

Leviticus

A Suggested Outline of Leviticus

- I. God's Provision for Sin (1–10)
 - A. The sacrifices (1–7)
 - 1. Burnt offering (1; 6:8–13)
 - 2. Meal offering (2; 6:14–23)
 - 3. Peace offering (3; 7:11–34)
 - 4. Sin offering (4; 6:24–30)
 - 5. Trespass offering (5:1–6:7; 7:1–7)
 - B. The priesthood (8–10)

- II. God's Precepts for Separation (11–24)
 - A. A holy nation (11–20)
 - 1. Clean and unclean—laws of purity (11–15)
 - 2. The Day of Atonement (16–17)
 - 3. Various laws of separation (18–20)
 - B. A holy priesthood (21–22)
 - C. Holy days—the feasts of the Lord (23–24)

- III. God's Promise for Success (25–27)
 - A. The Sabbath of the land (25)
 - B. The importance of obedience (26)
 - C. The seriousness of vows (27)

Introductory Notes to Leviticus

I. Name

Leviticus means “pertaining to the Levites.” The Levites were the members of Aaron’s family who were not ordained as priests but were responsible to help the priests in the service of the tabernacle (Num. 3:1–13). This book contains the divine instructions for the priests concerning the various sacrifices, the feasts, and the laws of separation (what was clean and what was unclean).

II. Theme

Genesis explains man’s sin and condemnation, while Exodus is the book of redemption. Leviticus deals with separation and communion. The nation was led out of Egypt and brought to Sinai in Exodus, but in Leviticus the Lord speaks from the tabernacle (Lev. 1:1) and explains how sinful man may walk in communion with God. The words “holy” or “holiness” are found more than eighty times

in this book. The first section of the book deals with the sacrifices, for we cannot approach God apart from the shed blood. The word "blood" is found eighty-eight times in Leviticus. The second half of the book covers the laws of purity, explaining how the people must live separated lives to please their Lord. God had redeemed the nation from bondage; now He wanted to see that nation walk in holiness and purity for His glory. If we have been saved by the blood of the Lamb and delivered from the bondage of the world, then we too ought to walk in fellowship with our Lord (1 John 1:5–10). We need the blood of Christ, the Perfect Sacrifice, to cleanse us from sin, and we need to obey the Word and walk in purity and holiness in this present evil world. All of this is seen in type and symbol in Leviticus.

III. Sacrifice

Leviticus is a book of sacrifice and blood, themes that are repulsive to modern minds. People today wants a "bloodless religion," salvation without sacrifice, yet this is impossible. Leviticus 16 is perhaps the key chapter of the book, and chapter 17 makes it clear that the shed blood is what takes care of the sin problem (17:11). The word "atonement" means "to cover"; it is used about forty-five times in the book. The blood of the OT sacrifices could never take away sin (Heb. 10:1–18). This was accomplished by the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The blood of the OT sacrifices could only cover sin and point ahead to the Savior whose death would finish the work of redemption. By itself, the bringing of sacrifices could never save the sinner. There had to be faith in God's Word, for it is faith that saves the soul. David knew that sacrifices alone could never take away his sins (Ps. 51:16–17); the prophets also made this clear (Isa. 1:11–24). However, when the sinner came with a contrite heart, putting faith in God's Word, then his sacrifice was acceptable to God (see Cain and Abel, Gen. 4:1–5).

Leviticus presents many pictures of Christ and His work of redemption on the cross. The five sacrifices illustrate various aspects of His Person and work, and the Day of Atonement beautifully pictures His death on the cross. Do not try to press every detail of each type. Some of the instructions for the sacrifices, for example, had practical purposes behind them and need not be made to carry special spiritual lessons.

IV. Practical Lessons

We do not practice the Levitical sacrifices today, but this book still carries some weighty practical lessons that we would do well to ponder.

A. The awfulness of sin.

There must be the shedding of blood to atone for sin. Sin is not something light and unimportant; it is hateful in the eyes of God. Sin is costly—every sacrifice was an expensive thing to the Jewish worshiper.

B. The holiness of God.

God makes a distinction in this book between the clean and the unclean. He also warns His people, "Be holy for I am holy" (11:44).

C. The graciousness of God.

He provides a way of forgiveness and restoration! Of course, this "Way" is Christ, "the new and living way" (Heb. 10:19ff). The OT sacrifices pointed to the coming Savior. The phrase "it shall be forgiven" is used at least ten times in Leviticus.

Leviticus 1–7

Hebrews 10:1–14 makes it clear that in Christ we have the complete fulfillment of each of the OT sacrifices. These five special sacrifices illustrate to us the various aspects of the Person and work of our Savior.

I. The Burnt Offering—Christ's Complete Dedication (1)

This sacrifice had to be a perfect male of the first year, the very best that was in the herd. The sacrifice would be brought to the door of the tabernacle, for there was but one place of sacrifice acceptable to God (see Lev. 17). The offerer would then place his hands on the head of the sacrifice, thus identifying himself with the beast, and as it were, transferring his sin and guilt to the innocent animal. The beast was killed and the priest caught the blood and sprinkled it around the brazen altar at the door of the tabernacle. The animal was then skinned (and the skin given to the priest), cut into pieces, and burned completely on the altar. “All on the altar” (v. 9) is the key phrase: the entire animal was given to God as it was burned in the fire. This is a picture of our Lord's complete dedication of Himself to God. “I have come to do Your will, O God” (Heb. 10:9). See also John 10:17 and Rom. 5:19. Leviticus 6:8–13 points out that the priest offered a burnt offering the first thing each morning, so that every other sacrifice during the day was offered on the foundation of the burnt offering. Romans 12:1–2 instructs Christians to give themselves as living sacrifices—as living burnt offerings—wholly dedicated to God. Just as the priests were to maintain a “continual burnt offering” (6:12–13), so we are to be constantly dedicated to the Lord for His glory.

II. The Meal Offering—Christ's Perfections (2)

The word “meat” means “meal”; there is no blood involved in this offering. It could be fine flour, flour baked into cakes, or even dried ears of corn. The fine flour speaks to us of Christ's perfect character and life—there was nothing rough or uneven in Him. The oil symbolizes the Spirit of God. And note the two-fold use of the oil: (1) mingled, v. 4, which reminds us that Christ was born of the Spirit; and (2) poured, v. 6, which speaks of Christ's anointing by the Spirit for His ministry. The frankincense added a wonderful fragrance to the offering, illustrating the beauty and fragrance of Christ's perfect life here on earth. The offering had to go through the fire, just as Christ had to endure the fire of Calvary. There must always be salt with the offering (v. 13), symbolizing purity and absence of decay, for there was no corruption of any kind in Christ. However, the offering was never to have leaven, which symbolizes sin (1 Cor. 5:6–8; Matt. 16:6; Mark 8:15), for there was no sin in Christ. Nor was the offering to have honey, which is the sweetest thing nature has to offer. There was nothing of “human, natural sweetness” in Christ; He was divine love in the flesh.

