as the days of a hired laborer he shall be with him. If ***there are*** still many in the years, according to them he shall repay his redemption from the silver of his purchase. And if few remain in the years until the year of the jubilee, then he shall calculate for him; according to his years he shall repay his redemption. As a hired laborer year by year he shall be with him; he shall not have dominion over him with harshness before your eyes. And if he is not redeemed by these ***means***, then he shall go out in the year of the jubilee, he and his sons with him. For to Me the sons

of Israel ***are*** slaves; they ***are*** My slaves whom I brought out from the land of Egypt. I ***am*** the LORD your God.

Chapter 25 Preview

Chapter 25 takes the idea of the Sabbath and applies it to the land and to the whole life of the nation. Every seventh year was to be a Sabbath year, when the fields were not planted and the vineyards were not pruned. After seven of these, seven times seven years, came the fiftieth year, the jubilee. A ram's horn would sound through the land on the Day of Atonement, and liberty would be proclaimed. Land that had been sold went back to the family that first owned it. Israelites who had sold themselves into service because of poverty went free and went home.

The chapter then explains how the land could be redeemed, bought back, by a close relative called the redeemer. It forbids charging interest to a poor brother. And it gives laws for Israelites who became servants, and for slaves bought from other nations. Those last laws are hard to read, and we will look at them honestly. Above all, this chapter teaches that the land and the people belong to God. Jesus began His ministry by reading words that echo the jubilee, and saying, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21).

Chapter 25 Study

25:1-2 *And the LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'When you come into the land which I am giving to you, then the land shall rest a Sabbath to the LORD.*

"And the LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai." This reminds us that we are still at Sinai, where the covenant was given (see also 26:46 and 27:34). "When you come into the land which I am giving to you, then the land shall rest a Sabbath to the LORD." Israel did not have the land yet. God was already making plans for how they would live in it. Even the soil was to keep a Sabbath.

25:3-7 *Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and you shall gather its produce. And in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of Sabbath rest for the land, a Sabbath to the LORD; your field you shall not sow, and your vineyard you shall not prune. The self-sown* ***growth*** *of your harvest you shall not reap, and the grapes of your untrimmed vine you shall not pick; it shall be a year of Sabbath rest for the land. And the Sabbath of the land shall be for you for food: for you and for your male slave and for your female slave and for your hired laborer and for your settler who sojourn with you, and for your livestock and for the living things that* ***are*** *in your land all its produce shall be to eat.*

For six years Israel would sow and prune and harvest. "And in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of Sabbath rest for the land." No planting, no pruning, no organized harvest. Whatever grew on its own, "the self-sown growth," was not reaped as a crop. It was food for everyone: "for you and for your male slave and for your female slave and for your hired laborer and for your settler," and even "for your livestock and for the living things that are in your land."

The Sabbath year did several things. It let the land rest and recover, which farmers today understand well. It fed the poor, the servants and the animals. It put rich and poor on the same level for a year, all eating from the same fields. And most of all, it taught Israel to trust God. Every seventh year, they had to stop working and believe He would provide.

25:8-10 *"'And you shall count for yourself seven Sabbaths of years, seven years seven times; and the days of the seven Sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. And you shall cause a ram's horn of loud blast to pass through in the seventh month, on the tenth of the month; on the Day of Atonement you shall cause a ram's horn to pass through in all your land. And you shall sanctify the year of the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty in the land to all its inhabitants; it shall be a jubilee for you, and you shall return each man to his possession, and each man to his clan you shall return.*

"And you shall count for yourself seven Sabbaths of years, seven years seven times," forty-nine years. Then "you shall cause a ram's horn of loud blast to pass through in the seventh month, on the tenth of the month; on the Day of Atonement." Notice the day. The jubilee began on the Day of Atonement (chapter 16). Freedom was announced on the day sins were atoned for. Atonement came first, then liberty.

"And you shall sanctify the year of the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty in the land to all its inhabitants; it shall be a jubilee for you." The word jubilee comes from the Hebrew yobel, a ram's horn, the trumpet that announced the year. In that year "you shall return each man to his possession, and each man to his clan you shall return." Families who had lost their land got it back. People who had sold themselves into service went home.

Imagine hearing that horn. A man who had lost his family's land years ago, through bad harvests or debt, would hear it and know: it is coming back. A man working for another family would know: I am going home.

25:11-13 *It shall be a jubilee for you, the year of the fiftieth year; you shall not sow, and you shall not reap its self-sown **growth**, and you shall not pick **the grapes of** its untrimmed vines. For it **is** a jubilee; it shall be holiness to you; from the field you shall eat its produce. In this year of the jubilee you shall return each man to his possession.*

The jubilee year was also a year of rest for the land, like the Sabbath year. "You shall not sow, and you shall not reap." "For it is a jubilee; it shall be holiness to you." It was a holy year, set apart for God. "In this year of the jubilee you shall return each man to his possession."

25:14-17 *"'And when you sell a sale to your fellow, or buy from the hand of your fellow, do not mistreat, each man his brother. According to the number of years after the jubilee you shall buy from your fellow; according to the number of the years of produce he shall sell to you. According to the abundance of the years you shall increase its price, and according to the fewness of the years you shall decrease its price; for **it is** a number of produce **years** he is selling to you. And you shall not mistreat, each man his fellow, and you shall fear your God; for I **am** the LORD your God.*

The jubilee affected every sale of land. "When you sell a sale to your fellow, or buy from the hand of your fellow, do not mistreat, each man his brother." Land in Israel was not really sold forever.

What a buyer paid for was the number of harvests until the next jubilee. "According to the abundance of the years you shall increase its price, and according to the fewness of the years you shall decrease its price; for it is a number of produce years he is selling to you." In our terms, it was more like a lease than a sale.

"And you shall not mistreat, each man his fellow, and you shall fear your God." A buyer could take advantage of a desperate seller. God said no. Fair dealing comes from the fear of God.

25:18-22 *"'And you shall do My statutes, and My judgments you shall keep and do them; and you shall dwell on the land in security. And the land shall give its fruit, and you shall eat to satisfaction, and you shall dwell in security on it. And when you say, "What shall we eat in the seventh year? Look, we shall not sow, and we shall not gather our produce," then I will command My blessing for you in the sixth year, and it shall make the produce for the three years. And you shall sow in the eighth year, and you shall eat of the produce, old* ***produce****, until the ninth year; until its produce comes in, you shall eat old* ***produce****.*

"And you shall do My statutes, and My judgments you shall keep and do them; and you shall dwell on the land in security." Then God answered the question every farmer would ask: "What shall we eat in the seventh year? Look, we shall not sow, and we shall not gather our produce."

God's answer: "I will command My blessing for you in the sixth year, and it shall make the produce for the three years." The sixth year would produce enough for the sixth, seventh and eighth years, until the new crop came in during the ninth.

This is a lesson in faith. It is the same lesson as the manna in the wilderness, when God gave a double portion on the sixth day so they could rest on the Sabbath (Exodus 16:22-30). Obeying God sometimes looks risky. Will there be enough? God says, Trust Me. Jesus taught the same thing: "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

Sadly, Israel did not keep the Sabbath years. Second Chronicles says that when Judah went into exile in Babylon, the land lay empty "until the land had accepted its Sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years" (2 Chronicles 36:21). We will see that warning in 26:34-35.

25:23-24 *"'And the land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land* ***is*** *Mine; for you* ***are*** *sojourners and settlers with Me. And in all the land of your possession you shall give redemption for the land.*

"And the land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is Mine; for you are sojourners and settlers with Me." Here is the foundation of the whole chapter. The land belonged to God. Israel lived on it as His guests, like foreigners living on someone else's land. They could not sell it forever, because it was not theirs to sell. "To the LORD belongs the earth and its fullness" (Psalm 24:1).

That is a good way for us to think about everything we own. We are stewards, not owners. Our houses, our money, our time and our bodies belong to God. And like the patriarchs, we are "strangers and sojourners on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13), looking ahead to a better home.

"And in all the land of your possession you shall give redemption for the land." Redemption means buying back. Land that was sold could always be bought back.

