

PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE: LEVITICUS GOD'S PERFECT PLAN

Leviticus 19:2

*Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them,
“You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.”*

I. BACKGROUND LEADING TO LEVITICUS

A. PROMISE—TO BECOME GOD'S 'NATION'

1. TO ABRAM—A GREAT NATION—[Gen 12:2-3](#)

- Very first part of promise—[v2](#)
- *I will make you a great nation*

2. TO MOSES—GOD'S PEOPLE—[Ex 6:6-7](#)

- I will deliver you from Egyptian bondage—[v 6](#)
- Israel will be My people—and I will be their God—[v 7](#)

B. ISRAEL'S IGNORANCE OF IDENTITY AND PURPOSE

1. ISRAEL DID NOT UNDERSTAND IDENTITY—MEANING OF “GOD'S PEOPLE”

- Only knew about the ‘God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob’

2. SO GOD REVEALED HIS IDENTITY AS ‘JEHOVAH’—COVENANT GOD—[Ex 3](#)

3. ISRAEL STILL IGNORANT OF HOW THIS MADE THEM UNIQUE—THEIR PURPOSE

C. GOD UNVEILED HIS PURPOSE

1. SEEN IN REASON GOD SET THEM FREE—TO WORSHIP HIM

2. TWO WAYS OF EXPRESSING WORSHIP

a. **Sacrifice** to God—go three days’ journey into wilderness

1. God directed Moses—tell this to pharaoh—[Ex 3:18](#)
2. Spoken three times to pharaoh before and during plagues
3. Sacrifice—became central **act** of worship

a. Implied throughout Torah—especially Leviticus

b. Explicit evidence—[II Kgs 17:36](#)

- Explains why northern Israel fell to Assyrians—722 BC
- They abandoned purposes for which God delivered them from Egypt
 1. To **fear** Him
 2. To **bow down** before Him—i.e. worship Him

3. To **sacrifice** to Him

b. **Serve** God—labor for Him

1. God directed Moses—tell this to pharaoh—**Ex 4:23**

2. In contrast to laboring for Pharaoh

- Pharaoh—ordered them to labor for him without straw—5:18
- God saw their distress—they were serving in bondage—6:5
- Pharaoh—regretted letting them go—so they would not serve him—14:4

3. Spoken to Pharaoh six times during plagues

4. Serving God—**equated** with worship

a. Implied in Torah—in two texts calling Israel to ‘fear’ the Lord

Dt 6:13—*You shall **fear** only the Lord your God; and you shall **worship** Him and swear by His name.*

Dt 10:20—*You shall **fear** the Lord your God; you shall **serve** Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name.*

b. Jesus made this explicit—by combining the two texts

Mt 4:10—*Away from me Satan; for it is written, ‘**worship** the Lord your God and **serve** Him only’*

D. A ‘HOLY NATION’

1. TO BE A ‘GREAT NATION’ [ABRAM]—THIS MEANT TO BE A ‘HOLY NATION’

2. EXPLAINED IN EXODUS

a. Before giving Ten Commandments

b. National identity explained

- God’s people are a ‘kingdom of priests’—a ‘holy nation’

Ex 19:5-6—*Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be **My own possession** among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a **kingdom of priests** and a **holy nation**.*

c. Sealed by Israel’s agreement—they ratified covenant with God

- First ratification—after giving of Ten Commandments—**Ex 24**
- Second ratification—after repenting idolatry—**Ex 34**

3. ECHOED IN NEW TESTAMENT

I Pe 2:9—*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession*

E. TRANSITION

1. ISRAEL WAS CALLED TO BE GOD'S **HOLY NATION**
2. A KINGDOM OF **PRIESTS**—THE VOCATION IS TO **SERVE**
3. BUT THEY NEEDED A PLAN—SHOWING THEM *HOW* TO SERVE HIM PROPERLY
4. THIS **PERFECT PLAN**—IS **LEVITICUS**
 - a. 'Perfect' in **objective**—to make them 'perfect'—what He created them to be
 - b. 'Perfect' in **content**—God's plan is best possible way—accomplishes God's will perfectly
 - c. 'Perfect' in **fulfillment**—what He started—continues with abiding results—to completion

II. STRUCTURE OF GOD'S PERFECT PLAN—OUTLINE OF LEVITICUS

A. TWO PARTS

1. CHAPTERS 1-16

- Institutions that establish holiness
- Culminating in atonement by God—and forgiveness of the people

