

**Sermon      September 19, 2021      Leviticus Part I**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today I am introducing a new sermon series. This series is in the Back-to-School spirit. Kids are back in school. What a better time than now for us big kids to crack open the books and get back to school and learn the Bible? This series is on the book of Leviticus. Have you ever read Leviticus? Probably not. It's one of those books that for most people they start reading the book and get bogged down in all the details and minutia of God's instructions for how to do tabernacle worship. Sort of like the book of Numbers. If you read through the Bible in a year, you probably have to force-feed yourself the book of Leviticus. Also, the church climate we have developed for ourselves has put Leviticus on the back shelves. People just aren't interested in putting in the work necessary to squeeze out the spiritual juice contained in this book. We all want things from the Bible that are simple, light, and go well with our modern sensibilities. I am here to make Leviticus into one of the most interesting, inspiring, and helpful books you've ever read, because this book will clarify or even transform what you get out of all that reading we do in the New Testament. Leviticus contains crystal-clear foreshadowing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Since Leviticus so clearly represents Christ, it was used greatly by the New Testament church in its evangelism efforts. It also speaks a new and relevant word for our outreach work today. So let's get going!

Leviticus is one of the 5 books of Moses, or the *Torah*. You may have memorized them at some point: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy. God does more first-person speaking in Leviticus than he does in any of the other books of the Bible. I think that suggests how important this book is. This book is part of the Torah. Torah is a Hebrew word usually translated as "Law." That is a poor translation. Torah really means something more along the lines of "instruction," or "practical direction," or "guidance." Sounds better already, right? The very day he rose from the dead, Jesus used the Torah to explain himself and his work to two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus.

**And beginning with Moses [Torah] and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. Luke 24**

Here, “Moses” means the writings of Moses, or the Torah, especially including Leviticus. Luke is here alluding to how the Old Testament books such as this one really do contain Jesus Christ and point to him.

What is Leviticus all about? To figure that out, we start with what Peter says in his second book.

**But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 2 Peter 3:13**

In Leviticus, God makes a HUGE step in this direction. This is also why Leviticus speaks a good word to all of us today. It says here that righteousness will dwell in the new heavens and earth. If righteousness dwells in the new ones, what dwells in the old? Contamination dwells in our world. Ever hear of something called the Covid virus? Yeah. It’s everywhere. The world is contaminated with it. People are worried about excess CO2 in the air and global warming. Every day we get air quality alerts because the air is contaminated. Living here, when the wind is right, we get a nice blast of fallout from the Edgar Thompson mill. Everyone is drinking filtered water. Why? Our water is contaminated with pesticides, pharmaceutical drugs, heavy metals, and toxins of every kind. The only person that judges our drinking water to be “safe” is the government. Years ago everyone ate naturally pure food. There was no such thing as Monsanto. Now there are so many foreign substances in our everyday food supply there is an entirely new category of food – organic. You can’t drink the water, breath the air, eat the produce, or enjoy the fish without health risks. Our social security numbers have been shared with anyone who wants them. Anyone with internet or a smartphone has been hacked. Security cameras are being installed at every corner. We are losing our privacy. Governments and corporations are getting bigger and more self-imposing. Our freedoms are eroding. Society is going off the rails. Political and financial corruption only grow. Wars never cease. And we all do our fair share contributing to the problem, if by nothing else then by our silence. No wonder God is bringing in new heavens and a new earth. He can’t stand to see the way things are going!

In Leviticus God begins to make the separation now between the contaminated world and his righteousness. In the physical realm God now begins to distinguish

between unclean and clean. We hear a lot about this in the Bible and this is where it all started. Theologically, God also here begins to distinguish between what is common and what is holy. Ever read anything in the Bible about holiness/ holy things/ holy lives? Leviticus is the fountainhead of all of that. How do we fit in with all of this? Well, God is pretty clear about that in our first we are now going to take a look at in this series.

**Keep my statutes and do them; I am the Lord who sanctifies you. Leviticus 20:8**

God says he is the one who sanctifies us. That means by his work we are made holy. We then have a part in those new heavens and earth he is bringing in. The unclean and common have no part in God's future. If they come into the presence of the holy, they are annihilated. Only the clean and holy can endure and enjoy God's holiness. The only way to become holy is to be made holy by the Lord. Does that sound vaguely familiar? I hope so!

The Lord gives an all-encompassing explanation of this holiness business in chapter 19.

**And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." Leviticus 19:2**

The English language cannot easily convey what God is really saying here in the original Hebrew language of the Old Testament. If you look at a number of different English translations of this verse, you will wind up with this;

**"Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You are/will be/shall be/ must be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." Leviticus 19:2**

The part here about us being holy has a sort of 3-way or Trinitarian meaning. It says we are holy now, God will never stop giving us his holiness, and we must never stop receiving it. God's holiness in us, therefore, is an established fact, a promise, and also a demand. Keeping that important instruction in mind as we read the Bible, pray, and live out our lives will keep us on the narrow path of God's salvation. I hope to get into more of what that looks like and what that

means starting next week. Until then, God bless you with the truth and power of his holy word in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Pastor Ron Breight      Christ Lutheran Church, Forest Hills, Pennsylvania

**Note:** These sermons are usually updated between the time of this printing and Sunday mornings. For an updated version of these sermons, visit [christlutheranfh.org](http://christlutheranfh.org).