25:25-28 *"'When your brother becomes poor and sells some of his possession, then his redeemer who **is** near to him shall come and redeem what his brother sold. And a man, when he has no redeemer, and his hand attains and he finds according to the sufficiency of its redemption, then he shall calculate the years of its sale, and repay the surplus to the man to whom he sold **it**, and he shall return to his possession. And if his hand has not found sufficiency to repay to him, then what he sold shall be in the hand of the one who bought it until the year of the jubilee; and it shall go out in the jubilee, and he shall return to his possession.*

"When your brother becomes poor and sells some of his possession, then his redeemer who is near to him shall come and redeem what his brother sold." The redeemer, in Hebrew the go'el, was the closest male relative. He had the right and the duty to buy back family land, to buy a relative out of slavery (25:48-49), and to stand up for the family. He is often called the kinsman-redeemer.

The book of Ruth tells the most beautiful story of a redeemer. Boaz, a relative of Naomi's dead husband, bought back the family land and married Ruth, the widow, "to raise up the name of the dead man over his inheritance" (Ruth 4:10). Their great-grandson was King David.

If there was no redeemer, a man could buy it back himself if he later had the money. He would figure the years left until the jubilee and pay the difference. And if he could never afford it, "it shall go out in the jubilee, and he shall return to his possession." No family would lose its land forever.

What a picture of Christ. We had lost everything through sin. We could not buy it back ourselves. So God sent a Redeemer who became our relative. Jesus took on flesh and blood and became one of us, so that He could redeem us (Hebrews 2:14-15). "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under law, so that He might redeem those under law" (Galatians 4:4-5). He paid the price with His own blood (1 Peter 1:18-19).

25:29-31 *"'And a man, when he sells a dwelling house of a walled city, then its redemption shall be until the completion of the year of its sale; its redemption shall be **for** days. And if it is not redeemed until a complete year is fulfilled for it, then the house which **is** in the city that has a wall shall stand in perpetuity for the one who bought it, throughout his generations; it shall not go out in the jubilee. And the houses of the villages which have no wall around them shall be reckoned with the field of the land; redemption shall be for it, and in the jubilee it shall go out.*

Houses inside walled cities were treated differently. They could be bought back for one year after the sale. After that, the sale was permanent, and the house "shall not go out in the jubilee." City houses were not farmland. They were not the family's share of God's land in the same way. But houses in "villages which have no wall around them" were counted with the fields and went back in the jubilee, because village homes were part of farming life on the land.

25:32-34 *And the cities of the Levites, the houses of the cities of their possession, a redemption forever shall be for the Levites. And what one of the Levites redeems, then the sale of the house and the city of his possession shall go out in the jubilee; for the houses of the cities of the Levites, it* ***is*** *their possession in the midst of the sons of Israel. And the field of the pasture land of their cities shall not be sold, for it* ***is*** *a possession forever for them.*

The Levites, the tribe that served at the tabernacle, received no tribal territory like the other tribes. They were given cities to live in, with pasture land around them (Numbers 35:1-8). Their houses could always be bought back and went back to them in the jubilee, even in walled cities. Their pasture land could not be sold at all, "for it is a possession forever for them." God made sure the Levites, who had no other land, would never lose the little they had.

25:35-38 *"'And when your brother becomes poor, and his hand slips with you, then you shall strengthen him;* ***as*** *a sojourner and a settler, and he shall live with you. Do not take from him interest and increase, and you shall fear your God, and your brother shall live with you. Your silver you shall not give to him at interest, and at increase you shall not give your food. I* ***am*** *the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be God to you.*

"And when your brother becomes poor, and his hand slips with you, then you shall strengthen him." His hand slips means he cannot support himself. Israel was to help him, treating him as they would "a sojourner and a settler," a guest living with them, "and he shall live with you."

"Do not take from him interest and increase." "Your silver you shall not give to him at interest, and at increase you shall not give your food." This was about loans to a poor fellow Israelite. When a brother was in need, Israel was to help him get back on his feet, not make money off his trouble. The law did not forbid all business loans, and Deuteronomy 23:20 allowed interest to foreigners in trade. But a poor brother was not a business opportunity.

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be God to you." The reason is God's own kindness to them. They had been poor slaves, and God set them free and gave them a home. They were to treat the poor the same way.

25:39-43 *"'And when your brother becomes poor with you and sells himself to you, you shall not work him* ***with*** *the work of a slave. As a hired laborer, as a settler he shall be with you; until the year of the jubilee he shall work with you. And he shall go out from you, he and his sons with him, and he shall return to his clan, and to the possession of his fathers he shall return. For they* ***are*** *My slaves whom I brought out from the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold* ***with*** *the sale of a slave. You shall not have dominion over him with harshness, and you shall fear your God.*

"And when your brother becomes poor with you and sells himself to you, you shall not work him with the work of a slave." An Israelite who fell so deep into poverty that he had to sell himself, that is, sell his labor to pay his debts, was not to be treated as a slave. "As a hired laborer, as a settler he shall be with you." He was a worker, not property.

"Until the year of the jubilee he shall work with you. And he shall go out from you, he and his sons with him, and he shall return to his clan." His family went with him. He went back to his land. Deuteronomy 15:12-15 adds that a Hebrew servant was to be set free in the seventh year and sent away with gifts. Bible teachers explain the two laws in different ways, but the point of both is the same: no Israelite was to be held in service forever.

Why? "For they are My slaves whom I brought out from the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold with the sale of a slave." God had bought Israel out of slavery. They belonged to Him. No Israelite could own another Israelite the way Pharaoh had owned them. "You shall not have dominion over him with harshness, and you shall fear your God."

25:44-46 *And your male slave and your female slave who shall be yours, from the nations that **are** around you, from them you may buy a male slave and a female slave. And also from the sons of the settlers who sojourn with you, from them you may buy, and from their clan that **is** with you, which they have fathered in your land; and they shall be for you for a possession. And you may take them as an inheritance for your sons after you, to possess **as** a possession; forever you may work them; but over your brothers, the sons of Israel, each man over his brother, you shall not have dominion over him with harshness.*

Now comes the hardest part of the chapter. "And your male slave and your female slave who shall be yours, from the nations that are around you, from them you may buy a male slave and a female slave." Slaves could also be bought from foreigners living in Israel. "They shall be for you for a possession," passed on to children, "forever you may work them." They did not go free in the jubilee as Israelites did. "But over your brothers, the sons of Israel, each man over his brother, you shall not have dominion over him with harshness."

We should not rush past this or pretend it is not there. The Law of Moses allowed Israelites to own foreign slaves. How should we understand it?

First, this was not the same as the slavery of the Atlantic slave trade or of American history. That slavery was built on kidnapping, and the Law of Moses made kidnapping a man and selling him a crime punished by death (Exodus 21:16). The New Testament names "enslavers" among the lawless (1 Timothy 1:10). It was also built on race. Israel's servant laws were not about race.

Second, the Law put limits on it that were very different from the nations around Israel. A master who killed his slave was punished (Exodus 21:20). A slave whose eye or tooth was knocked out by his master went free (Exodus 21:26-27). A runaway slave was not to be handed back to his master, but could live wherever he chose (Deuteronomy 23:15-16). Slaves rested on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:10) and shared in the food of the Sabbath year (25:6). A slave who was circumcised could eat the Passover (Exodus 12:44) and become part of the worshiping community.

Third, many Bible teachers believe this law, like the law allowing divorce, was given to a people living in a fallen world and did not show God's full design from creation. Jesus said Moses permitted divorce "in view of your hardness of heart," and "from the beginning it has not been so" (Matthew 19:8). These teachers apply the same thinking to the servant laws. They limited and regulated an evil that was everywhere in that world, rather than abolishing it all at once.

Fourth, the gospel undermines slavery at its root. Every person is made in God's image (Genesis 1:27). In Christ, "there is not slave nor free" (Galatians 3:28). Paul sent the runaway slave Onesimus back to Philemon "no longer as a slave, but above a slave, a beloved brother" (Philemon 1:16). He told slaves who could become free to take the chance (1 Corinthians 7:21), and told masters that they "also have a Master in the heavens" (Colossians 4:1). Many of those who worked to end the slave trade and slavery in later centuries were Christians moved by these truths.

Sadly, people have misused these verses to defend cruelty, including the race-based slavery of more recent history. That was a twisting of Scripture. The Bible never taught that any race was made to serve another.