2. CHAPTERS 17-27

- How atoned people live out holiness in community

B. CHAPTERS 1-16

1. **CHAPTERS 1-7**—THE SACRIFICES OF WORSHIP

- a. Summary verse—shows types of sacrifice

Lev 7:37-38—*This is the law of the **burnt offering**, the **grain offering** and the **sin offering** and the **guilt offering** and the **ordination offering** and the sacrifice of **peace offerings**, which the Lord commanded Moses at Mount Sinai in the day that He commanded the sons of Israel to present their offerings to the Lord in the wilderness of Sinai.*

- b. Sacrifice—was how they restored broken relationship with God

1. They prepared by purifying themselves before God
2. Showed genuine repentance with humility
3. Focus not on sacrifice itself—but on inward attitude—and outward behavior

➤ **Mic 6:8**—Lord does not delight in sacrifice—but mercy, justice, humility

- c. Section shows requirements/regulations for sacrifices and how priests administer them

2. **CHAPTERS 8-10**—THE PRIESTHOOD

- Aaronic priesthood identified and consecrated
- Exhortation to right action—negative example of Nadab and Abihu
- 3. **CHAPTERS 11-15—RULES FOR SEPARATING CLEAN FROM UNCLEAN**
 - Clean and unclean animals
 - Uncleanness after birth
 - Uncleanness of disease
 - Unclean emissions
- 4. **CHAPTER 16—DAY OF ATONEMENT**
 - Culminating act of divine forgiveness

C. CHAPTERS 17-27

1. **CHAPTERS 17-25—THE ‘HOLINESS CODE’**
 - a. Show how to live holy lives—ethically—in community
 - b. Focuses on
 - Sacrifice and blood
 - Sexual relationships
 - Interpersonal relations—moral behavior
 - Capital offenses
 - Holiness in worship
 - Observation of holy days and feasts
 - Being consecrated to God—punishment for desecration
 - Sabbatical and jubilee year
2. **CHAPTER 26—BLESSINGS OF OBEDIENCE—PENALTIES FOR DISOBEDIENCE**
3. **CHAPTER 27—RULES FOR VALUATION OF POSSESSIONS**
 - Humans (servants)
 - Animals
 - Property

III. KEY THEME OF LEVITICUS—BE HOLY

A. FOUR KEY PASSAGES

Lev 11:44-45—*For I am the Lord your God, Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth. For I am the Lord who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; thus you shall be holy, for I am holy.*

Lev 19:2—*Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”*

Lev 20:7-8—*You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the Lord your God. You shall keep My statutes and practice them; I am the Lord who sanctifies you. . . .*

verse 26—*Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine.*

Lev 22:31b-33—*I am the Lord. So you shall keep My commandments, and do them; I am the Lord. You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be sanctified among the sons of Israel; I am the Lord who sanctifies you, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, to be your God; I am the Lord.*

B. WHAT ‘HOLY’ MEANS

1. **ATTRIBUTE**—CHARACTERISTIC—TO BE HOLY

- a. Adjective—‘holy’
- b. Hebrew = **qadowsh**
- c. Meaning
 - Pure—clean
 - Free from defilement—crime—idolatry—other ‘profane’ things

2. **ACTION**—BEHAVIOR—TO MAKE HOLY—TO DO HOLY THINGS

- a. Verb—‘sanctify’
- b. Hebrew = **qadash**
- c. Meaning
 1. Consecrate—dedicate—prepare
 - So the object will be useful—to accomplish its purpose
 2. Be separate—hallowed—devoted to God
 - So the object will bring honor—not dishonor—to its owner

II Tim 2:20-21—Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

3. **OPPOSITE** OF HOLY = PROFANE

- Defile—pollute
- Dishonor
- Wound—pierce
- Treat as common
- Break covenant

C. IMPORTANCE OF HOLINESS

1. IMPORTANCE IN LEVITICUS

- a. Several other biblical words also suggest holiness
- b. *Just these two* forms are used 44 times in 27 chapters of Leviticus
 - Second most usage is Isaiah—41 times
- c. Total of *all* forms of ‘holy’
 - Most occurrences are in Leviticus—95 times in 27 chapters
 - Second most in Isaiah—51 times

2. IMPORTANCE IN ALL SCRIPTURE

- a. Holy—611 times in Bible (KJV)—[77 in Lev]
- b. Holiness/holier/holiest—47 times
- c. Hallowed—22 times—[3 in Lev]
- d. Sanctify/sanctified—136 times—[22 in Lev]
- e. Consecrate/consecrated—28 times—[3 in Lev]
- f. Dedicate/dedicated—28 times
- g. Second most used adjective—after good—just before evil