How wonderful are Christ's perfections! May the Spirit of God so work in us that we might become more like Him—balanced, even, fragrant, pure.

III. The Peace Offering—Christ Our Peace (3)

This procedure was about the same as the procedure for the burnt offering, except that the offerer received back some of the animal and feasted upon it. The best was first given to God (vv. 3–5), but the rest was to be eaten by the offerer according to the rules laid down in 7:11–21. This was to be a joyful feast, illustrating the fact that there was peace between the offerer and the Lord, that the barrier of sin had been removed. For the NT truth, see Eph. 2:14, 17 and Col. 1:20. Note too in Lev. 7:28–34 that the priests received the breast and the shoulder as their own, reminding us that God's people must feed on Christ if they are to be strong. Leviticus 17:1–9 points out that every time an Israelite slaughtered a beast, it was to be treated like a peace offering. Would it not be wonderful if

we regarded each of our meals as a peace offering to God and spent our time at the table in communion with Him and one another?

Apart from Christ, there can be no peace. It required the blood of the cross for the sin problem to be settled once and for all.

IV. The Sin Offering—Christ Made Sin for Us (4)

There was no offering for deliberate “high-handed” sin (Num. 15:30–31), but there was provision made for sins of ignorance. Note that the blood had to be sprinkled before the veil (v. 6) and applied to the horns of the incense altar (v. 7), which shows the seriousness of sin. In vv. 3–12 we have the instructions for the sins of the priest; in vv. 13–21 we have the instructions for the sins of the whole congregation—and note that the same sacrifice was required for both! The sins of a priest (being the anointed of God) were equal to the sins of the whole nation! In vv. 22–26 we have the regulations for rulers, and in vv. 27–35, the regulations for the common people. The offering, then, depended on the status and responsibility of the person who had broken the Law of God.

Note that the sacrifice was not burned on the brazen altar; it was taken outside the camp and burned in a clean place. This reminds us of Heb. 13:11–13 and the fact that Christ was crucified “outside the camp,” rejected by the nation He came to save. The NT parallel for the sin offering is 2 Cor. 5:21 where we are told that Christ was made sin for us; see also 1 Peter 2:24.

It is wonderful to see that even the poorest offender could provide a sin offering, for in 5:7 we are told that God would accept turtledoves or pigeons. It was this humble sacrifice that Mary and Joseph brought (Luke 2:24) showing the poverty of our Lord's family.

V. The Trespass Offering—Christ Paying Sin's Debt (5:1–6:7)

The sin offering and trespass offering are closely related. In fact, they picture two aspects of the death of Christ for lost sinners. The sin offering dealt with sin as a part of human nature, the fact that all people are sinners, while the trespass offering emphasized the individual acts of sin. You will note in the trespass offering that offenders had to make restitution for what they had done (5:16; 6:4–5). This offering, then, reminds us that sin is costly, and that where there is true repentance there will be restitution and repayment. In 5:14–19 we have trespasses against God emphasized, while in 6:1–7, the emphasis is on trespasses against other people. In both cases, sin was looked upon as a debt to be paid; and, of course, that debt was fully and finally paid by Christ.

It is interesting to look at the order of these sacrifices as they are recorded in the Bible. God begins with the burnt offering, the complete consecration of His Son to the work of redemption, for this is where the plan of salvation begins in eternity past. But from man's point of view, the order is reversed. First, we see ourselves as having committed sins of various kinds, and we realize that we are in debt to God and man. This is the trespass offering. But as the work of conviction continues, we realize that we are sinners—our very nature is sinful! This is the sin offering. Then the Spirit reveals Christ to us, the One who made peace by the blood of His cross, and we discover the peace offering. As we grow in grace, we come to understand the perfections of our Lord, and that we are “accepted in the Beloved”; this is the meal offering. The result of all of this must be our complete consecration to the Lord—the burnt offering.

We do not need any sacrifices today. “For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified” (Heb. 10:14, nkjv). Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Leviticus 10

In the previous chapter, Moses and Aaron had set up the tabernacle and dedicated it to the Lord, the fire of God had fallen on the altar, and the glory of God had filled the sanctuary. It was a high and holy experience for the priests and the nation of Israel. However, two of the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (Ex. 6:23; 28:1), presumptuously sinned against God and were judged by Him. The fire of God that consumed the sacrifice on the altar (9:24) brought about their sudden death. "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

The central theme of the chapter is stated in v. 3, "I will be sanctified in them that come near me, and before all the people I will be glorified." The phrase "them that come near me" refers to the priests, who had the privilege of ministering in the tabernacle where God dwelt in the holy of holies. See Ezek. 42:13 and Ex. 19:22. Privilege always brings responsibility, but Nadab and Abihu proved themselves to be irresponsible.

It's a privilege to be a servant of the Lord. God admonished His servants to honor and glorify Him in three special areas of life.

I. Honoring God (10)

A. *In their serving (vv. 1–5).*

Nadab and Abihu had been on the holy mount with Moses and their father Aaron (Ex. 24:1–2, 10), so they were a privileged pair. They had heard the words of the Law and knew what God required of His priests, so theirs was not a sin of ignorance.

What was their sin? The text says they offered "strange fire" to the Lord. The word "strange" means "unauthorized by the Word of God" (see Ex. 30:9). They were enthusiastic, but what they did was not according to the Scriptures. It has been suggested that they failed to use the fire from the altar (9:24), so God couldn't accept their worship. But much more is involved than that.

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest was privileged to enter the Holy of Holies with incense (Lev. 16:12). The rest of the year, incense was burned morning and evening on the golden altar that stood before the veil (Ex. 30:1–10, 34–38). The two sons of Aaron had devised a new ceremony for worshiping Jehovah, and He would not accept it. They were not high priests, it was not the Day of Atonement, and they did not burn the incense on the golden altar.