25:47-52 *"'And when the hand of a sojourner or a settler with you attains **means**, and your brother with him becomes poor and sells himself to a sojourner, a settler with you, or to an offshoot of the clan of a sojourner, after he has sold himself, redemption shall be for him; one of his brothers may redeem him, or his uncle or the son of his uncle may redeem him, or any of the kin of his flesh from his clan may redeem him; or **if** his hand has attained, then he may redeem himself. And he shall calculate with the one who bought him from the year he sold himself to him until the year of the jubilee; and the silver of his sale shall be according to the number of years; as the days of a hired laborer he shall be with him. If **there are** still many in the years, according to them he shall repay his redemption from the silver of his purchase. And if few remain in the years until the year of the jubilee, then he shall calculate for him; according to his years he shall repay his redemption.*

What if a poor Israelite sold himself to a foreigner living in Israel? "After he has sold himself, redemption shall be for him; one of his brothers may redeem him, or his uncle or the son of his uncle may redeem him, or any of the kin of his flesh." Or if he later had the money, "then he may redeem himself."

The price was worked out like the land: count the years until the jubilee, and pay "according to the number of years," as if paying off the wages of a hired worker for the time left. Many years left meant a higher price. Few years left meant a lower one.

God did not want an Israelite to stay in service to a foreigner if he could be bought back. His family had the right, and the duty, to redeem him.

25:53-55 *As a hired laborer year by year he shall be with him; he shall not have dominion over him with harshness before your eyes. And if he is not redeemed by these **means**, then he shall go out in the year of the jubilee, he and his sons with him. For to Me the sons of Israel **are** slaves; they **are** My slaves whom I brought out from the land of Egypt. I **am** the LORD your God.*

"As a hired laborer year by year he shall be with him; he shall not have dominion over him with harshness before your eyes." Even a foreign master had to treat him fairly, and the people of Israel were to watch and make sure of it. "And if he is not redeemed by these means, then he shall go out in the year of the jubilee, he and his sons with him."

"For to Me the sons of Israel are slaves; they are My slaves whom I brought out from the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God." This is the last word of the chapter. Israel could not be owned by anyone else, because God had already bought them.

What does this chapter teach us now? The jubilee was a law for Israel in the land, and we do not keep it today. But it points us to Christ. When Jesus stood up in the synagogue in Nazareth, He read from Isaiah 61, a passage built on the jubilee: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken in heart, to proclaim release to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away the oppressed in release, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19). Then He sat down and said, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21).

Jesus is the great Redeemer, our near kinsman, who paid the price to set us free. "Therefore if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). He proclaims release from the debt of sin and the slavery of sin to everyone who trusts Him.

Notice where Jesus stopped reading. Isaiah 61:2 goes on: "and a day of vengeance of our God." Jesus stopped before those words. His first coming brought "the acceptable year of the Lord," the time of grace. The day of vengeance will come at His second coming. Many Bible teachers also see the full jubilee in the kingdom Christ will set up when He returns, when the land is restored to Israel and the whole creation is set free (Romans 8:21). Until then, we live in the year of the Lord's favor. Today is the day to come to Him.

This chapter also calls us to live with open hands. The land is God's. Our money is God's. Help the poor brother get back on his feet. Do not take advantage of anyone in need. Rest, and trust God to provide.

Chapter 25 Summary

The LORD told Moses on Mount Sinai that in the land, every seventh year would be a Sabbath year, when the fields and vineyards were left alone and what grew by itself fed everyone, including servants, foreigners and animals. After forty-nine years, a ram's horn would sound on the Day of Atonement, and the fiftieth year would be the jubilee, a holy year of rest when liberty was proclaimed and every family returned to its land. Land sales were priced by the years left until the jubilee, because the land belonged to God and Israel lived on it as His guests. A close relative, the redeemer, could buy back land a poor brother had sold, or the seller could buy it back himself, and otherwise it returned in the jubilee. Houses in walled cities could be bought back only for a year, but village houses and Levite houses returned in the jubilee. Israel must help a poor brother and not charge him interest. An Israelite who sold himself was to be treated as a hired worker, not a slave, and he went free with his family in the jubilee. Slaves could be bought from foreign nations and kept, but no Israelite could rule his brother harshly. An Israelite sold to a foreigner could be redeemed by his family or go free in the jubilee, because Israel belonged to the LORD who brought them out of Egypt. Jesus read Isaiah 61 in Nazareth and announced that He had come to proclaim release and the acceptable year of the Lord.

Chapter 25 Study Questions

1. What was Israel to do, and not do, in the seventh year, and who ate what grew? (25:2-7)

2. When was the jubilee announced, and what happened in that year? (25:8-13)

3. How was the price of land set, and why? (25:14-17, 23)

4. What question did God expect Israel to ask about the Sabbath year, and how did He answer it? (25:20-22)

5. What was a redeemer, and what could he do for a poor relative? How does Ruth 4:9-10 show this? (25:25-28, 47-49)

6. How was an Israelite who sold himself to be treated, and why? (25:39-43, 55)

7. What does this chapter say about foreign slaves, and what other laws in the Bible limited how slaves could be treated? (25:44-46; Exodus 21:20, 26-27; Deuteronomy 23:15-16)

8. Read Luke 4:16-21. What did Jesus announce, and where did He stop reading in Isaiah 61:2? Why might that matter?

9. Verse 23 says the land belongs to God and we are His guests. How would your view of your money and possessions change if you truly believed that?

10. Jesus is our Redeemer who sets us free (John 8:36). What has He set you free from? Who could you tell about Him this week?

Chapter 26: Blessings and Curses

Scripture

26:1-13 'You shall not make for yourselves worthless idols, and a carved image and a sacred pillar you shall not set up for yourselves, and a figured stone you shall not put in your land to bow down to it; for I ***am*** the LORD your God. My Sabbaths you shall keep, and My sanctuary you shall fear. I ***am*** the LORD. If in My statutes you walk, and My commandments you keep, and you do them, then I will give your rains in their time, and the land will give its produce, and the tree of the field will give its fruit. And for you threshing will reach the grape harvest, and grape harvest will reach the sowing; and you will eat your bread to satisfaction, and you will dwell in security in your land. And I will give peace in the land, and you will lie down, and ***there will be*** none terrifying ***you***; and I will cause harmful living things to cease from the land, and a sword will not pass through your land. And you will pursue your enemies, and they will fall before you by the sword. And five of you will pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand; and your enemies will fall before you by the sword. And I will turn to you, and I will make you fruitful, and I will multiply you, and I will establish My covenant with you. And you will eat old ***produce***, grown old, and old ***produce*** you will bring out from before ***the*** new. And I will put My tabernacle in your midst, and My soul will not abhor you. And I will walk about in your midst, and I will be your God, and you, you will be My people. I ***am*** the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, from being slaves to them; and I broke the bars of your yoke and made you walk upright.

26:14-26 And if you do not listen to Me, and do not do all these commandments, and if you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My judgments, so as not to do all My commandments, so that you break My covenant, I also, I will do this to you: and I will appoint over you sudden terror, the consumption and the fever, causing ***the*** eyes to fail and making ***the*** soul pine away; and you will sow your seed in vain, and your enemies will eat it. And I will set My face against you, and you will be struck before your enemies; and those who hate you will have dominion over you, and you will flee, and ***there is*** none pursuing you. And if despite these ***things*** you do not listen to Me, then I will again discipline you sevenfold for your sins. And I will break the pride of your strength, and I will make your heavens like iron and your land like bronze. And your strength will be spent in vain, and your land will not give its produce, and the tree of the land will not give its fruit. And if you walk with Me ***in*** hostility, and you are not willing to listen to Me, then I will add to you a blow sevenfold according to your sins. And I will send among you the living things of the field, and they will make you childless, and they will cut off your livestock, and they will make you few; and your roads will be desolate. And if by these ***things*** you are not disciplined by Me, and you walk with Me ***in*** hostility, then I also will walk with you in hostility, and I also will strike you sevenfold for your sins. And I will bring on you a sword avenging the vengeance of ***the*** covenant; and you will be gathered into your cities, and I will send pestilence in your midst, and you will be given into the hand of an enemy. When I break for you the staff of bread, then ten women will bake your bread in one oven, and they will bring back your bread by weight, and you will eat and not be satisfied.

26:27-46 And if in ***spite of*** this you do not listen to Me, and you walk with Me in hostility, then I will walk with you in ***the*** fury of hostility, and I also will discipline you sevenfold for your sins.

