

Devotional and Reading Plan for 2022, Week Eight

Week 8 — February 19-25, Leviticus 9-26

We are in the heart of Leviticus this week and holiness is the topic. Now, I've got a confession to make, and perhaps you can relate to what I'm going to tell you. The first few times I took on reading through the Bible, when I would get to the book of Leviticus I would accomplish some of the fastest speed reading you could ever imagine. As you go through the book you read about rules for cleansing, rules for food, rules for priests, and so on. Regardless of my initial reaction, there is a theme that runs through the book that is perhaps more essential and impactful to my everyday life than maybe the themes in many of the other books.

The theme is holiness. Prayerfully, as you read this book you will see something that relates very directly to yourself, and that is that God desires that His people are holy and pursuing holiness. "For I am the LORD your God. You must consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy... For I, the LORD, am the one who brought you up from the land of Egypt, that I might be your God. Therefore, you must be holy because I am holy." (Lev. 11:44-45).

February 19th
Leviticus 9-11. "Fear is Respect"

Since the start of Leviticus, we have been reading very specific rules for the priests concerning offerings. Chapters eight and nine were discussing their ordination ceremony. It was an elaborate time of dedicating themselves to the service of God.

They were the intercessors for the people, and it was a position only available to the descendants of Aaron. For Nadab and Abihu, perhaps some of this went to their head. Pride may have been a factor in their sin (10:1-2). Alcohol may have been an issue (10:8-9). Complacency was possibly an issue, as they really did not care to follow the rules about where the fire and the incense came from. But, one thing that most certainly was a factor was their disrespect for the Almighty God.

I have a problem with Christians who say, "We really don't need to fear God. We just need to respect Him." The character of the Holy One, Judge and Creator demands something more than respect. "He will be glorified before all the people" (10:3).

February 20th
Leviticus 12-14:32. "Vitamin Be One"

This section covers some things that are kind of unpleasant just to read about. But, amazingly, it all goes back to the theme of Leviticus—holiness.

I have read historical accounts of the physical health of the Israelites compared to other nations of their time and area. The Israelites were far healthier. Their birthrate was higher. The longevity and health of the nation just seemed much stronger. Why? The rules.

There are so many directives concerning purification procedures for water and food, contaminated materials, circumventing contagious diseases, etc.

Again, we are reminded of the fact that God's rules have purpose. God wants holy people set apart for Him. Yet, in addition to being the Almighty God He is also their Protector. God takes care of His people even through a series of rules designed to protect them from disease and sickness.

It is this kind of reminder that we need to prompt us to remember that God's intentions and purpose are far more arranged than our short-term vision would let us think.

February 21st

Leviticus 14:33-16:34. "Covering is Not a Cure"

Once each year the Israelites would confess their sins, and the high priest would enter the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle (and temple later) to make atonement for them as a nation. This was called the Day of Atonement, and it was obviously, one of the most important days of the year.

The ceremony had very specific rules that the high priest was to follow. The animals had to meet certain standards. The process was to symbolize certain things as it followed a very rigid procedure. There was a great deal of blood spilled out and sprinkled at the front of the Ark of Covenant. And, understand this, it had to be performed each year—it was temporary.

Atonement is only a bandage and not a cure. Atone means "to cover." Their sins were just being "covered" up each year, yet it all looked forward to a perfect sacrifice that would remedy that problem.

Forgive means "to cancel." Jesus Christ's sacrifice made forgiveness possible. Prayerfully, we never take it for granted.

February 22nd

Leviticus 17-19. "Be Holy Because Your Lord Is"

The thought of exactly how to be holy has suffered from many false concepts. In some circles, holiness is equated with a long list of "don'ts." For others, holiness means a particular style of dress or mannerisms. And for still others, it may mean an unattainable perfection.

A word study reveals that to be holy is to be morally blameless. It is to be separated from sin and consecrated to God. A holy life is one lived in conformity to the moral precepts of the Bible and in contrast to the sinful ways of the world.

Jerry Bridges wrote, "Surely God has not commanded us to be holy without providing the means to be holy. The privilege of being holy is yours, and the decision and responsibility to be holy is yours. If you make that decision, you will experience the fullness of joy which Christ has promised to those who walk in obedience to Him."

"...seek to live a clean and holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

February 23rd

Leviticus 20-22. "Calling Sin 'Sin'"

Homosexuality. Bestiality. Adultery. Incest. These are terms that when mentioned can bring a look of disgust or shock upon our face. Are we allowed to talk of such things? Are we allowed to say such things are wrong, violently wrong?

We are being inundated from our culture with the idea that we should not stand and loudly label certain things as sin. We are taught that inwardly you may believe what you would like, but don't outwardly express your disdain for moral depravation.

We're tutored into reasoning that black and white standards are gone and gray is the norm. Yet, God's Word has never looked very gray to me.

Furthermore, we must understand that calling sin what it is, will be what leads us to the salvation of God. Until we understand our need for salvation, we will not be looking for it. Paul said, "I would not have known what sin was except through the law" (Rom. 7:7). "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

February 24th

Leviticus 23-25:23. "Refocus"

Israel was instructed to remember seven specific holidays each year. Some festivals lasted one week and others just one day. But each holiday represented something important: Passover reminded them of God's deliverance from Egypt, Unleavened Bread reminded them of their new way of life, Firstfruits reminded them of God's provision, and so forth down the list.

Apart from reminders, God's established holidays also provided rest and renewal. God felt so strongly about the importance of each of these that He also established a Sabbath day of rest each week.

Rest. It is vital for us physically in order to maintain what we need to do.

Renewal. It is vital for us emotionally as sometimes our joy is replaced with drudgery as we carry on.

Reminder. We need these things spiritually as we refocus on a variety of items; our gratitude to God; our life's perspective; and, our fellowship with our Creator.

Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), so keep each area of your life healthy.

February 25th

Leviticus 25:24-26:46. "Blessed by God"

"...anyone who believes in Jesus Christ will never be disappointed" (2 Peter 2:6).

In chapter 26 God promises a long list of blessings if the Israelites obey Him. Their harvests will be plentiful, they will live securely, He will live among them, and on and on.

However, He also says that they will receive a long list of punishments if they disobey Him. Their enemies will eat their crops, their land will be devastated, they will die in slavery, and so forth.

When we live in obedience to God, what kind of blessings will we receive? Does God give you peace? Does your conviction give you direction? Do His promises give you hope?

How often do you consider the blessings of God? Have you ever seriously tried to count them "one by one" as that old song suggests? I would challenge you to list as many as you can. Embark on proving the truth of Proverbs 10:6; "The godly are showered with blessings."