Why did they sin? Perhaps they were carried away by the enthusiasm of the hour as they saw the glory of God fill the sanctuary and the fire of God come down from heaven. What they did was an example of "will worship" (Col. 2:23) and is a warning to all who lead God's people in the service of worship. Carnal enthusiasm is no substitute for the fullness of the Spirit, and one of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control (Gal. 5:23). We must worship God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). The Spirit of God will never lead believers to do anything contrary to the Word of God, no matter how "happy" or enthusiastic they may feel.

Judgment begins at the house of the Lord (1 Peter 4:17; see also Ezek. 9:6). This was the beginning of a new period in the history of Israel, and God used this judgment as a warning to His people. You will find similar judgments occurring when Israel entered the Promised Land (Josh. 7), when David sought to bring the ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6), and during the first days of the church (Acts 5). Whenever sinful men and women take to themselves the glory that belongs only to God, judgment will come in one form or another. God will not give His glory to another (Isa. 42:8; 48:11; 52:11).

B. In their mourning (vv. 6–7).

Moses warned Aaron and his two remaining sons not to mourn the death of Nadab and Abihu the way the common people would mourn (see 21:1–12 and Ezek. 24:16–17). They had to remain in the tabernacle precincts during the time of dedication (8:33). If they disobeyed, wrath would come upon all the people and not just on the priests. By staying at their posts and serving the people, they were honoring God and showing the people the importance of obeying His Word, no matter what the cost.

Of course, no such commandment applies to God's people today, who are also His priests (1 Peter 2:5, 9). We sorrow at the death of loved ones, but we must not sorrow "as those who have no hope" (1 Thes. 4:13–18). By sorrowing in a godly manner, we bear witness to the lost world that we have hope in Jesus Christ and are not in despair.

C. In their eating and drinking (vv. 8–20).

These admonitions relate to the daily duties of the priests, but they have practical applications for believers today.

(1) *Strong drink (vv. 8–11)*. This is the only place in Leviticus where God speaks directly to Aaron, so it must be an important commandment. The Jews were not forbidden to drink wine or strong drink, but they were warned against drunkenness and the sins that often accompany it (Prov. 20:1; 23:20, 29–31; Isa. 5:11; Hab. 2:15). Those who serve the Lord must be an example to others and be filled with the Spirit and not with wine (Eph. 5:18). By their teaching and example, they must "put a difference" between the holy and the unholy (see Ezek. 22:26; 42:20; 44:23; 48:14–15). The NT follows this same approach (Rom. 14:14–23).

(2) *The sacrifices (vv. 12–20)*. The priests were given a certain portion of some of the sacrifices and were to eat this food at the tabernacle. It was holy and must not be treated like common food. During the dedication ceremony recorded in chapter 9, they had offered the meal offering, sin offering, burnt offering, and peace offering; and the priests were to eat their portions as a part of the service. It was another reminder to them and the people that the sacrifices were holy unto the Lord. See Lev. 6:14–30 and 7:11–38 for more detail.

There were two kinds of sin offerings, one whose blood was sprinkled in the holy place, and one whose blood was sprinkled on the altar of burnt offering. On that day, the sin offering was of the second kind (9:9; 10:18), so Aaron and the priests should have eaten it; but they didn't. It was bad enough that Nadab and Abihu did what they weren't supposed to do and brought judgment, but now the priests weren't doing what they were supposed to do and were inviting more judgment!

Moses rebuked Aaron's two sons, but Aaron spoke up in their defense. The family had not been allowed to mourn over the sudden loss of two sons, so they had fasted instead and did not eat the meat of the sin offering. Had they eaten the sacrifice, it would have been only a mechanical routine and not a holy meal; for their hearts wouldn't have been in it. Would God want that kind of service? He wants obedience, not sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22) and hearts that are right with Him.

This chapter is a stern warning against worship and service that go beyond the boundaries set by the Word of God. It's also a warning against carnal enthusiasm that imitates the work of the Spirit. Counterfeit worship grieves the Spirit of God who wants to lead us in worship experiences that are based on Scripture and that glorify the Lord. Our worship must show forth the praises of God (1 Peter 2:9) and be acceptable to God (1 Peter 2:5). Worship that exalts men and women and fails to glorify God is not acceptable to Him.

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31, nkjv).

Leviticus 11

From the emphasis on *atonement* in chapters 1–10, Moses now turns to the theme of *defilement*. In chapters 11–15 and 17–22, he teaches his people the difference between the clean and the unclean in the areas of food, birth and death, diseases and personal relationships. Chapters 21–22 instruct the priests as to their responsibility to be separated from sin and devoted to the Lord.

I. Guidelines for God's People (11)

A. *The diet of God's people (vv. 1–23).*

We don't know when God's people first received the law about clean and unclean foods, but it was known in Noah's day (Gen. 7:1–10). Perhaps this was a part of the teaching God gave Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. There were at least two reasons for this dietary law: (1) the health of God's people, and (2) the distinction of Israel as a separated people. In a day when there was neither refrigeration nor adequate means for cooking, many of these forbidden foods were potentially dangerous to the health of the people. See Ex. 15:26 and Deut. 7:15. However, the main reason was that the Jews might be reminded daily, at each meal, that they were a separated people who were not to live like the Gentile nations around them. See Deut. 14:1–20 for more information.

These dietary laws were given only to the Jews and were abolished with the fulfillment of the Mosaic Law in Jesus Christ (Col. 2:11–17). Jesus made it clear that these laws were temporary and did not determine the condition of the heart (Mark 7:1–23). The early church found itself divided over these laws (Rom. 14:1–15:7). Peter apparently kept a "kosher house" even after Calvary and Pentecost (Acts 10:9–16), but he soon learned that God had made some drastic changes. ("Kosher" comes from a Hebrew word meaning "right, fit." People in a kosher Jewish home ate only those foods that God said were right and fit.) In the church today, diets are not a means of salvation or holiness (Col. 2:20–23; 1 Tim. 4:1–5); and Christians must not judge one another in these matters. While some foods may not be physically good for some people, what a Christian eats or drinks must not be made a test of spirituality.

Moses first deals with *land creatures* (vv. 1–8) and states that only those animals may be eaten that have the split hoof and that chew the cud. The *water creatures* (vv. 9–12) must have both scales and fins. This would eliminate the creatures that wallow in the mud where they could pick up all sorts of parasites. The free swimming fish would be safe to eat. (Of course, this was long before the days of the pollution of the earth's water systems.) Next come the *flying creatures* (vv. 13–23), including fowl (vv. 13–19) and insects (vv. 20–23). Here the Lord names specific creatures and doesn't give any general standard to follow as He did with land and water creatures. The fourth category is *creeping things* (vv. 29–31a, 41–43). Again, specific creatures are named as being unclean to the Jews.

