

**On The Way to Jesus pt 4**  
**God's Covenant Law- Sacred Space, Acts, People, and Time**

If you missed the first three weeks, then let me tell you what we're doing in this series. We are looking at the Big Story of Jesus that is woven throughout all of the bible.

Our series is ON THE WAY TO Jesus, and we've come to God's Covenant Law  
In the Historical Redemption Reading Plan – topic #6 Covenant Law given through Moses

This brings us to the part of the OT where start to get bogged down. Genesis and Exodus have a familiar narrative and may keep our attention, but when we get to Leviticus, we're stymied. Whaaaaaaat is this about??? And WHYYYYY SHOULD I CARE IN 2023?

I get it

Even with the 10 Commandments, which make a lot of sense, we are prone to ask, “Who dares to make such a statement that 10 laws for human behavior, 10 commandments, that were written over 3000 yrs ago should be the linchpin and the basis for our civilization? Who dares to make such a statement like that?”

The church of Jesus Christ does. IT was Jesus who said, “heaven and earth may pass away, but not a jot or tittle of the law of God will pass away until all is fulfilled.”

What he was saying is that the law of God is greater than heaven and earth. Now that is something.

Our lives are like fluff, unless the Grace of God with all its greatness, comes in and writes His Law on our hearts.

**When it comes to finding meaning and purpose of life, the answer is a “WHO”, not a “what”. And the person is God himself, as He is known through Christ.**

Contrary to the spirit of our age, The ‘who’ is not ‘self.’.

As we saw a few weeks ago in Genesis, it is the Creator God who sets the terms, the norms, and the definitions of life, relationships as married or single, and our role as those created for His glory.

How does that relate to the Covenant Law and especially a book like Leviticus?

Did you know that Jesus referred to a verse in Leviticus more than any other verse in the Old Testament? You've probably heard of this verse– “Love your neighbor as yourself.” That comes from this book. , [Leviticus 19:18](#) And in the New Testament, it's referred to 10 times.

Before God gives the Covenant Law IN EXODUS 20, He gives these words of reminder and promise in Exodus 19:3-8 -what one author calls THE EAGLES' WING SPEECH

**There Israel encamped before the mountain, <sup>3</sup> while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: <sup>4</sup> ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. <sup>5</sup> Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; <sup>6</sup> and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’**

God didn't simply lead them out of bondage to wander around. He was leading them to meet Hm and be with Him. Remember the promise, “I will be your God, you will be my people and I will dwell in your midst.” The Lord God gave His people gracious instruction

**Deut 4: 7 For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we**

call on Him? 8 Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?

Before we go any further, you need to know this – The values embedded in the Covenant Law, especially the Ten Commandments are Someone you meet before they are commands to Obey.

All the commands to be a holy people are rooted in the covenant relationship, in which Israel was consecrated by grace to the Lord: "Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the LORD your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD, who makes you holy" (Lev 20:7-8).

We need to understand the LAW in the context of the big picture. The Covenant Law, or Torah in Hebrew, is God's 'good instruction' to His people.

If you understand some key distinctions, the whole issue of the OT system of Laws will make more sense:

#### WCF ch 19 – God's Law

This explanation of the distinctions, role, and purpose of God's Law has been around for 380 years, not including the NT texts.

God gave the MORAL LAW – notable the 10 Commandments, written on two tablets. The first four establish our obligations to God and the remaining six our obligations to other people, as divine image bearers.

In addition to what is called the moral law, it pleased God to give the people of Israel, as a pre-Christian assembly of believers, ceremonial laws, containing many typical ordinances. Some of these ordinances pertain to worship and foreshadow Christ, his grace, actions, suffering, and the benefits to be had from believing in him.<sup>4</sup> The rest of these ordinances contain various instructions about moral duties. All of these ceremonial laws are now nullified under the New Testament.

\*\* Jesus was the fulfillment of what was symbolized and promised in these ceremonial laws so they don't have a place in our faith and practice.

God also gave the Israelites, as a political body, various civic or judicial laws. These laws were to govern Israel as a theocratic state. They expired with the state of Israel and make no further obligation on God's people than what seems appropriate in contemporary legal codes. At times these judicial laws are mixed in with ceremonial regulation.

