



## **Getting started with Leviticus**

*How can a holy God live with unholy people?*

Leviticus follows directly on from Exodus. By the end of Exodus, the tabernacle has been built so that God could dwell with His rescued people, but the last few verses are a cliff-hanger. The glory of the LORD fills the tabernacle as God makes His home there – but not even Moses can come close...

God is holy – in His moral purity and perfection He is distinct; set apart; different. The human problem since Genesis 3 is that we are not holy; and therefore we cannot enjoy God's presence as we were created to do.

*How can a holy God live with unholy people?*

Leviticus shows us how a holy God makes His people holy; and what it looks like to live in a way which reflects His holiness.

### ***Holiness in the big tent; holiness in the little tents.***

The Israelites lived in a camp; lots of little tents gathered around one big tent: the Tabernacle. At the centre of life was God's dwelling place; the place of sacrifice. In Leviticus we see that God is concerned about holiness in the big tent and in the little tents.

#### **Chapters 1-15: Holiness in the big tent.**

Israelite life revolved around the Tabernacle – the sacrifices, the priests and rules about cleanness. In these chapters we see the system that makes it possible for a holy God to live with unholy people.

#### **Chapters 17-27: Holiness in the little tent.**

God's holy character is to be reflected not only in religious rituals but in everyday life. These chapters show us what it looked like to live in the community of God's people.

## Chapter 16: Making the tents holy.

The hinge chapter: the day of Atonement; an annual occasion which was about the purification of the big tent and the little tents; the tabernacle and the people.

### ***Why should I care about an old law book?***

It might seem strange to be reading detailed law from thousands of years ago; but it teaches us so much about the good news of Jesus.

#### **1. The Law teaches us about God**

The Law reflects the character of God – His purity, generosity, justice. As you read, ask the question: what does this teach me about the Holy God?

#### **2. The Law teaches us about ourselves**

In contrast to God's holiness, we see that we are unholy. The sacrifices illustrate the penalty we deserve. The perfect standard of the law shows us just how far short we fall; and how much we need a Saviour.

#### **3. The Law teaches us how to live as God's people**

As well as showing us our need for a better sacrifice, Leviticus describes the type of life that is pleasing to God.

We no longer live in Old Testament Israel; we live the other side of Jesus' cross. But while the specifics are different for us, God is unchanged and the principles remain the same.

Much of what we read in the OT law is the basis for the NT instructions on how to live in the light of the grace of Jesus.

1 Peter 1v16 quotes Leviticus 11v14, proving that both in the Old Testament and New Testament it has always been God's design that His people should **"be holy, for I am holy."**

### ***Things to note***

There is a lot of "clean/unclean" language. This is not to do with hygiene but rather it's about **ritual uncleanness**.

For a time, those who were ritually unclean were not able to come close to God's presence – and sacrifice was needed to return them to a state of ritual cleanness.

Being ritually unclean is not the same as being morally unclean, but it's designed to remind us of our moral uncleanness, and our need for a sacrifice to draw near to God.

### ***Jesus in Leviticus***

It's important for us to read the whole book of Leviticus through the lens of Jesus and His Cross. The whole system we read about in Leviticus finds its fulfilment in Jesus – and when we realise that, it overflows with rich gospel truth.

The New Testament picks up on the various offerings to describe what Jesus did for us...

Burnt offering – 1 Peter 1v19

Sin offering – Romans 8v3, Hebrews 5v3

Guilt offering – 1 Corinthians 15v3

Peace offering – 1 Corinthians 10v16-18

*How can a holy God live with an unholy people?* That question is only really answered in the person and work of the Lord Jesus; the holy one, treated as unholy, so that unholy people like me and you can draw near to a holy God. It's only because of Jesus that the holy God, by His Holy Spirit, can come and dwell with His rescued people.



### **RBT Grow Group is on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> March**

Bring along some things from your reading of Leviticus to share with others.

### ***Some RBT reading ideas:***

- Meet up once a week to read it with a friend.
- Listen online at [Biblegateway.com](http://Biblegateway.com)
- Write down a verse that struck you that day.
- Encourage someone by texting them a thought from what you've read.



Here are some questions the Bible wants you to ask of itself. Use these to help you as you read your way through this month's book: (please don't feel like you have to fill in every question in loads of detail. These are a guide to help you learn from what you are reading.)

- What did you learn about Jesus and what it means to trust him? (Luke 24:45-47)
- What did you learn about yourself? (James 1:23 & 2 Tim 3:16-17)
- How were you corrected or rebuked or equipped for every good work? (2 Tim 3:16-17)
- What did you learn from the book that will help you keep going as a follower of Jesus? (Romans 15:4)
- What did you learn that will help you serve and build up the church? (Eph 4:11-16)
- What have you learnt that helps you love the Lord your God with all your heart & with all your soul & with all your mind? (Matt 22:37-40)
- What has helped you love your neighbour as yourself? (Matt 22:37-40)