Some well-meaning students try to "spiritualize" these laws to find some "deeper" truth in them, but the results are contradictory and questionable. To make "chewing the cud" refer to meditating on Scripture, and "the cloven hoof" picture a separated walk in Christ, is to twist the Scriptures and rob them of their true meaning.

Christians today are free to eat what they please, but they must keep 1 Cor. 10:31 in mind.

B. *The defilement of God's people (vv. 24–40).*

Not only did Moses warn the Jews to beware of what they ate, but they must also beware of what they touched; for the carcass of an animal was unclean to them. If a Jew touched a carcass, he would be unclean until evening, the beginning of the new day. He would then have to wash both his

clothes and his body, and then he was permitted to enter the camp. In vv. 24–28, the law deals with *people* being defiled by dead animals; and in vv. 31b–38, it deals with the defilement of *things*, particularly things in the home. Vessels, clothing, furniture, food, and water could all be defiled by that which was unclean. This “ritual uncleanness” had to be dealt with seriously if the people and the home were to be pleasing to the Lord. In vv. 39–40, Moses deals with defilement from the carcasses of clean animals used for food. The Jew didn't eat much meat since it was very expensive to lose an animal that was useful for breeding, wool, and milk. They were to be careful not to kill their animals carelessly, for it was against the law to eat blood (Lev. 3:17; 7:26–27; 17:14).

C. The dedication of God's people (vv. 44–47).

Here Moses gives three motives for purity on the part of the Jewish nation. They would be tempted to follow the filthy customs of their pagan neighbors, but these truths would motivate them to obey the Lord and refrain from defilement.

(1) *God is a holy God (v. 44).* “Be holy for I am holy” is repeated in various forms nine times in the Book of Leviticus (11:44; 19:2; 20:7, 26; 21:8, 15; 22:9, 16, 32) and it is quoted in 1 Peter 1:15–16 as applying to the NT Christian today. If we are God's people, and He is a holy God, then it's logical that we live holy lives. The dietary laws reminded the Jews to be a separated people, a holy people (Ex. 19:5–8; see 1 Peter 2:9).

(2) *God redeemed us for Himself (v. 45).* The Lord often reminded the Jews that they were a redeemed people and that He had rescued them by His grace and power (19:36; 22:33, 23:43; 25:38, 42, 55; 26:13, 45). Had He not redeemed them, they would still be slaves in Egypt. Of course, the Exodus is a picture of the redemption we have in Jesus Christ, for He is the Passover Lamb sacrificed for us (John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Peter 1:18–19). If we are a redeemed people, then we ought to live holy lives to please the God who set us free.

(3) *God wants His people to be different (vv. 46–47).* These laws taught the Jews that they were a special people to the Lord and were supposed to be different from the nations around them. See Lev. 10:10 and 20:22–26, as well as Ezek. 22:26, 42:20, 44:23, and 48:14–15. Because the people forgot their debt to the Lord, they began to mingle with the Gentile nations and learn their godless ways. They stopped making a difference between the holy and the unholy, the clean and the unclean; and this led to their chastening and captivity. Of course, today “there is no difference” between the Jew and the Gentile, either in condemnation (Rom. 3:22–23) or salvation (Rom. 10:12–13). Believing Jews and Gentiles are “all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26–29).

It's significant that the Lord Jesus established an ordinance for His church that involved eating and drinking (1 Cor. 11:23–34). Each time we share the bread and the cup, we do it to remember Him and what He did for us on the cross. The observing of the Lord's Supper (the Eucharist) should encourage us to be a holy people, a grateful people, and a people who are different from the people of the world.

Leviticus 13–14

When He was ministering on earth, our Lord healed lepers (Matt. 10:8; 11:5; Mark 1:40–45; Luke 17:11–19). This was called cleansing, since leprosy was looked upon as defilement as well as disease. The leper was barred from normal society and was prohibited from going to the temple. These two chapters in Leviticus deal with leprosy as a picture of sin, and they illustrate what Christ has done to cleanse sinners. (Note that the Hebrew word translated “leprosy” could be applied to several different skin ailments.)

I. The Characteristics of Sin (13)

If people thought they had leprosy, they were required to go to the priest for an examination. Note the characteristics of leprosy and how they picture sin:

A. *It is deeper than the skin (v.3).*

Leprosy was not merely a surface eruption; it was deeper than the skin. How like sin! The problem is not on the surface. Deeper than the skin, the problem lies in sinful human nature. The Bible has nothing good to say about the flesh (the old nature) because our sinful nature is the source of so many of our troubles. Sinners cannot be changed by shallow surface remedies; they need to have their hearts changed. See Jer. 17:9, Rom. 7:18, Ps. 51:5, and Job 14:4.

B. *It spreads (v. 7).*

Leprosy was not an isolated sore on one part of the body; it had a way of spreading and defiling the whole body. Sin also spreads: it begins with a thought, then follows a desire, then an act, then the terrible results (James 1:13–15). Read 2 Sam. 11 and see how sin spread in David's life. David left his army when he should have been fighting; he allowed his eyes to wander to his neighbor's wife; he lusted; he committed adultery; he lied; he made Uriah, the neighbor, drunk; and finally, he murdered the man.

C. *It defiles (vv. 44–46).*

This means, of course, ceremonial defilement; lepers were not allowed to participate in the religious services. They were forced to mark themselves as lepers and to cry, “Unclean! Unclean!” to warn the people around them. Anyone who touched a leper was also defiled. This is the tragedy of sin: it defiles the mind, the heart, the body, and all that it touches. One sinner can defile a whole household; think of Achan (Josh. 7). No person was ever made cleaner because of sin, for sin is the great defiler of mankind.

D. *It isolates (v. 46).*

“He shall dwell alone!” What sad words. “Outside the camp” in the place of rejection was the only place for a leper. Sin always isolates people. It takes them away from family, friends, and, ultimately, from God. When Christ was made sin for us He cried, “Why have You forsaken me?” Sin separates people from God—and this is what hell is.

