

Set Free to be Holy  
Water, Fire, and Blood #01  
Exodus 19:1-13

### Leviticus Challenges

- Different culture and customs | *I simply don't relate or understand*
- Confusing or irrelevant | *It doesn't need to be, but on the surface it is*
- Backwards and outdated | *more than a little anti-semitism crops up here*

### Leviticus as Literature

- Center of Torah | *Mosaic authorship, likely later edit and compilation*
- Priesthood manual | *tabernacle's owner manual, "of the Levites"*
- Rituals and ethics | *chs 1-16, then 17-27*
- Not messianic | *yes, lots of Jesus. But Jewish readers didn't think "messiah"*

### Our Approach

- Thorough, not exhaustive | *not a survey, but not a year. Current plan is 23 sermons*
- Discipleship and apologetics | *Christians equipped to answer objections*
- Context first, then Jesus | *we want to start with it's own context before jumping to Jesus*

**Big idea (for series): You can't truly understand the work of Jesus without Leviticus**

### Introduction

Leviticus is the answer to a burning question for the people of Israel:

**How can imperfect mortals approach a perfectly holy God?**

- This is the question at the heart of the book, the question it answers
- Being in God's presence / proximity / relationship is a central theme to the bible

### Proximity to God

- Perfect Edenic presence
- Exiled away from presence
- Occasional presence | *God showing up to Abraham, Jacob, etc.*
- No presence in slavery | *God, where are you??*
- The hope of the exodus

### Set Free to Be With God

**Exodus 15** <sup>13</sup>With your faithful love, you will lead the people you have redeemed; you will guide them to your holy dwelling with your strength...<sup>17</sup>You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your possession; Lord, you have prepared the place for your dwelling; Lord, your hands have established the sanctuary. <sup>18</sup>The Lord will reign forever and ever!

- *This is great news, we get to be with YHWH, our God!!*
- God says "meet me at Mount Sinai"

- From our reading: *they came to the mountain, “you will be my kingdom of priests and a holy nation,” Moses tells everybody to “get ready” but also “be careful to not come too close”*

### **Fear and Trembling**

**Exodus 19** <sup>16</sup> On the third day, when morning came, there was thunder and lightning, a thick cloud on the mountain, and a very loud blast from a ram’s horn, so that all the people in the camp shuddered. <sup>17</sup> Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. <sup>18</sup> Mount Sinai was completely enveloped in smoke because the Lord came down on it in fire. Its smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain shook violently.

### **Who May Approach?**

**Exodus 19** <sup>21</sup> The Lord directed Moses, “Go down and warn the people not to break through to see the Lord; otherwise many of them will die. <sup>22</sup> Even the priests who come near the Lord must consecrate themselves, or the Lord will break out in anger against them.”

- There’s a right way and a wrong way to approach this God
- God gives 10 Commandments

### **The People Respond**

**Exodus 20** <sup>18</sup> All the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the ram’s horn, and the mountain surrounded by smoke. When the people saw it they trembled and stood at a distance. <sup>19</sup> “You speak to us, and we will listen,” they said to Moses, “but don’t let God speak to us, or we will die.” <sup>20</sup> Moses responded to the people, “Don’t be afraid, for God has come to test you, so that you will fear him and will not sin.” <sup>21</sup> And the people remained standing at a distance as Moses approached the total darkness where God was.

- Not getting close to God, he’s too holy/powerful/glorious
- Exodus continues with some more commandments, but then...
- (ch. 25) A TENT OF MEETING!! | Like a mini-Eden (fascinating area of study)

### **Prototype Tent**

**Exodus 33** <sup>7</sup> Now Moses took a tent and pitched it outside the camp, at a distance from the camp; he called it the tent of meeting. Anyone who wanted to consult the Lord would go to the tent of meeting that was outside the camp. <sup>8</sup> Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would stand up, each one at the door of his tent, and they would watch Moses until he entered the tent. <sup>9</sup> When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and remain at the entrance to the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses.

- Notice how it’s still outside of the camp
- In Exodus 35 through the end, construction on the Tabernacle complex begins
  - Side note: tabernacle refers to physical structure, “tent of meeting” is spiritual

*Making everything: curtains, ark of the covenant, table, lampstand, altar of incense, main burnt offering altar, basin of water, priestly uniforms*

## The Tent of Meeting

**Exodus 40** <sup>16</sup> Moses did everything just as the Lord had commanded him. <sup>17</sup> The tabernacle was set up in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month...So Moses finished the work. <sup>34</sup> The cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. <sup>35</sup> Moses was unable to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud rested on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

- Moses could go up Mt. Sinai, and he could go in the first tent, but now...going backwards?
- And this is where Leviticus comes in: how can they interact with this holy God?

## Important Categories

**Leviticus 10** <sup>10</sup> You must distinguish between the holy and the common [or profane], and the clean [pure] and the unclean [impure].

- Clean/unclean later | But simply to say, it's not a sin to be "unclean"

## Holy or Common

- Common/profane is normal
- Holy is special and set apart

## God's Holiness

- Transcendent | *set apart and unlike anything in all creation*
- Power and glory | *the source of all life, awe-inspiring!*
- Moral perfection | *he is righteous in all his ways*
- A God of order | *distinguish between...Leviticus emulates Genesis 1*

## Holiness Breaking In

- Sacred space | *Most holy place, **tabernacle/temple***
- Sacred objects | *set apart for special use*
- Sacred time | *Sabbath day is holy*
- Sacred people | *Most important!*

**Mark Scarlata** In some ways we might think of Leviticus as setting the stage for a new world order. Never before since the days of Eden had God dwelt with humanity on earth. But now this holy God is coming back to inaugurate a new creation, a new Eden, by making his home in the midst of his people. He has come to bless them, and the world, with his presence. Leviticus marks the dawn of a new age for Israel and for all nations. God has come down from heaven to dwell with his people, to bring them his salvation, and to teach them about how to live in his holy presence. This is why Leviticus is so concerned with holiness.

*The optimism of Leviticus, as though God was saying, "Come dwell near me, and I'll teach you how to be holy. Then together, we'll take my holiness to the ends of the earth!"*

- People's failure to be holy
- And this system that was designed to draw people close caused many to push away

- When Jesus appears, he claims to be the place where God dwells fully
  - Demons call him “the holy one of God”
  - Jesus makes claims about his body being the new temple

### **God’s Ultimate Tabernacle**

**John 1** <sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- Dwell = “set up tent” | The whole

**Big idea: Jesus is the holiness of God unleashed in the world**

**Big idea: Those who are united to Jesus are made holy**

- Paul calls us “holy objects set apart for special use” (2 Tim. 2:21)
- He also calls us a temple (dwelling place, new tabernacle) of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19)

### **Invited Near**

**Hebrews 10** <sup>19</sup> Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, <sup>21</sup> and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

**Big idea: Because we’re made holy by Jesus, we are invited to come near**

**Big idea: Because we’re made holy by Jesus, we are invited to live holy lives**