And you will eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters you will eat. And I will destroy your high places, and I will cut down your incense altars, and I will put your corpses on the corpses of your idols, and My soul will abhor you. And I will make your cities a waste, and I will devastate your sanctuaries, and I will not smell your soothing aroma. And I, I will devastate the land, and your enemies who dwell in it will be appalled at it. And you I will scatter among the nations, and I will draw out a sword after you; and your land will be a desolation, and your cities will be a waste. Then the land will accept its Sabbaths all the days of its lying desolate, and you ***will be*** in the land of your enemies; then the land will rest and accept its Sabbaths. All the days of its lying desolate it will rest, that which it did not rest in your Sabbaths when you dwelt on it. And ***as for*** those who remain among you, I will bring faintness into their heart in the lands of their enemies, and the sound of a driven leaf will pursue them, and they will flee ***as in*** the flight of a sword, and they will fall, and ***there is*** none pursuing. And they will stumble, each man over his brother, as from before a sword, and ***there is*** none pursuing; and you will have no power to stand before your enemies. And you will perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies will eat you. And those who remain among you will rot away in their iniquity in the lands of your enemies; and also in the iniquities of their fathers with them they will rot away. And they will confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, in their unfaithfulness with which they acted unfaithfully against Me, and also that they walked with Me in hostility, I also will walk with them in hostility, and I will bring them into the land of their enemies; or ***if*** then their uncircumcised heart humbles itself, and then they accept their iniquity, and I will remember My covenant ***with*** Jacob, and also My covenant ***with*** Isaac, and also My covenant ***with*** Abraham I will remember; and the land I will remember. And the land will be forsaken by them, and let it accept its Sabbaths while it is made desolate without them; and they, they will accept their iniquity, because, even because they rejected My judgments, and their soul abhorred My statutes. And yet even ***with*** this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, and I will not abhor them, to make an end of them, to break My covenant with them; for I ***am*** the LORD their God. And I will remember for them the covenant of the former ones, whom I brought out from the land of Egypt before the eyes of the nations, to be their God. I ***am*** the LORD.'" These ***are*** the statutes and the judgments and the laws which the LORD gave between Himself and the sons of Israel on Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses.

Chapter 26 Preview

Chapter 26 brings the laws of Leviticus to a close with the blessings and curses of the covenant. In the ancient world, covenants between a great king and his people often ended this way: a list of blessings for keeping the agreement and a list of curses for breaking it. God tells Israel what He will do if they walk in His statutes: rain in its season, full harvests, peace in the land, victory over enemies, and best of all, "I will walk about in your midst, and I will be your God, and you, you will be My people" (26:12).

Then He tells them what He will do if they turn away. The curses come in waves, each one worse than the one before, "sevenfold for your sins": sickness, defeat, drought, wild animals, war, famine, siege, and finally exile from the land. This is one of the hardest chapters in the Bible to read. But it does not end in judgment. It ends with a promise. If Israel confesses its sin, God will remember His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. "I will not reject them, and I will not

abhor them, to make an end of them" (26:44). History shows that every part of this chapter came true.

Chapter 26 Study

26:1-2 *'You shall not make for yourselves worthless idols, and a carved image and a sacred pillar you shall not set up for yourselves, and a figured stone you shall not put in your land to bow down to it; for I **am** the LORD your God. My Sabbaths you shall keep, and My sanctuary you shall fear. I **am** the LORD.*

The chapter begins by repeating the heart of the covenant. "You shall not make for yourselves worthless idols, and a carved image and a sacred pillar you shall not set up for yourselves, and a figured stone you shall not put in your land to bow down to it." A sacred pillar was a standing stone used in pagan worship. A figured stone was a stone carved with images. These were the tools of Canaanite religion.

"My Sabbaths you shall keep, and My sanctuary you shall fear." Worshiping only the LORD, keeping His Sabbaths, and honoring His house: these sum up Israel's faithfulness. Idolatry would be the root of everything that went wrong later in the chapter.

26:3-5 *If in My statutes you walk, and My commandments you keep, and you do them, then I will give your rains in their time, and the land will give its produce, and the tree of the field will give its fruit. And for you threshing will reach the grape harvest, and grape harvest will reach the sowing; and you will eat your bread to satisfaction, and you will dwell in security in your land.*

"If in My statutes you walk, and My commandments you keep, and you do them, then I will give your rains in their time." In the land of Canaan, everything depended on rain. The early rains came in the fall, the late rains in the spring. If they came on time, there would be food. If not, there would be famine.

God promised harvests so big that "threshing will reach the grape harvest, and grape harvest will reach the sowing." Threshing the grain would still be going on when it was time to pick grapes, and the grape harvest would last until it was time to plant again. "And you will eat your bread to satisfaction, and you will dwell in security in your land."

26:6-8 *And I will give peace in the land, and you will lie down, and **there will be** none terrifying **you**; and I will cause harmful living things to cease from the land, and a sword will not pass through your land. And you will pursue your enemies, and they will fall before you by the sword. And five of you will pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand; and your enemies will fall before you by the sword.*

"And I will give peace in the land, and you will lie down, and there will be none terrifying you." Wild animals that killed livestock would be removed, and "a sword will not pass through your land." When enemies did come, "five of you will pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand." Israel's victories would come from God, not from their numbers. Gideon's

three hundred men (Judges 7) and Jonathan and his armor bearer (1 Samuel 14) show this promise at work.

26:9-10 *And I will turn to you, and I will make you fruitful, and I will multiply you, and I will establish My covenant with you. And you will eat old* ***produce****, grown old, and old* ***produce*** *you will bring out from before* ***the*** *new.*

"And I will turn to you, and I will make you fruitful, and I will multiply you, and I will establish My covenant with you." This goes back to God's promise to Abraham, that his seed would be many (Genesis 17:2-7). There would be so much food that they would have to clear out last year's grain to make room for the new.

26:11-13 *And I will put My tabernacle in your midst, and My soul will not abhor you. And I will walk about in your midst, and I will be your God, and you, you will be My people. I* ***am*** *the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, from being slaves to them; and I broke the bars of your yoke and made you walk upright.*

Now comes the greatest blessing of all. "And I will put My tabernacle in your midst, and My soul will not abhor you. And I will walk about in your midst, and I will be your God, and you, you will be My people."

All the rain and the harvests and the peace were good gifts. But the best gift was God Himself. He would live among them and walk with them, as He walked with Adam in the garden (Genesis 3:8). This is the goal of the whole Bible. Paul quotes this verse to the church: "For you are a temple of the living God, just as God said," and then he quotes it, "I will dwell in them and walk among them" (2 Corinthians 6:16). And at the very end of the Bible, John hears, "Look, the tabernacle of God is with men" (Revelation 21:3).

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, from being slaves to them; and I broke the bars of your yoke and made you walk upright." A yoke was the wooden bar laid across the neck of an ox. Slaves walked bent under their burdens. God broke the yoke and let them stand up straight. Again, the blessings rest on what God had already done. He saved them first. He called them to obey second.

26:14-17 *And if you do not listen to Me, and do not do all these commandments, and if you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My judgments, so as not to do all My commandments, so that you break My covenant, I also, I will do this to you: and I will appoint over you sudden terror, the consumption and the fever, causing* ***the*** *eyes to fail and making* ***the*** *soul pine away; and you will sow your seed in vain, and your enemies will eat it. And I will set My face against you, and you will be struck before your enemies; and those who hate you will have dominion over you, and you will flee, and* ***there is*** *none pursuing you.*

Then the tone changes. "And if you do not listen to Me, and do not do all these commandments, and if you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My judgments," so that "you break My covenant." Notice the progression: not listening, not doing, rejecting, abhorring. Sin begins with not listening and ends with hating what God says.

The first wave: "sudden terror, the consumption and the fever," diseases that waste the body and dim the eyes. Their crops would be eaten by their enemies. "I will set My face against you, and you will be struck before your enemies." They would be so afraid that they would "flee, and there is none pursuing."

These curses were for Israel as a nation under the covenant of Sinai. I want to say this clearly: this chapter does not teach that every illness or hard time in a believer's life is God's punishment for sin. Jesus rejected that idea (John 9:2-3). The blessings here are not a promise that every faithful Christian will be healthy and rich. They are the terms of God's national covenant with Israel in the land.

26:18-20 *And if despite these **things** you do not listen to Me, then I will again discipline you sevenfold for your sins. And I will break the pride of your strength, and I will make your heavens like iron and your land like bronze. And your strength will be spent in vain, and your land will not give its produce, and the tree of the land will not give its fruit.*

"And if despite these things you do not listen to Me, then I will again discipline you sevenfold for your sins." The word discipline is important. These were not the actions of a God who wanted to destroy His people. They were the actions of a Father trying to bring His children back. Sevenfold means complete, full measure.

