

People of the Holy God

To begin term 2 2023 we'll be taking a quick tour through Leviticus, the third book of the Old Testament. Last year we studied Exodus, and Leviticus picks up the story where Exodus left off. Israel are at Mount Sinai; they've just been joined to the Lord by covenant, and they are learning what it means to be the people of the Holy God.

We live in a very different time and place, but 1 Peter 2:9 tells us that as Christians, we too are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God". So there are important things for us to learn from Leviticus all these years later.

This four-week series won't cover every chapter of Leviticus. Some of the small group studies coincide with the sermon passages, but others fit in between the sermons, so that by the end we have touched on the most important sections of the book.

30 April	Sermon 1	Lev. 1-7	<i>Relationship with the Holy God</i>
	Study 1	Lev. 1-7	<i>Relationship with the Holy God</i>
7 May	Sermon 2	Lev. 8-10	<i>Fear of the Holy God</i>
	Study 2	Lev. 11	<i>Symbolising God's holiness</i>
14 May	Sermon 3	Lev. 16	<i>Approaching the Holy God</i>
	Study 3	Lev. 16	<i>Approaching the Holy God</i>
21 May	Sermon 4	Lev. 18-20	<i>Living for the Holy God</i>
	Study 4	Lev. 26	<i>Faithfulness to the Holy God</i>

To get your head around the big picture of Leviticus, this [video from The Bible Project](#) is a helpful start. See also the diagram at the end of this booklet, which is explained in the video.

The study material in this book was originally developed at Christ Church St Ives, and is re-used with their kind permission.

"You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own." – Leviticus 20:26



Here is an explanation of the different 'activities' in the studies...



INVESTIGATE

This is where we will do most of our reading of the text to work out what it all means as it sits on the pages of the Bible.



DISCUSS & APPLY

This is where we try and think about how the passage interacts with our lives today in either attitudes or action.



PRAYER & THANKS

This is where we turn what we are learning about God's word about him, ourselves, our world, and his plans of salvation, into prayer, confession and thanksgiving.

Study 1 | Leviticus 1-10



INVESTIGATE

1. Read Exodus 25:1-9. What were God's intentions for the tabernacle? (verses 8-9)



DISCUSS & APPLY

1. The big picture: There are 5 different types of offerings described in Leviticus 1-10. In small groups investigate the table. Looking at the big picture what impressions do you get?
 - a. Why do you think it was important that people laid hands on the sacrifice?
 - b. How was blood used in each of the sacrifices? What did it represent?
 - c. What are the different purposes of each sacrifice?

Name of sacrifice	Types of Animals	Hand-laying?	How is the blood used?	Who gets to eat?	Purpose of Sacrifice
Burnt (Lev 1)	Cattle, sheep, goats, birds	Yes	Poured on altar sides	No-one	Makes atonement (1:4)
Grain/Cereal (Lev 2)	Grain			Priests	
Fellowship/Peace (Lev 3)	Cattle, sheep, goats	Yes	Poured on altar sides	Priest & people	
Sin (Lev 4:1-5:13)	Cattle, sheep, goats, birds	Yes	Smearred on altars, sprinkled inside tent	Priests	To secure forgiveness for intentional/unintentional sins (4:26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13)
Guilt (Lev 5:14-6:7)	Rams	Probably	Poured on altar sides	Priests	To secure forgiveness for intentional/unintentional sins (5:16, 19; 6:7)

2. A close up view: Let's focus in on one particular sacrifice. Read Leviticus 1:1-9.
 - a. From verse 4 what does the person need to do in order to make the sacrifice acceptable for atonement?
 - b. What happens to the offering in verses 5-9?
 - c. After the burnt offering, how would you describe God's attitude to the sacrifice and the person who offered it?



3. Read Hebrews 10:5-10. What are the similarities and differences between Jesus and the burnt offering?
4. What effect does Jesus' sacrifice have on believers?



DISCUSS & APPLY

5. If someone were to ask if you were holy or not? How would you respond?

6. Reflect on what it means that Jesus' one sacrifice is sufficient compared to the multitude of animal sacrifices. How does this lead us to thankfulness and appreciation for Jesus?

7. What effect does/should Jesus' sacrifice have on your life? See Romans 12:1-2.



PRAYER & THANKS

- Praise God that he is holy and rejoice that God wants to dwell with his people.