IV. HOW ‘HOLINESS’ WORKS IN LEVITICUS

A. HOW HOLINESS IS EXPRESSED

1. FOUR WAYS—LISTED IN [LEVITICUS 7](#)

Lev 7:7-8—*You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy; for I am the Lord your God. You shall keep My statutes and practice them; I am the Lord who sanctifies you.*

2. THE FOUR WAYS—EXPLAINED

- a. **Position** of holiness—*consecrate yourselves*—consecration
 - Consecrated = set apart—separated and unique
 - Set apart—for God—unto God—dedicated exclusively for His use
 - Set apart—from the world
- b. **Condition** of holiness—*be holy*
 - Character—disposition
 - *Being* holy people
 - In relationship with God—pure before God

- In relationship with each other—common standard of holiness
- c. **Behavior** of holiness—*keep My statutes*
- Living good/pure lives
 - Not just status—but utility—usable
 - Useful to accomplish God’s purposes
 - Purpose—to bring glory to God just status
- d. **Cause and effect** of holiness—*I am the Lord who sanctifies you*
- Ultimately—it is God who makes us holy—He initiates it
 - We cannot ‘consecrate ourselves’ without His **divine initiative**
 - He does this for a purpose—which He promises to accomplish—to make us holy
 - So—this brings us full circle—to our obligation
 - Because He sanctifies us—we are obligated to consecrate ourselves

B. HOW HOLINESS WORKS

1. SEEN BY CONNECTING FOUR PASSAGES—**LEV 11/19** with **LEV 20/22**

a. **LEV11/19**—command to **be holy** and why

Lev 11:44-45—*For I am the Lord your God, Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth. For I am the Lord who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; thus you shall be holy, for I am holy.* **Lev 19:2**—*Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”*

b. **LEV 20/22**—directions **how to** be holy

Lev 20:7-8—*You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the Lord your God. You shall keep My statutes and practice them; I am the Lord who sanctifies you. . . .* **verse 26**—*Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine.* **Lev 22:31b-33**—*I am the Lord. So you shall keep My commandments, and do them; I am the Lord. You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be sanctified among the sons of Israel; I am the Lord who sanctifies you, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, to be your God; I am the Lord.*

2. LOGICAL SEQUENCE

a. **What** we are to be—HOLY—**chapters 11 and 19**

b. **Why** we are to be holy

1. Because **God is holy**—**chapters 11 and 19**

- Identity—God’s people must be like Him
- Metaphysics—Holiness required to come into His presence

2. Because they have a **covenant relationship** with the Lord

- He brought them out of bondage to freedom—**chapters 11 and 22**
- He did this to make them His special people—**chapter 20**
- He did this to be their God—**chapter 11**
- He did this so they could worship and relate to Him personally

3. Because they have a **covenant obligation**

- To **be** like Him—**identify** with Him—as holy—**chapters 11 and 19**
- To be **unlike** everyone else—set apart to the Lord—**chapters 20 and 22**
- To obey the statutes of the One who freed them—**chapters 20 and 22**
- The purpose of their freedom—was to worship and serve Him

c. **How** we are made holy

1. By the Lord—He sanctifies [brought them out of Egypt to be unique]—**chapter 22**
2. By our own action—sanctified through self-separation and obedience—**chapter 20**

C. APPLICATION

1. HOLINESS AS IDENTITY

- If we are going to be God's children—we must be like Him
- Holiness—is a DNA marker—showing we are like our Father

2. HOLINESS AS FELLOWSHIP

- Relationship—cannot have fellowship with God if relationship is broken/blocked by sin
- Metaphysics—God cannot be touched by sin—we must be holy to enter His presence

3. HOLINESS AS INTEGRITY

- We cannot BE holy without DOING holy
- Behavior must match character—and *vice versa*
- Our actions must be 'one' with our values and identity

4. HOLINESS AS PRAGMATISM

- For our own good
- Sin is destructive—brings present misery and ultimately death
- Holiness is constructive—brings present health/blessedness and ultimately life

5. HOLINESS AS COMMUNITY

- Obedience to common moral codes brings communal health and prosperity

- Communal holiness brings care and concern for helping one another
- Communal holiness brings social unity and peace

6. HOLINESS—NOT UNHOLINESS

- Holiness is not—perfectionism and legalism
- Holiness is not—self-righteousness
- Holiness is not—empty sacrifice—but justice, mercy, humility

7. HOLINESS AS TESTIMONY

1. God blessed Abraham—to bless all families
2. God freed Israel—to become a witness to other nations—and free them!
3. Our good deeds [of holiness]—should bring praise to the Father

Mt 5:16—*Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*

4. We are set apart and made holy—to proclaim His excellence

I Pe 2:9-10—*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*