The second wave: "I will break the pride of your strength, and I will make your heavens like iron and your land like bronze." The sky would be hard as iron and give no rain. The ground would be hard as bronze and give no crops. This happened in the days of Elijah, when there was no rain for three and a half years (1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17).

26:21-22 *And if you walk with Me **in** hostility, and you are not willing to listen to Me, then I will add to you a blow sevenfold according to your sins. And I will send among you the living things of the field, and they will make you childless, and they will cut off your livestock, and they will make you few; and your roads will be desolate.*

"And if you walk with Me in hostility." This phrase is repeated through the rest of the chapter. Hostility here has the idea of walking against God, opposing Him. The third wave: "I will send among you the living things of the field," wild animals that would kill children and livestock, until "your roads will be desolate."

26:23-26 *And if by these **things** you are not disciplined by Me, and you walk with Me **in** hostility, then I also will walk with you in hostility, and I also will strike you sevenfold for your sins. And I will bring on you a sword avenging the vengeance of **the** covenant; and you will be gathered into your cities, and I will send pestilence in your midst, and you will be given into the hand of an enemy. When I break for you the staff of bread, then ten women will bake your bread in one oven, and they will bring back your bread by weight, and you will eat and not be satisfied.*

"And if by these things you are not disciplined by Me," then "I also will walk with you in hostility." If Israel walked against God, God would walk against them. The fourth wave: "a sword

avenging the vengeance of the covenant." War would come. People would crowd into walled cities, and disease would spread there.

"When I break for you the staff of bread." Bread was the staff of life, what people leaned on to live. There would be so little grain that "ten women will bake your bread in one oven," and the bread would be rationed "by weight." "And you will eat and not be satisfied."

26:27-31 *And if in **spite of** this you do not listen to Me, and you walk with Me in hostility, then I will walk with you in **the** fury of hostility, and I also will discipline you sevenfold for your sins. And you will eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters you will eat. And I will destroy your high places, and I will cut down your incense altars, and I will put your corpses on the corpses of your idols, and My soul will abhor you. And I will make your cities a waste, and I will devastate your sanctuaries, and I will not smell your soothing aroma.*

"And if in spite of this you do not listen to Me," then the fifth and last wave would come, "the fury of hostility." Verse 29 describes the worst horror of a long siege: "And you will eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters you will eat." We do not need to dwell on this. It is enough to say that Scripture records it happening in the sieges of Samaria and of Jerusalem (2 Kings 6:28-29; Lamentations 4:10). Sin, left to run its course, ends in the destruction of everything good, even a parent's love for a child.

God would destroy their "high places," the hilltop shrines where idols were worshiped, and their "incense altars." Their bodies would lie on "the corpses of your idols," the idols that could not save them. "And My soul will abhor you." Their cities and sanctuaries would be laid waste. "I will not smell your soothing aroma." Worship without obedience would no longer please God.

26:32-35 *And I, I will devastate the land, and your enemies who dwell in it will be appalled at it. And you I will scatter among the nations, and I will draw out a sword after you; and your land will be a desolation, and your cities will be a waste. Then the land will accept its Sabbaths all the days of its lying desolate, and you **will be** in the land of your enemies; then the land will rest and accept its Sabbaths. All the days of its lying desolate it will rest, that which it did not rest in your Sabbaths when you dwelt on it.*

"And I, I will devastate the land, and your enemies who dwell in it will be appalled at it. And you I will scatter among the nations." This was exile, the worst curse of all, to be driven out of the land God had given them.

And here is a striking detail. "Then the land will accept its Sabbaths all the days of its lying desolate." The land would get the rest Israel had refused to give it (25:2-7). That is exactly what happened. Second Chronicles 36:21 says the exile in Babylon lasted "until the land had accepted its Sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years."

This chapter was fulfilled in history. The northern kingdom of Israel was taken into exile by Assyria when Samaria fell in 722 B.C. (2 Kings 17:6-7). The southern kingdom of Judah was carried off to Babylon, and Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in 586 B.C. God had warned them, centuries before, in this very chapter.

26:36-39 *And **as for** those who remain among you, I will bring faintness into their heart in the lands of their enemies, and the sound of a driven leaf will pursue them, and they will flee **as in** the flight of a sword, and they will fall, and **there is** none pursuing. And they will stumble, each man over his brother, as from before a sword, and **there is** none pursuing; and you will have no power to stand before your enemies. And you will perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies will eat you. And those who remain among you will rot away in their iniquity in the lands of your enemies; and also in the iniquities of their fathers with them they will rot away.*

Those who survived in exile would live in fear. "The sound of a driven leaf will pursue them, and they will flee as in the flight of a sword, and they will fall, and there is none pursuing." A people who once could chase a hundred enemies with five men would now run from a leaf blowing in the wind. "And you will perish among the nations." "Those who remain among you will rot away in their iniquity," and in "the iniquities of their fathers."

This is a picture of what sin does. It takes away courage and peace. The guilty run when no one is chasing them (Proverbs 28:1).

26:40-42 *And they will confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, in their unfaithfulness with which they acted unfaithfully against Me, and also that they walked with Me in hostility, I also will walk with them in hostility, and I will bring them into the land of their enemies; or **if** then their uncircumcised heart humbles itself, and then they accept their iniquity, and I will remember My covenant **with** Jacob, and also My covenant **with** Isaac, and also My covenant **with** Abraham I will remember; and the land I will remember.*

But now, at the bottom, comes hope. "And they will confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, in their unfaithfulness with which they acted unfaithfully against Me." If in exile "their uncircumcised heart humbles itself," a heart that had never been truly given to God, "and then they accept their iniquity," taking responsibility for their sin, then God says, "I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham I will remember; and the land I will remember."

Notice the names are given in reverse order, going back to the beginning. God's promise to Abraham came before Sinai, and it rested on God's grace alone (Genesis 15). Israel could break the covenant of Sinai, and they did. But God would not break His promise to Abraham.

We see this prayer of confession in Daniel. In Babylon, near the end of the seventy years, Daniel prayed, "we have sinned, and we have committed iniquity; we have acted wickedly, and we have rebelled" (Daniel 9:5). Nehemiah also prayed, reminding God of His word to Moses that if His scattered people returned to Him, He would gather them (Nehemiah 1:8-9). God kept that word. In 538 B.C. Cyrus king of Persia allowed the Jews to return home.

26:43-45 *And the land will be forsaken by them, and let it accept its Sabbaths while it is made desolate without them; and they, they will accept their iniquity, because, even because they rejected My judgments, and their soul abhorred My statutes. And yet even **with** this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, and I will not abhor them, to make an end of them, to break My covenant with them; for I **am** the LORD their God. And I will remember for them the covenant of the former ones, whom I brought out from the land of Egypt before the eyes of the nations, to be their God. I **am** the LORD.'"*

"And the land will be forsaken by them, and let it accept its Sabbaths while it is made desolate without them." They would bear the results of their sin. But then: "And yet even with this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, and I will not abhor them, to make an end of them, to break My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God."

These may be the most important words in the chapter. God disciplined Israel severely. But He never cast them off. "I will remember for them the covenant of the former ones, whom I brought out from the land of Egypt before the eyes of the nations, to be their God."

Paul asks, "did God reject His people? May it not be!" (Romans 11:1). "God did not reject His people whom He foreknew" (Romans 11:2). Israel has been scattered among the nations more than once, after the Babylonian exile and again after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. But "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29). I believe God still has a future for the nation of Israel. The prophets say He will gather them from all the nations, give them a new heart, and put His Spirit within them (Ezekiel 36:24-28), and Paul says "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26). God keeps His covenants.

26:46 *These **are** the statutes and the judgments and the laws which the LORD gave between Himself and the sons of Israel on Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses.*

"These are the statutes and the judgments and the laws which the LORD gave between Himself and the sons of Israel on Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses." This verse closes the main body of Leviticus. Chapter 27, on vows, is a kind of appendix.

What does this chapter teach us now? God is faithful to His word, both His warnings and His promises. Sin has real consequences, for nations and for people. God disciplines His children because He loves them: "for whom the Lord loves He disciplines" (Hebrews 12:6), and He does it "for our benefit, so that we may share His holiness" (Hebrews 12:10).