- Pray that we will take sin seriously and realise how much God detests sin. Give thanks that God has dealt with our sin in the life and death of his precious Son.

- Ask God to enable us to live lives worthy of him because he has made us holy.

- Pray for many around the world who continue to make sacrifices of various kinds, hoping it will bring them peace. Ask that God will open their eyes to see that it is only Jesus who brings peace.

Study 2 | Leviticus 11

Two categories predominate in Leviticus 11-15: clean and unclean. They are attributed to a range of things: from food to mildew. It is easy to get stuck in the minute detail but it is also important to keep sight of the big picture.



INVESTIGATE

1. Read Leviticus 11: 1-25. How are the Israelites supposed to react to things that are unclean? (see verses 10-12, 13, 20, 23)
2. What is the problem with these animals? Genesis 1:24-25 described animals as good. In Genesis 1:29-30 the humans are given plants to eat and in Genesis 9:1-5 they are permitted to eat meat (but not with the lifeblood in it). So what makes these animals 'unclean'? NB: Mark 7:17-19 Jesus declares all food clean again.
3. What was the 'treatment' for becoming unclean? e.g. 11:25, 28, 39-40. (See also Leviticus 13:46 & 15:31)



INVESTIGATE

4. Read Leviticus 11:41-47. What do these verses tell us about what God is calling Israel to be like and why? How does God's character and actions influence this?
5. What order is Israel's holiness and redemption from Egypt described in? Why is this important?



INVESTIGATE

6. Read Romans 6:19-23. The Exodus from Egypt was one of a series of ways God redeemed his people. How does Romans increase our understanding of this?
7. How does Paul explain the relationship between Christians and holiness on this side of the cross?



DISCUSS & APPLY

8. If a non-Christian friend or colleague asked you why ancient Israel had laws about clean and unclean animals, how would you explain it? How can you explain the character of God that makes cleanness important?

9. There is a tension for Christians to be distinct from the world but also to live in the world. Share ways you are seeking to live that out. Would your friends and colleagues notice anything different about you, or do you blend in?

10. God's people don't have the obvious distinctions of clean and unclean now, but what are some ways that we can remember that God is still concerned about our holiness? Think as practically and personally as you can? E.g. movies, language, leisure time, motivations at work etc.

11. If you are a Christian, how can we remind each other that Christ has washed us clean and encourage each other with the amazing truth that God now dwells with us in his Spirit and we have the hope of dwelling with him in heaven to look forward to?



PRAYER & THANKS

- Praise God that he delivered his people from slavery and has delivered us from sin. Rejoice that he is pleased with the living sacrifice of our lives.

- Pray that those who are 'outside' God's people will see the purity of Christian lives and long to be part of God's kingdom.

- Pray that we will rejoice in being distinct from the world and treasure God's good ways of living, rather than grumbling.