E. *It destines things for the fire (v. 52).*

Any garment that was found defiled with leprosy was burned. There is only one place for sin, and that is in the fires of judgment. Jesus described hell as a place where the fire never burns out (Mark 9:43–48). It is sad to think of millions of “spiritual lepers” being consigned to the eternal fires of judgment because they have never trusted Christ as their Savior. How important it is that we tell the world the good news of the Gospel!

People may laugh at sin, excuse it, or try to explain it away, but to God sin is serious. Note Isa. 1:4ff for the prophet's use of leprosy as a picture of sin.

II. The Cleansing of the Sinner (14)

This chapter explains the ritual for the ceremonial cleansing of lepers so that they might enter society again.

A. *The priest goes to the leper (v. 3).*

Of course, the leper was barred from coming into the camp, so the priest had to go “outside the camp” to him. What a picture of Christ who came to us and died “outside the camp” that we might be saved (Heb. 13:10–13). We did not seek Him; He came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10).

B. *The priest offers the sacrifices (vv. 4–7).*

This ceremony is a beautiful picture of the work of Christ. The priest took one of the birds and placed it in an earthen vessel (clay jar), and then he killed it. Of course, the birds were not created to live in jars, but to fly in the heavens. Christ willingly left heaven and took upon Himself a body, put Himself, as it were, in an earthen vessel, that He might die for us. Note that the bird was killed over running water, a picture of the Holy Spirit. The priest then took the living bird, dipped it in the blood of the dead bird, and set it free. Here is a vivid illustration of Christ's resurrection. Christ died for our sins and was raised again, and He took the blood (spiritually speaking) back to heaven that we might be cleansed from sin. The priest finally sprinkled some of the blood on the leper, for “without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Heb. 9:22, nkjv).

C. *The leper washes and waits (vv. 8–9).*

The priest had already pronounced him clean, so he was accepted as far as the Lord was concerned, but now he had to make himself ritually acceptable. This washing is a picture of the believer cleansing himself from filthiness of the flesh and spirit (2 Cor. 7:1). After we have been saved, it is our responsibility to keep our lives blameless and holy for His sake. Note that the leper's wait was until the eighth day, for eight is the number of resurrection, the new beginning.

D. *The leper offers the sacrifices (vv. 10–13).*

He was now back in the camp at the door of the tabernacle. He offered a trespass offering, a sin offering, and a burnt offering. The sin offering took care of his defilement; the burnt offering represented his renewed dedication to God. Why the trespass offering? Because while he had been defiled, the man had not been able to serve God as he should, and he owed God a great debt. The trespass offering was his only way to repair the damage done by that wasted segment of his life. Every lost sinner is robbing God of the honor due His Name, and each day the debt becomes greater.

E. The priest applies the blood and oil (vv. 14–20).

This is a touching part of the ritual. The priest took the blood and applied it to the right ear, the right thumb, and the right great toe of the man, symbolizing that his whole body had now been purchased and belonged to God. He was to listen to God's Word, work for God's glory, and walk in God's ways. Then the priest put the oil on the blood, symbolizing the power of the Spirit of God for the doing of God's will. The blood could not be put on the oil; the oil had to be put on the blood. For where the blood has been applied, the Spirit of God can work. The rest of the oil was poured on the man's head, and thus, he was anointed for his new life. If you will read Lev. 8:22–24, you will see that a similar ceremony was performed for the consecration of the priests. In other words, God treated the leper as he would a priest.

Of course, all of this is accomplished today through faith in Jesus Christ. He went "outside the camp" to find us. He died and rose again to save us. When we trust Him, He applies the blood and oil to our lives and restores us to fellowship with God. One day a leper said to Christ, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." He replied, "I am willing; be cleansed." See Mark 1:40–45. Christ is willing to save and able to save.

Leviticus 16–17

The Day of Atonement was Israel's highest religious holiday, for on that day God dealt with all the sins that had not been covered during the year. Hebrews 10:1ff is the NT commentary on this chapter.

I. The Preparation of the Priest (16:1–14)

A. He had to be alone (vv. 1–2, 16:17).

No Levite could assist in this important ritual. The high priest had to officiate alone. So with our Lord: He alone could pay the price for sin. His nation rejected Him, His disciples forsook Him and fled, and the Father turned from Him when He died on the cross. Alone our Lord settled the sin question once and for all.

B. He laid aside his glorious garments (v. 4).

What a picture of our Lord's coming to earth as a human being. He laid aside the garments of His glory and took upon Him the form of a servant. See also Phil. 2:1–11.

C. He washed (v. 4).

For the priest, this meant getting rid of any ceremonial defilement. As a picture of Christ, it shows Him sanctifying Himself for our sake (John 17:19). He willingly dedicated Himself to the task of giving His life a ransom for many.

D. He offered a sin offering (vv. 6–11).

Our Lord did not have to offer any sacrifices for Himself. Read carefully Heb. 7:23–28.

E. He entered the holy of holies (vv. 12–13).

The high priest actually entered the holy of holies three times: first, with the incense, which pictures the glory of God; then, with the blood from the sacrifice for himself; and finally, with the blood shed for the people. The incense preceded the blood because the purpose of salvation is the glory of God (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). Jesus died not simply to save lost sinners and give them life, but that God might be glorified (John 17:1–5).

All of this was preparation for the main task of the Day of Atonement, the giving of the sin offering for the nation.

II. The Presentation of the Goats (16:15–34)

Note that the two goats were considered one sin offering (v. 5). They illustrate two aspects of the work of the cross. After the high priest returned from sprinkling the blood of his sin offering, he took the goat that was designated to die and killed it as a sin offering for the entire nation. He then entered the holy of holies for the third time, this time with the blood of the goat. He sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat and before it, and thus covered the sins of the nation. Note that v. 20 indicates that the blood of the sin offering “reconciled” the people and the tabernacle to God (see Heb. 9:23–24).

Having applied the blood, the high priest then took the live goat, laid his hands on its head, and confessed the sins of the people, thus symbolically transferring their guilt to the innocent animal. The word “scapegoat” comes from a Hebrew word which means “to remove.” This goat was then sent away into the wilderness, never to be seen again, and this illustrated the removal of the nation’s sins (Ps. 103:12). Of course, these rituals did not remove sin, since the ceremonies had to be repeated year by year. But they illustrated what Christ would do when He died once for the sins of the world. The believing Israelite was saved by his faith, just the way people have always been saved. Only after the sin offering had been completed, and the nation’s iniquity carried away (symbolically), did the high priest lay aside his humble linen garments and put on his garments of glory. This is a picture of the resurrection and ascension of Christ. After He had finished His work on the cross, He went back to the Father in glory, where He is seated today. The Day of Atonement was to be a serious day for the Jews, and they were not to do any work. Salvation is not by works, it is wholly by the grace of God.