But we who trust in Christ are not under the curses of the Law. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13). Jesus took the curse on the cross so that we could receive the blessing. The greatest blessing of this chapter, "I will be your God, and you, you will be My people" (26:12), is ours in Him. And if you have wandered, the door back is the same as it was for Israel: confess your sin, humble your heart, and trust God's promise. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous so that He may forgive us the sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Chapter 26 Summary

The LORD told Israel not to make idols but to keep His Sabbaths and honor His sanctuary. If they walked in His statutes, He would send rain in its season, give great harvests, peace and security, victory over enemies, and many children, and He would put His tabernacle among them and walk among them as their God. If they refused to listen and broke His covenant, He would discipline them sevenfold, in growing waves: disease and defeat, drought, wild animals, war and plague, famine, and siege so terrible that parents would eat their children. He would destroy their high places, lay waste their cities and sanctuaries, and scatter them among the nations, and the land would enjoy the Sabbaths they had not given it. Survivors would flee at the sound of a leaf. But if they confessed their sin and humbled their hearts, God would remember His covenant with Jacob, Isaac and Abraham and the land. Even in exile He would not reject them or make an end of them, for He is the LORD their God. These were the laws the LORD gave at Mount Sinai through Moses.

I always drank off and on, but I kept it under control. Then in 2014 I had a major hiking accident that took four major surgeries to partly repair. Over the next six years I used alcohol to deal with the pain, a little at first and a lot by the end, until it became a full addiction. God used that hard road to bring me to the end of myself and back to Him. His discipline is proof of His love (Hebrews 12:6-11).

Chapter 26 Study Questions

1. What did God promise if Israel walked in His statutes? (26:3-10)

2. What was the greatest blessing in the list, and how does Paul use it in 2 Corinthians 6:16? (26:11-12)

3. How does the progression in verses 14 and 15 describe how sin grows in a heart? (26:14-15)

4. What does the word "discipline" in verses 18, 23 and 28 tell us about God's purpose in the curses?

5. What would happen to the land during the exile, and how does 2 Chronicles 36:21 show it came true? (26:34-35)

6. What did Israel need to do for God to remember His covenant, and which covenant did He name? (26:40-42)

7. What did God promise not to do, even in the land of their enemies? How does Paul echo this in Romans 11:1-2, 29? (26:44)

8. Why is it wrong to read this chapter as a promise that faithful Christians will always be healthy and wealthy?

9. Galatians 3:13 says Christ became a curse for us. How does that change the way you read this chapter?

10. Hebrews 12:6-11 says God disciplines those He loves. Can you think of a time God used something hard to draw you back to Him?

Chapter 27: Vows and Things Given to the LORD

Scripture

27:1-15 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and you shall say to them, 'When a man makes a special vow, by your valuation of souls to the LORD, then your valuation of the male from a son of twenty years and up to a son of sixty years shall be—your valuation shall be approximately 20 ounces (fifty shekels) of silver, by the shekel of the holy place. And if she ***is*** a female, then your valuation shall be approximately 12 ounces (thirty shekels). And if from a son of five years and up to a son of twenty years, then your valuation of the male shall be approximately 8 ounces (twenty shekels), and for the female approximately 4 ounces (ten shekels). And if from a son of a month and up to a son of five years, then your valuation of the male shall be approximately 2 ounces (five shekels) of silver, and for the female your valuation ***shall be*** approximately 1 1/5 ounces (three shekels) of silver. And if from a son of sixty years and upward, if a male, then your valuation shall be approximately 6 ounces (fifteen shekels), and for the female approximately 4 ounces (ten shekels). And if he ***is too*** poor for your valuation, then he shall make him stand before the priest, and the priest shall value him; according to what the hand of the one who vows can reach, the priest shall value him. And if ***it is*** an animal of which they bring near an offering to the LORD, all that he gives of it to the LORD shall be holy. He shall not replace it, and he shall not exchange it, a good for a bad or a bad for a good; and if he does indeed exchange animal for animal, then it and its substitute shall be holy. And if ***it is*** any unclean animal of which they do not bring near an offering to the LORD, then he shall make the animal stand before the priest, and the priest shall value it, between good and bad; according to your valuation, priest, so it shall be. And if he does indeed redeem it, then he shall add its fifth to your valuation. And when a man sanctifies his house ***as*** holy to the LORD, then the priest shall value it, between good and bad; as the priest values it, so it shall stand. And if the one who sanctified ***it*** redeems his house, then he shall add the fifth of the silver of your valuation to it, and it shall be his.

27:16-34 And if a man sanctifies to the LORD some of the field of his possession, then your valuation shall be according to its seed: the seed of approximately 6 bushels (a homer) of barley at approximately 20 ounces (fifty shekels) of silver. If he sanctifies his field from the year of the jubilee, according to your valuation it shall stand. And if he sanctifies his field after the jubilee, then the priest shall calculate the silver for him according to the years that remain until the year of the jubilee, and it shall be deducted from your valuation. And if the one who sanctified it does indeed redeem the field, then he shall add the fifth of the silver of your valuation to it, and it shall stand ***as*** his. And if he does not redeem the field, and if he has sold the field to another man, it shall not be redeemed anymore. And the field, when it goes out in the jubilee, shall be holy to the LORD, like the field of the devoted thing; it shall belong to the priest ***as*** his possession. And if he sanctifies to the LORD a field of his purchase, which ***is*** not of the field of his possession, then the priest shall calculate for him the amount of your valuation up to the year of the jubilee, and he shall give your valuation on that day ***as*** holy to the LORD. In the year of the jubilee the field shall return to ***the one*** from whom he bought it, to ***the one*** to whom the possession of the land ***belongs***. And all your valuation shall be by the shekel of the holy place; the shekel shall be

approximately 2/5 ounce (twenty gerahs). Only a firstborn which is born as a firstling to the LORD among livestock, no man shall sanctify it; whether an ox or a sheep, it ***is*** the LORD's. And if ***it is*** among the unclean livestock, then he shall ransom ***it*** by your valuation, and he shall add its fifth to it; and if it is not redeemed, then it shall be sold by your valuation. Only, every devoted thing which a man devotes to the LORD from all that he has, from mankind and livestock and from the field of his possession, shall not be sold, and it shall not be redeemed; every devoted thing ***is*** a holy of holies to the LORD. Every devoted ***one*** who is devoted from mankind shall not be ransomed; he shall surely be put to death. And all the tithe of the land, of the seed of the land, of the fruit of the tree, ***is*** the LORD's; it ***is*** holy to the LORD. And if a man does indeed redeem ***any*** of his tithe, let him add its fifth to it. And all the tithe of the herd and the flock, all that passes under the rod, the tenth shall be holy to the LORD. He shall not examine between good and bad, and he shall not exchange it; and if he does indeed exchange it, then it and its substitute shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed.'" These ***are*** the commandments which the LORD commanded Moses for the sons of Israel on Mount Sinai.

Chapter 27 Preview

Leviticus seemed to end with chapter 26 and its closing line about the laws given "on Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses" (26:46). Chapter 27 adds one more section, about vows and gifts given to the LORD. A vow was a promise to give something to God, often made in a time of need or thankfulness. A person might vow himself or a family member, an animal, a house or a field. This chapter tells how such things were valued in silver, and how a person could redeem, or buy back, what he had vowed by paying its value plus a fifth.

The chapter also deals with things that could not be vowed because they already belonged to God: the firstborn of the animals, things "devoted" to the LORD, and the tithe, a tenth of all the produce of the land and the herds. The opening verses, which set different values for men and women of different ages, are hard for many readers today, and we will look at them carefully. The lesson of the whole chapter is simple: what we promise to God, we must keep, and what belongs to God, we must give.

Chapter 27 Study

27:1-2 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and you shall say to them, 'When a man makes a special vow, by your valuation of souls to the LORD,*

"When a man makes a special vow, by your valuation of souls to the LORD." The word souls here means persons. Sometimes an Israelite would vow a person to the LORD: himself, his son or daughter, or a servant. Hannah did this when she prayed for a son and promised to give him "to the LORD all the days of his life" (1 Samuel 1:11), and Samuel served at the tabernacle.

But only Levites could serve at the tabernacle (Numbers 3:5-10). Most people vowed to the LORD could not actually work there. So the law set a value in silver, and the person paid that amount to the sanctuary instead. The vow was kept, and the money went to support God's house.

Vows were voluntary. No one had to make one. "And if you refrain from vowing, it shall not be sin in you" (Deuteronomy 23:22). But once made, a vow had to be kept. "When you vow a vow to God, do not delay to pay it" (Ecclesiastes 5:4).