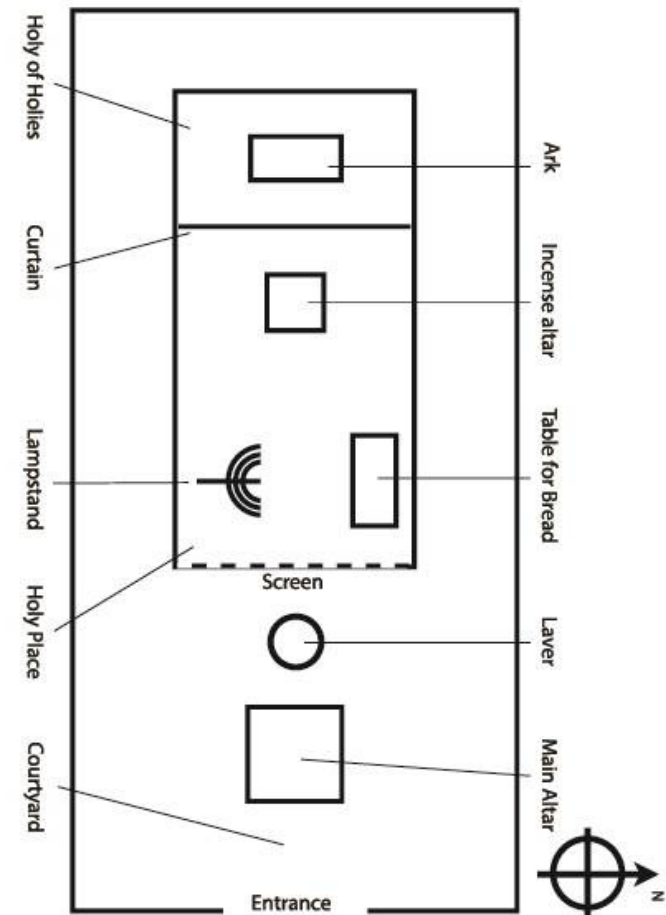
Study 3 | Leviticus 16



INVESTIGATE

1. From Leviticus 16:34 what necessitated the Day of Atonement for Israel? (see also verses 16, 24, 30)
2. What does 'atonement' mean?
3. **AARON:** Read Leviticus 16: 1-14. What preparations did Aaron have to make before entering the tent of meeting?
 - a. Verse 2
 - b. Verse 3
 - c. Verse 4
 - d. Verse 6, 11, 14
 - e. Verse 12-13

4. Look at the diagram of the tent of meeting and draw where the different things happened. NB: Aaron has to make atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting and the Altar (16:20)



5. **ISRAEL:** Read Leviticus 16: 5, 7-10, 15-19. What are the two goats for? What are their different roles?

6. Read Leviticus 16:20-22, 26-28. What happens to the scapegoat and those who deal with it?

7. **THE PEOPLE:** Read Leviticus 16: 29-34. While the sacrifices were happening what were the people doing? How do you think this would have affected them?

8. What were some of the limitations of the Day of Atonement? See verses 2, 6, 34.

9. Having looked in detail at the passage, why do you think atonement is so important?



10. Read Hebrews 7:11-28, especially 23-28. In what ways is Jesus contrasted to the High Priests of Aaron's line?

11. Jesus is now the one and only High Priest. How does this fact change things for us, this side of the cross?



12. The writer to the Hebrews wanted them to be confident to enter the presence of God. What will give us confidence? Are there things that stop you feeling confident? How can the truth of the gospel combat them?

13. The Day of Atonement is still practised in Jewish and Muslim cultures today. How could you explain why Christians don't celebrate it now?



PRAYER & THANKS

- Praise God for the once for all sacrifice of Jesus to deal with sin. Rejoice that the sacrifice has been paid.
- Pray that people around us will come to understand how the sacrifice for their sin has been paid and they can now have confidence to come to God through Jesus.
- Pray that we will come confidently into God's presence, not trusting in our own righteousness, but in Jesus. Confess the things that stop you coming to him and accept Jesus' forgiveness.

Study 4 | Leviticus 26



INVESTIGATE

1. Read Leviticus 26:1-13. From verses 1-2 what are the overarching general instructions God gives?
2. What blessings does God offer his people in :
 - a. Verses 3-5
 - b. Verses 6-8
 - c. Verses 9-13
3. What would life be like if all these blessings were occurring?
4. What reasons does God give about why he would bless Israel? (see verse 13 in particular)



DISCUSS & APPLY

5. These seem such amazing promises and blessings. If there were such good things on offer, do you think they will motivate Israel to be obedient? What would be worth giving them up?

6. Some people use passages like Leviticus 16:1-13 to say God will always bless his people now in the same way as he blessed Israel. What are some strengths and/or dangers of this approach?



INVESTIGATE

7. Read Leviticus 26:14-39. What curses does God say will come on Israel if they disobey?
 - a. Verses 14-17

 - b. Verses 18-20

c. Verses 21-22

d. Verses 23-26

e. Verses 27-39

8. Looking back over the curses which areas of life are mentioned? Are there any parts of life that will be untouched?

9. Throughout the passage God repeats what sin would lead to these consequences. How does he describe it? See verses 14, 18, 21, 23 and 27.

10. While the people are off being punished, what will happen to the land? (verses 34-35, 43) Why do you think this is important?



DISCUSS & APPLY

11. What picture do these curses give you about life lived in rejection of God?



INVESTIGATE

12. Read Leviticus 26:40-46. God provides a glimmer of hope. What would Israel need to return to God?

13. What response would this prompt from God and why? (verses 42, 44-45)

14. Later in Judah's history King Josiah finds the book of the Law and repents from the nations' sin. Skim 2 Kings 22-23, particularly focussing on 2 Kings 22:15-20. How did God respond when Josiah returned to him? NB: In 2 Kings 23:1-3 Josiah and the people recommit to the covenant.