III. The Prohibition Concerning Blood (17)

Leviticus 17:11 is a key verse of the Bible, for it states emphatically that the only way of atonement is through the blood. Long before science discovered the marvel of blood, the Bible taught that the life is in the blood. Doctors used to take out blood to try to make people well; today they give blood transfusions!

This chapter prohibited the Jew from slaughtering his animals carelessly. He was to make each animal a peace offering to the Lord by bringing it to the door of the tabernacle for the priest to offer. The danger, of course, was that they would be tempted to sacrifice to idols or demons (v. 7), a practice they had learned in Egypt; or that the blood would not be taken from the animal and thus the people would sin by eating blood. The blood was something special; it was not to be treated as common food.

Throughout this chapter the emphasis is on the one place of sacrifice. There was only one price that God would accept—the blood—and only one place where God would accept it—the door of the tabernacle. So it is today. God accepts but one price for sin—the blood of His Son. And that blood was shed at the one place God appointed—Calvary’s cross. To depend on any other sacrifice at any other place is to be rejected by God.

The life is in the blood, both physically and spiritually. Our spiritual life depends on the shed blood of Christ (see 1 John 1:7; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:22).

We live in a day when liberal theologians reject the doctrine of the blood of Christ. They call it “slaughterhouse religion.” It needs to be made clear that the Bible is a book of blood, from Genesis (where God slew animals to clothe Adam and Eve) to Revelation (where John beheld Christ “as a Lamb that was slain”). It is not Christ the Example, or Christ the Teacher who saves us; it is Christ the Lamb of God, crucified for the sins of the world.

Leviticus 21–22

The priests in general, and the high priest in particular, were to maintain the highest standards of character and conduct; and they were never to offer sacrifices that were below standard. In this, they pictured our Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect High Priest and the perfect sacrifice (Heb. 7:26–28; 10:1–14). They also challenge God's people as priests (1 Peter 2:5, 9) and sacrifices (Rom. 12:1) to give their very best to God.

Note the repetition of the words defile, profane, blemish, unclean, holy, and sanctify. The theme is the holy character and conduct of God's servants as they minister to the Lord and His people. God warns that, as we serve Him, we not profane ourselves (21:5), God's name (21:6; 22:2), God's sanctuary (21:12), our children (21:15), or the holy things that we handle in ministry (22:15).

One of the tragedies throughout Israel's history was the defilement of the priesthood, which led ultimately to the defilement of the nation. If the greatest sin is the corruption of the highest good, then the Jewish priests succeeded in committing the greatest sin; for they corrupted the priesthood by their godless character, their evil conduct, and their careless ministry of the holy things of God (see Mal. 1:6–2:9). Unfortunately, the church today has made both merchandise and mockery of the ministry; and the church is desperately in need of a revival of holiness.

I. Perfect Priests (21:1–22:16)

These laws concern the conduct of the priests with reference to mourning for the dead, marriage, and the conduct of family relationships.

A. *Conduct of the priests (21:1–9).*

In the camp of Israel, a person was defiled if he or she touched a dead body or even entered a dwelling where there was a dead body (Num. 19:11–22). The ordinary priest could defile himself for close family members but not for other relatives or for friends. No Jew was to follow the mourning practices of the pagans (19:27–28; Deut. 14:1). The reason for these laws is given in vv. 6 and 8: the priests offer the sacrifices of God and have been set apart by God (see 21:15, 23; 22:9, 16, 32). No priest was to marry a harlot or a divorcee, for this might bring into the priestly clan children not begotten by a man from the tribe of Levi (see v. 15). No daughter of a priest was permitted to live, if she became involved in immorality (see 20:14 and Gen. 38:24).

B. *The conduct of the high priest (21:10–15).*

Because of his position before God and anointing from God, the high priest was expected to be even more exemplary than the ordinary priests. God always expects more from leaders. He couldn't even defile himself for his father and mother, nor could he show the normal signs of mourning. Verse 11 doesn't teach that the high priest lived in the tabernacle, for Num. 3:38 tells us his tent was pitched at the east side of the tabernacle. This verse instructs the high priest always to be on duty and not to leave the tabernacle precincts even for a funeral. He had to marry a virgin to assure the nation that the next high priest was actually his son.

C. The characteristics of the priests (21:16–24).

Both the priests at the altar and the sacrifices on the altar (22:17–25) were to be without blemish. While we're not certain what handicaps are indicated by some of these terms, it's clear that God wanted His ministers to be perfect physically. Once again, this magnifies the perfections of our High Priest, Jesus Christ. The Lord certainly doesn't include physical perfection as a requirement for ministry today (1 Tim. 3); the emphasis is on moral and spiritual maturity. Paul had a thorn in the flesh which made him even more qualified to serve!

D. The contacts of the priests (22:1–16).

The priests must "treat with respect" (NIV) the holy things of God by keeping themselves separated from defilement. What a tragedy if the holy servant of God made everything he touched unclean because of his own defilement (see Matt. 23:25–28). Moses repeated some of the causes of defilement that had already been explained in detail in previous chapters: leprosy (chaps. 13–14), running sores (chap. 15). A priest who presumptuously ministered while unclean was in danger of death (vv. 3, 9).

Beside avoiding the unclean things, the priests had to be careful how they dispensed the holy things. Only the priests could eat portions taken from the meal offerings, the sin offerings, and the trespass offerings; but members of the priest's family could share in eating the other offerings. The person had to be an official member of the family by birth or purchase. A daughter married to a non-priest was excluded. Anybody who ate the holy food unwittingly had to pay a penalty.

II. Perfect Sacrifices (22:17–33)

God always deserves the very best and we dare not bring Him that which is blemished (Mal. 1:6–2:9). The blood of a blemish sacrifice could never please God or atone for sin. Furthermore, these sacrifices were types of the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is the perfect sacrifice (Heb. 9:14; Eph. 5:27). To offer God blemished sacrifices was to profane His name.

The laws relating to the killing of the sacrifices shows the tenderness God has toward animals (vv. 27–28). He will not take the young from the mother too soon. God also has concern for the birds (Deut. 22:6–7) and the trees (Deut. 20:19–20).

The chapter closes with God's reminder of the reasons that ought to motivate His people as they sacrifice: He is the Lord who has set them apart as His own people, He delivered them from the bondage of Egypt, and these are His commandments.