27:3-7 *then your valuation of the male from a son of twenty years and up to a son of sixty years shall be—your valuation shall be approximately 20 ounces (fifty shekels) of silver, by the shekel of the holy place. And if she* ***is*** *a female, then your valuation shall be approximately 12 ounces (thirty shekels). And if from a son of five years and up to a son of twenty years, then your valuation of the male shall be approximately 8 ounces (twenty shekels), and for the female approximately 4 ounces (ten shekels). And if from a son of a month and up to a son of five years, then your valuation of the male shall be approximately 2 ounces (five shekels) of silver, and for the female your valuation* ***shall be*** *approximately 1 1/5 ounces (three shekels) of silver. And if from a son of sixty years and upward, if a male, then your valuation shall be approximately 6 ounces (fifteen shekels), and for the female approximately 4 ounces (ten shekels).*

Here are the values, in shekels of silver "by the shekel of the holy place," the standard weight used at the sanctuary. A shekel was about two fifths of an ounce of silver.

- A man from twenty to sixty years old: fifty shekels, about twenty ounces.
- A woman of the same age: thirty shekels, about twelve ounces.
- A boy from five to twenty: twenty shekels. A girl: ten.
- A baby boy from one month to five years: five shekels. A baby girl: three.
- A man over sixty: fifteen shekels. A woman over sixty: ten.

Many readers today ask: does this mean God values men more than women? No. These values were not a measure of a person's worth before God. If they were, then a man of sixty-one would be worth less than a boy of nineteen, and a baby would be worth almost nothing. The values match the work a person could usually do in the fields and the economy of that time. A man in the prime of life could do the most heavy labor. Children and the elderly could do less. That is why the values rise and fall with age, and the gap between men and women narrows in old age.

Scripture is clear about the worth of every person. Both man and woman were created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27). In Christ, "there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). And the price of every soul who belongs to Christ is the same: not "silver or gold," "but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

There is one more thing worth noticing. Thirty shekels of silver was also the price paid for a slave killed by an ox (Exodus 21:32). It was the price Judas was paid to betray Jesus: "they set for him thirty silver coins" (Matthew 26:15). The Son of God was valued by men at the price of a slave. Zechariah had foretold it, with bitter irony, as "the magnificent price at which I was priced by them" (Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 27:9).

27:8 *And if he **is too** poor for your valuation, then he shall make him stand before the priest, and the priest shall value him; according to what the hand of the one who vows can reach, the priest shall value him.*

"And if he is too poor for your valuation, then he shall make him stand before the priest, and the priest shall value him; according to what the hand of the one who vows can reach." A poor man was not shut out from making a vow to God, and he was not crushed by one he could not pay. The priest set a price he could afford. Once again God made room for the poor (see 5:7; 14:21).

27:9-10 *And if **it is** an animal of which they bring near an offering to the LORD, all that he gives of it to the LORD shall be holy. He shall not replace it, and he shall not exchange it, a good for a bad or a bad for a good; and if he does indeed exchange animal for animal, then it and its substitute shall be holy.*

If a man vowed an animal that could be offered on the altar, "all that he gives of it to the LORD shall be holy." Once vowed, it belonged to God. "He shall not replace it, and he shall not exchange it, a good for a bad or a bad for a good." He could not change his mind and swap in a worse animal. If he tried to exchange it, "then it and its substitute shall be holy." He would lose both.

This rule guarded against a very human temptation. In a moment of crisis we promise God our best. When the crisis passes, we look for a way to give less. God says, keep your word.

27:11-13 *And if **it is** any unclean animal of which they do not bring near an offering to the LORD, then he shall make the animal stand before the priest, and the priest shall value it, between good and bad; according to your valuation, priest, so it shall be. And if he does indeed redeem it, then he shall add its fifth to your valuation.*

If the animal was unclean, one that could not be offered, such as a donkey or a camel, the priest set its value, "between good and bad," and it was sold for the sanctuary. If the owner wanted to keep it, he could redeem it, but "he shall add its fifth to your valuation," paying a fifth more, twenty percent. The extra fifth made sure no one treated a vow lightly.

27:14-15 *And when a man sanctifies his house **as** holy to the LORD, then the priest shall value it, between good and bad; as the priest values it, so it shall stand. And if the one who sanctified **it** redeems his house, then he shall add the fifth of the silver of your valuation to it, and it shall be his.*

A man could also dedicate his house to the LORD. The priest valued it, and if the man later wanted it back, he paid the value plus a fifth.

27:16-21 *And if a man sanctifies to the LORD some of the field of his possession, then your valuation shall be according to its seed: the seed of approximately 6 bushels (a homer) of barley at approximately 20 ounces (fifty shekels) of silver. If he sanctifies his field from the year of the jubilee, according to your valuation it shall stand. And if he sanctifies his field after the jubilee, then the priest shall calculate the silver for him according to the years that remain until the year of the jubilee, and it shall be deducted from your valuation. And if the one who sanctified it does indeed redeem the field, then he shall add the fifth of the silver of your valuation to it, and it shall stand* ***as*** *his. And if he does not redeem the field, and if he has sold the field to another man, it shall not be redeemed anymore. And the field, when it goes out in the jubilee, shall be holy to the LORD, like the field of the devoted thing; it shall belong to the priest* ***as*** *his possession.*

A man could dedicate part of his inherited field, "the field of his possession." Its value was set by how much seed it took to sow it: fifty shekels for a field sown with a homer of barley seed. A homer was ten ephahs, about six bushels. That price was for the full time from one jubilee to the next. If he dedicated it partway through, the priest figured the value "according to the years that remain until the year of the jubilee" (25:15-16).

He could redeem it by paying the value plus a fifth. But if he did not redeem it, and if he "sold the field to another man," it could not be redeemed anymore. At the jubilee it would not return to him. It would become "holy to the LORD, like the field of the devoted thing," and belong to the priests.

These rules are detailed, but the point is clear. A gift to God is serious. It is not something to play games with.

27:22-25 *And if he sanctifies to the LORD a field of his purchase, which* ***is*** *not of the field of his possession, then the priest shall calculate for him the amount of your valuation up to the year of the jubilee, and he shall give your valuation on that day* ***as*** *holy to the LORD. In the year of the jubilee the field shall return to* ***the one*** *from whom he bought it, to* ***the one*** *to whom the possession of the land* ***belongs****. And all your valuation shall be by the shekel of the holy place; the shekel shall be approximately 2/5 ounce (twenty gerahs).*

A man could also dedicate a field he had bought, one that was not part of his family's inheritance. In that case, he paid its value up to the next jubilee, and in the jubilee the field went back to its original owner, "to the one to whom the possession of the land belongs." No vow could cancel the jubilee or take a family's land from them forever (25:23). "All your valuation shall be by the shekel of the holy place," twenty gerahs to the shekel. One fair standard was used for everyone.

27:26-27 *Only a firstborn which is born as a firstling to the LORD among livestock, no man shall sanctify it; whether an ox or a sheep, it* ***is*** *the LORD's. And if* ***it is*** *among the unclean livestock, then he shall ransom* ***it*** *by your valuation, and he shall add its fifth to it; and if it is not redeemed, then it shall be sold by your valuation.*

"Only a firstborn which is born as a firstling to the LORD among livestock, no man shall sanctify it." The firstborn animals already belonged to God (Exodus 13:2, 12). A man could not vow to God

what was already His. You cannot give someone a gift that already belongs to them. An unclean firstborn animal could be redeemed with a fifth added, or sold.

27:28-29 *Only, every devoted thing which a man devotes to the LORD from all that he has, from mankind and livestock and from the field of his possession, shall not be sold, and it shall not be redeemed; every devoted thing* ***is*** *a holy of holies to the LORD. Every devoted* ***one*** *who is devoted from mankind shall not be ransomed; he shall surely be put to death.*

"Only, every devoted thing which a man devotes to the LORD from all that he has, from mankind and livestock and from the field of his possession, shall not be sold, and it shall not be redeemed." A devoted thing, in Hebrew herem, was something given over to God completely and permanently. It could never be bought back. It was "a holy of holies to the LORD."