DISCUSS & APPLY

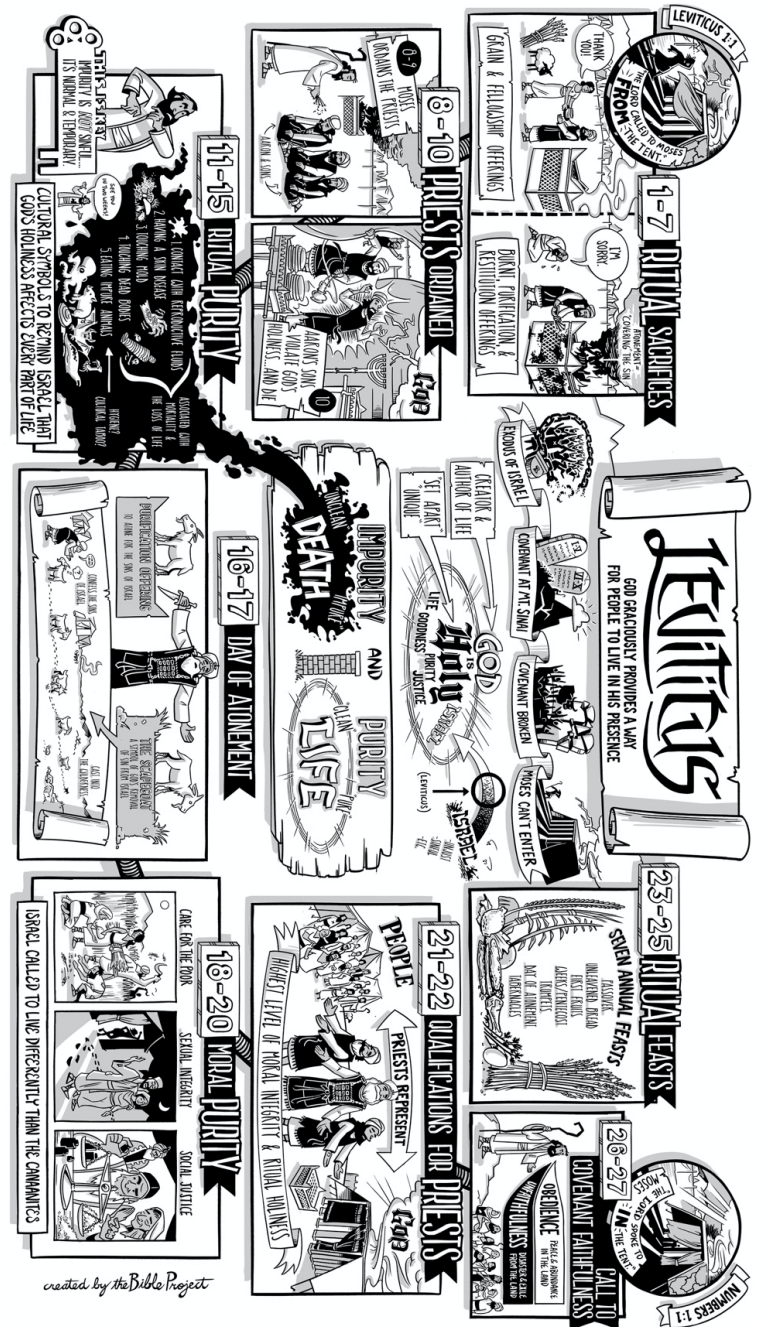
15. How does the New Testament describe the way God will bless his people? Now and in the future?

BLESSING	In the present	In the future
Romans 8:17-27		
Ephesians 1:3-14		
Colossians 2:9-15		
Revelation 21:1-4		



PRAYER & THANKS

- Praise God that he wants to bless his people in so many ways and that particularly in Jesus he has overcome our sin and blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ.
- Pray that we will hold on to how good it is to live under the lordship of God. Pray for each other that we will look forward to the hope that is stored up for us in heaven.
- Pray for the many around us who are living as enemies of God and are under his curse. Pray that they will repent, call out to God and seek his forgiveness.



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