Believers today don't bring animal sacrifices to God because that whole system was ended at the cross. But we do present to Him our bodies (Rom. 12:1–2), the people we have won to Christ (Rom. 15:16), our praise (Heb. 13:15), our good works (Heb. 13:16), a broken heart (Ps. 51:17), and our prayers (Ps. 141:2). Since nothing that we offer Him is perfect, we must offer our sacrifices through Jesus Christ so that they will be acceptable to God (1 Peter 2:5).

Leviticus 23

The seven feasts of the Lord are full of rich spiritual food and bear careful study. Some of these feasts we have already studied, so we will not deal with them in detail, but others are new in our studies. It is important to note the order of these seven feasts, for they give us a "prophetic calendar" for both Israel and the church. The religious year opened with Passover, which pictures the death of Christ. On the day following the Passover Sabbath (a Sunday), the Israelites celebrated Firstfruits, picturing our Lord's resurrection from the dead. The week following Passover was

devoted to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when all the leaven was put out of the houses. This illustrates the sanctification of believers as they put sin out of their lives. All of this took place in the first month of the year. Fifty days after Firstfruits is the NT Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit on the church. In the seventh month, three feasts were celebrated. The Feast of Trumpets opened the month, reminding us of the gathering of God's people when the Lord returns. On the tenth day was the Day of Atonement, illustrating the cleansing of God's people; and from the fifteenth to the twenty-first days, the Jews joyfully celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles, picturing the blessings of the future kingdom. God's people are a scattered people who must be gathered, a sinful people who must be cleansed, and a suffering people who must be given joy. The long period (about three months) between Pentecost and the Feast of Trumpets speaks of this present age of the church, when Israel is set aside because she rejected her Messiah.

I. Passover (23:4–5)

We have already considered this feast, so refer to the notes on Ex. 11–13. Everything depends on the blood of the lamb: there could be no other feasts if there were no Passover. People today who want to do away with the blood are undermining the very foundation of God's plan of the ages!

II. Unleavened Bread (23:6–8)

This too has already been considered. It pictures God's people putting sin out of their lives (2 Cor. 7:1) and feeding on the Lamb that they might have strength for the journey. Do not reverse these two feasts. Nobody is saved by putting away leaven (sin), and nobody will want to put away sin until first he or she has been saved by the blood! This is the difference between religious reformation and spiritual regeneration, being born again by the Spirit of God.

III. Firstfruits (23:9–14)

This feast was reserved for the land of Canaan, when the people would have fields and harvests. It would be impossible to celebrate such a feast in the wilderness. On the day after the "Passover Sabbath" (a Sunday, the first day of the week), the priest would wave the first sheaf of grain before the altar as a token that the whole harvest belonged to the Lord. This is a picture of our Lord's resurrection, since 1 Cor. 15:20–21 definitely calls Him "the firstfruits." Worshiping on the Lord's Day is not the invention of the church, as some people teach. It was written into God's calendar centuries before! Because Christ, the Firstfruits, is alive, the entire "resurrection harvest" belongs to God. Not one person will be forgotten. The promise is certain: "Because I live, you shall live also" (John 14:19, nkjv).

IV. Pentecost (23:15–22)

"Pentecost" means "fifty," and fifty days after Christ's resurrection, the Holy Spirit came to believers (Acts 2). For forty days, Christ had ministered to His disciples (Acts 1:3), and for another ten days they had prayed and waited for Pentecost to arrive. The "new meal offering" (v. 16) was composed of two loaves of bread, symbolizing Jews and Gentiles baptized into one body, the church, by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). The fact that leaven was allowed illustrates to us that there is sin in the church on earth today. Thank God the day will come when there will be no leaven among God's people! Note too that the priest presented loaves and not sheaves of grain, for now the believers have been united in Christ by the Spirit. It is after Pentecost that we have the long gap when there are no feasts. There are three feasts in the first month and three in the seventh, with Pentecost between. This long gap speaks of the present age, the age of the church. Israel has rejected her Lamb; she cannot receive the Spirit until she receives her Messiah; and she is scattered across the

world. She has no temple, no priesthood, no sacrifice, and no king. What is her future? It is seen in the next three feasts.

V. Trumpets (23:23–25)

As a nation, Israel was instructed by signals from the priests blowing trumpets (Num. 10). The Feast of Trumpets illustrates the regathering of Israel when God's trumpets shall call them from the ends of the earth. Read Isa. 27:12–13, and the words of Christ in Matt. 24:29–31.

Of course, there is an application here to the church, for we await the sound of the trumpet and the return of our Lord in the air (1 Cor. 15:52ff; 1 Thes. 4:13–18). The Jews sounded the trumpets to gather the assembly together, and this is what our Lord will do when He gathers His children. The Jews also sounded the trumpets for war, and once Christ has His children off this earth, He will declare war on the nations.

VI. Day of Atonement (23:26–32)

This has previously been discussed in our notes on Lev. 16–17. When God has finally gathered the Jews together, He will reveal Christ to them, and “they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced.” Israel's future Day of Atonement is described in Zech. 12:10–13:1. Read these verses carefully. It will be a day of mourning for sin, a day of cleansing by the blood of the Lamb. There are some who apply the Day of Atonement to the Judgment Seat of Christ, when the saints of God will give account for the deeds done in the body. Its primary application, however, is to the nation of Israel. Certainly at the Judgment Seat of Christ, the church will be cleansed of all defilement and be made beautiful for the marriage of the Lamb.

VII. Tabernacles (23:33–44)

For seven days, the Jews were to live in booths, reminding them of God's provision and protection when they were in the wilderness.

But there is also a future Feast of Tabernacles for Israel that will take place when the King has been received and the nation restored. Read Zech. 14:16–21 for more detail. Thus, this feast speaks of the future millennial kingdom that God has promised the Jews. This feast followed the harvest (v. 39), which teaches us that God will have gathered all of His harvest before Christ establishes His earthly kingdom. This was to be a feast of rejoicing, not sorrow; and certainly all heaven and earth will rejoice when Christ reigns from Jerusalem. This chapter is God's “prophetic timetable,” and we know not when the trumpets will sound. How important it is for us to be ready for the sound of the trumpet and the coming of the Lord!