Verse 29 is hard: "Every devoted one who is devoted from mankind shall not be ransomed; he shall surely be put to death." This does not allow an Israelite to vow another person to death. Human sacrifice was forbidden and called an abomination (18:21; 20:2; Deuteronomy 12:31). The devoted person here was someone placed under God's ban because of his own guilt, by God's command or a lawful judgment. Exodus 22:20 says, "Whoever sacrifices to the gods, except to the LORD alone, shall be devoted to destruction." The same word is used for the city of Jericho under God's judgment (Joshua 6:17). Such a person could not be ransomed with money. The judgment had to stand.

27:30-33 *And all the tithe of the land, of the seed of the land, of the fruit of the tree,* ***is*** *the LORD's; it* ***is*** *holy to the LORD. And if a man does indeed redeem* ***any*** *of his tithe, let him add its fifth to it. And all the tithe of the herd and the flock, all that passes under the rod, the tenth shall be holy to the LORD. He shall not examine between good and bad, and he shall not exchange it; and if he does indeed exchange it, then it and its substitute shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed.'"*

"And all the tithe of the land, of the seed of the land, of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's; it is holy to the LORD." A tithe is a tenth. A tenth of all the grain and fruit already belonged to God. A man could redeem part of his crop tithe by paying its value plus a fifth.

"And all the tithe of the herd and the flock, all that passes under the rod, the tenth shall be holy to the LORD." The shepherd counted the animals as they passed under his staff, and every tenth one belonged to God. "He shall not examine between good and bad." He could not pick out the weak ones to give God and keep the strong. And the animal tithe could not be redeemed or exchanged.

Tithing did not begin with Moses. Abraham gave a tenth to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:20), and Jacob vowed, "all that You give me, I will surely give a tenth of it to You" (Genesis 28:22). Under the Law, the tithe supported the Levites, who had no land (Numbers 18:21). Malachi later rebuked Israel for robbing God "in the tithe and the contribution" (Malachi 3:8).

Do Christians have to tithe today? Believers differ. Some believe the tithe is still the standard, since it came before the Law. Others believe the New Testament does not command a set percentage, but calls us to give regularly, generously and gladly: "Each one should give just as he purposes in the heart, not out of grief or out of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver"

(2 Corinthians 9:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). Either way, Jesus warned the Pharisees, who tithed even their garden herbs, not to forget "the justice and the mercy and the faith" (Matthew 23:23).

27:34 *These **are** the commandments which the LORD commanded Moses for the sons of Israel on Mount Sinai.*

"These are the commandments which the LORD commanded Moses for the sons of Israel on Mount Sinai." This is the last verse of Leviticus. It closes the book the way it opened, with the LORD speaking to Moses (1:1). Everything in this book came from God, given at Sinai to a people He had redeemed.

What does this chapter teach us now? It teaches us to be careful with our promises to God. Jesus taught that His followers should not need to swear oaths at all, but simply let their yes mean yes and their no mean no (Matthew 5:33-37). Ananias and Sapphira did not have to give their land, but they lied about the gift, and it cost them their lives (Acts 5:1-11). Peter told Ananias, "You have not lied to men but to God" (Acts 5:4). Do not promise God what you have no intention of giving.

It also teaches us that some things already belong to God. Our lives, our children, our money, our time: none of it is ours to begin with. "You were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:20). We do not give God gifts to earn His favor. We give back to Him because He first gave everything for us.

And it points us once more to our Redeemer. In this chapter, things given to God could be bought back by paying their price. We had given ourselves over to sin, and we could not pay our own price. But Jesus paid it, not with silver, but with His own blood. He was valued by men at thirty pieces of silver. He was valued by His Father as the beloved Son. And He gave Himself to buy us back.

Chapter 27 Summary

The LORD gave Moses laws for vows. A person vowed to the LORD was valued in silver by age and sex, from fifty shekels for a man in his prime down to three shekels for a baby girl, and a poor person was valued by what he could pay. An animal fit for sacrifice that was vowed became holy and could not be exchanged; if exchanged, both became holy. An unclean animal, a house or a field could be valued by the priest and redeemed by paying its value plus a fifth. A field was valued by its seed and the years left until the jubilee; if not redeemed and sold to another, it became the priests' at the jubilee. A bought field returned to its original owner at the jubilee. Firstborn animals could not be vowed, since they already belonged to the LORD. A devoted thing could not be sold or redeemed, and a person devoted under God's ban was to be put to death. The tithe of crops and herds belonged to the LORD; crop tithes could be redeemed with a fifth added, but the tenth animal could not be chosen or exchanged. These were the commandments the LORD gave Moses at Mount Sinai.

Chapter 27 Study Questions

1. What was a vow, and what happened when a person was vowed to the LORD? (27:2)

2. How did the values change with age and sex, and what do they tell us about the work a person could do? (27:3-7)

3. What did the priest do when a poor man could not pay the set value? (27:8)

4. Why could a man not exchange an animal he had vowed, and what happened if he tried? (27:9-10)

5. How much extra did a person pay to redeem something he had vowed, and why do you think it was required? (27:13, 15, 19)

6. What things could not be vowed to the LORD, and why? (27:26, 28, 30)

7. How was the tithe of the herd chosen, and what was the owner not allowed to do? (27:32-33)

8. Jesus was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15). How does that compare with the values in this chapter, and what does it show about how the world valued Him?

9. Have you ever made a promise to God and not kept it? What does Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 say, and what should you do now?

10. If everything you have already belongs to God (1 Corinthians 6:20), how should that shape your giving? What does 2 Corinthians 9:7 call you to?

Conclusion

Leviticus begins with God calling to Moses from the tent of meeting (1:1). The holy God had come to live in the middle of a sinful people, and the whole book answers one question: how can they come near Him and live? God's answer was not "try harder." It was blood, a priest, and a way that He Himself provided. Offerings for sin and guilt, a burnt offering of the whole life, a peace offering shared at His table. Priests set apart to stand between God and the people. Laws of clean and unclean that taught Israel every day that God is holy. And once a year, the high priest going behind the veil with blood, and a goat carrying the sins of the nation away into the wilderness.

As I said at the start of this study, the guiding principle throughout has been to read God's Word plainly, as it is written, and let Scripture explain Scripture. Read that way, Leviticus is not a dusty rulebook. It shows us how seriously God takes sin, and how far He was willing to go to deal with it. God Himself said, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life" (17:11). He gave it. Atonement was His gift. Then He called a redeemed people to be holy in every part of life: in their homes, their bodies, their fields, their business, and in loving their neighbor as themselves (19:18). He gave them holy days to remember what He had done and to look ahead to what He would do. And He promised that even when they failed, He would not cast them off, but would remember His covenant (26:42-45).

Every page of this book points to Jesus Christ. He is the Lamb without blemish, the sin offering burned outside the camp, our Passover and the firstfruits of the resurrection. He is the High Priest who did not need to offer for His own sins, who entered not a tent but heaven itself, with His own blood, once for all. He is our near kinsman and Redeemer who proclaimed release to the captives. The sacrifices of Leviticus had to be repeated year after year, because "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). But "by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14).

I hope this study has done what I set out to do: bring you closer to God, help you grow in your walk with Him, and give you a new love for a part of the Bible many people skip. The veil has been torn. The way into God's presence is open. You do not need a priest, an altar or a goat. You need Jesus. The only thing required of us to spend eternity with God is to receive His Son, Jesus, as our Lord and Savior.

If you haven't yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, or if you want to deepen the one you already have with Him, I invite you to pray this prayer with me:

Lord Jesus, You are the Savior of the world, and You forgive all who come to You. I come before You to confess that I have sinned against You. I have rebelled against You and put myself first above You and all others. I want to have a deep, meaningful relationship with You where I can show others by my demeanor and character that You are first in my life. I am asking for Your forgiveness for all my sins. You died for me on the cross so that I could be forgiven and made right with God. Please help me not forget that You gave Your very life for me. I am asking that You take control of

my life and make a new creature out of me and into the person You want me to be. I thank You, Lord, and I love You. Amen.

If you prayed this prayer, tell another believer, ask a pastor about being baptized, and find a church where you can grow and serve. You have been washed by His blood, so come near to God with confidence through Him (Hebrews 10:19-22), and "be holy, because I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

Bibliography

The following source was consulted throughout this study. The commentary reflects my own study and convictions, and any direct quotation from an outside source is identified and cited at the point where it appears.

Green, Jay P., Sr. (ed.). The Interlinear Bible: Hebrew-Greek-English. Hendrickson Publishers, 1986 (2nd ed.; printing used 2005). ISBN 1-56563-977-4.