Leviticus 25

The economic system in Israel was based on three fundamental principles: (1) God owned the land and had a right to control it, v. 23; (2) God owned the people, because He had redeemed them from Egyptian bondage, vv. 38, 42, 55; and (3) the Jews were a family (“your brother,” nkjv) and should care for each other, vv. 25, 35–36, 39, 47. Joshua and the Jewish army conquered the land of Canaan, but it was God who assigned their inheritance (Joshua 13–21). The people “possessed” the land and enjoyed its products, but God owned it and determined how it would be used.

This chapter focuses on three topics relating to the economy of the nation.

I. The Sabbath Year (25:1–7, 18–22)

The OT Jewish calendar functioned on a series of “sevens.” The seventh day of the week was the Sabbath. Seven weeks after Passover came Pentecost, and the seventh month of the year introduces the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Every seventh year was a “Sabbatic Year,” and after seven Sabbatic years came the Year of Jubilee.

The Sabbatic year was God’s way of allowing the land to lie fallow and restore its fruitfulness. The people were not permitted to have a formal harvest that year, but anyone could eat from the produce of the fields and orchards. God promised to provide abundant crops during the sixth year, so observing the Sabbatic Year was really a test of faith for the people. It was also an expression of God’s love for the poor of the land (Ex. 23:10–12). According to Deut. 15:1–11, all debts were to be remitted at the end of the seventh year. Jewish servants were supposed to serve only six years (Ex. 21:2), and the Jewish people were encouraged to be especially generous to the poor.

The Sabbatic year was a time of rest and restoration for the land, the people, and the animals who worked on the land. It was an opportunity for a new beginning for those who had experienced difficulties financially. Unfortunately, there’s no evidence that the nation ever faithfully obeyed this law (2 Chron. 36:21). The prophets often condemned the Jewish leaders and wealthy people for their ruthless treatment of the poor. Had the Sabbatic year law been observed, it would have prevented the poor from losing their lands and the rich from amassing huge estates. The economy wouldn’t have been perfect, but it would have been balanced much better.

During the Feast of Tabernacles in each Sabbatic year, the priests were to read and explain the Book of Deuteronomy to the people (Deut. 31:9–13). It was something like a week-long Bible conference during which the people were reminded of what God had done for them and what He expected them to do in return. God’s people need to be taught His Word, for each new generation has not learned it; and the older generations need to be reminded of it.

II. The Year of Jubilee (25:8–17, 23–24)

The word “jubilee” comes from the Hebrew word *yobel* which means “ram’s horn.” This special year was announced by the blowing of trumpets on the Day of Atonement. Thus, the year began with fasting and repentance as the nation confessed its sins to the Lord (Lev. 16).

During that year, the people reclaimed the land that had been sold so that it would not go out of the control of the family or clan. Any Jew purchasing property would calculate the price until the next Year of Jubilee when the land would revert back to the original owner. How much food it could produce in that time was a major consideration. As in the Sabbatic year, the land was to lie fallow during the Year of Jubilee. The people would have to trust God to provide what they needed for the Sabbatic year (the forty-ninth), the Year of Jubilee (the fiftieth), and the fifty-first year when they would again plant seed. There would not be a new harvest until the next year.

The people did not own the land, therefore they couldn’t sell it permanently. God gave them the land (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:7; 17:8; Deut. 5:16) and permitted them to use it, and He would always control it. The people were to walk in the fear of the Lord and not use their wealth to oppress one another.

The slaves were released during this special year, so that families would be reunited. The statement “Proclaim liberty throughout all the land” (v. 10) is engraved on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia.

The Year of Jubilee looks forward to the kingdom age when Jesus Christ will reign in glory and fulfill the promises made to the Jewish people. Read Isa. 61 and see what God has planned for the nation of Israel. In a spiritual sense, the Year of Jubilee also pictures our Christian life (Luke 4:16–21, which is quoted from Isa. 61:1–2). In His reading of the OT in the synagogue that Sabbath in Nazareth, Jesus stopped with “the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:19), which refers to the Year of Jubilee. He did not read “the day of vengeance of our God” (Isa. 61:2), for that day of judgment

will not come until after God has finished His present program of "calling out a people for His name" (Acts 15:14).

III. The care of the poor (25:25–55)

These laws applied regardless of whether it was a Sabbatic year or a Year of Jubilee. The general principle is laid down in vv. 25–28 and then is applied to specific situations. A person who had to sell property because of a financial need could redeem it at any time, or a brother could redeem it for him. But the price would be determined by the number of years remaining until the Year of Jubilee.

A. A house in a city (vv. 29–34).

This would be very valuable property because of the security afforded in a walled city. For this reason, the seller had only one year's time in which to buy it back. After that, the owner held the property as long as he pleased; and it would not revert to the original owner during the Year of Jubilee. However, this rule didn't apply to houses owned by the Levites. For a Levite who gave his property to the Lord, see Acts 4:34–37.

B. A poor brother (vv. 35–46).

The Jews were not to oppress one another or take advantage of each other in financial matters. If they loaned money, they were not to take interest; if they sold food, they were not to make an exorbitant profit. See Neh. 5. If a Jew had a fellow Jew as a servant, working off a debt, he was not to treat him like a slave; and the servant was to go free at the Year of Jubilee.

C. The Kinsman-Redeemer (vv. 47–55).

The best illustration of this law is in the book of Ruth where Boaz redeemed Ruth and Naomi and their property. A kinsman could rescue his relative by paying his debts and recovering his land. The "redeemer" had to be a near kinsman who was able and willing to redeem. The poor relative would be set free from both bondage and debt. The kinsman-redeemer is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ who became our "close relative" by becoming a man (Phil. 2:1–11; Heb. 2:9–18) and paying the price for our redemption by dying on the cross. He was both able to save and willing to save.

It must be noted that the economic system in Israel was not a form of communism. People possessed private property which could be bought and sold, but God owned the land and would not permit it to be sold permanently. The Sabbatic year and the Year of Jubilee, if obeyed, would have prevented the rich from getting richer and thus making the poor poorer. But the Jews didn't obey these laws and the results were tragic. They also enacted laws that favored the rich and crushed the poor, and God judged them for it. See Isa. 3:12–15 and 10:1–3; Amos 2:6–7 and 5:11.

Finally, these special laws also show God's concern for the land. By allowing the land to lie fallow every seventh year, and then two years in a row at the Jubilee, they were restoring its productivity and increasing its value. Of course it took faith to do this, but God promised to meet their needs. After all, the food we eat comes from the hand of God, not from the supermarket; and we all need to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11).