\*\*SIDEROAD – all governments represent some form of theocracy, it's only a matter of what view of God or religion that you want to follow. Laws and politics are downstream from culture, and culture is downstream from theology.

"But you can't legislate morality" – That is one of the greatest myths or lies of all time. All legislation represents someone's system of morality. If a law isn't moral in some way, then why pass it?

\*\* The theocracy of Israel ended when the tribes divided and end up being scattered or sent into exile. Even up their return, they never had the same degree of independence and theocratic rule as before. In 70 A.D. Jerusalem was destroyed and that put an end to a formal state government and rule of the Jewish people in the land. Even with the reestablishment of Israel in 1948, we don't see Israel operating under the civil or ceremonial laws.

The moral law, however, does pertain to everyone, saved and unsaved, forever, not just with respect to its content but also in relationship to the authority of God, the Creator, who gave it. In the gospel, Christ does not in any way remove this obligation, but rather strengthens it.

SO WHAT???

One issue that is often thrown out in the discussion of the “Law”, or the Ten Commandments in particular, is that Christians will “pick and choose” which laws to obey. Once we understand the distinctions, it is easier to carry on the discussion. The issues are not as complicated as some like to make it sound, and the explanation has been around for a good 380 years or more.

As a REVIEW, let’s look at the “skeletal themes” of the first five books of the Law – OT – Torah – Pentateuch:

Genesis is about the beginnings of the human family, our initial rebellion against God, and His work at reestablishing a people for Himself. God call Abraham and his descendants which turned into a nation, Israel. Genesis gives their origin narrative and ends with the death of the patriarch Joseph, and before he dies, he blesses the 12 tribes.

Exodus shows how the people of God were delivered out of the bondage of slavery, but they wandered in the wilderness because of their unbelief.

The Book of Numbers returns to the theme of Exodus and the people dedicate the tabernacle as they prepare to enter Canaan.

At the end of the Pentateuch is Deuteronomy, which means the “second law”, and there is a repetition and reminder of the Law previously given. That’s why parts of Deuteronomy sound like parts of Exodus and Leviticus. Deuteronomy gives a picture of where the people of God are going and there is the announcement of blessings and curses depending on their obedience to God’s law. This book also ends with the death of a leader, Moses.

In the middle of the first five books is Leviticus which describes how this people formed by God are to offer worship and service to Him. The focal point of that worship and service was the Tabernacle, which was the place where the presence of God was centralized.

The problem of the Fall in Gen 3 raises a question that Leviticus and the Covenant Law help answer until the coming of Christ.

Kevin DeYoung...

Leviticus for all of its weirdness and confusion, is preeminently about one thing: How can unholy people dwell in the midst of a holy God?

Or if you want to put it from the other perspective, it is about how a holy God can dwell in the midst of an unholy people. That’s what Leviticus is about. His people are unholy, just like us. He is holy; He was then, He is now, He forever will be, always has been holy. How can a holy God dwell in the midst of an unholy people?

At the end of Exodus God’s presence fills the Tabernacle and the glory of the Lord filled it so that Moses could not even enter. Now what? How do they ever dwell with such a glorious holy God?

Leviticus gives 27 chapters of instructions from God to Moses on what the people can do so that they can dwell with God and He can dwell with them. The system of sacrifices underscores what may be the main idea of Leviticus and the Covenant Law:

God IS HOLY AND WE ARE NOT. Without His provision and grace, we’ll never be able to dwell with God.

Dr. Tremper Longman suggests FOUR rubrics that are helpful as you read the “Law” sections of the OT. Think of them as bins for storage. There are verses and chapters that deal with :

1. Sacred Space – The central Focal point of “God dwelling with His people”. Eden, Tabernacle, Temple – this includes the details of what the sacred space looks like and how it is organized.
2. Sacred Acts – the whole system of offerings – Burnt, Tribute, Fellowship, Sin and Guilt offerings

3. Sacred People – The Priests, Levites – their lifestyle and their job description.

4. Sacred Time – Sabbath, Pilgrimage Festivals, Day of Atonement

The weird verses and passages that are hard to understand will most likely go in one of those four bins or categories.

\*\*NOTE that all of these have a fulfillment in Christ and to some degree the church. That should not be a surprise since this series is ON THE WAY TO JESUS.

God gives Moses the pattern for the Tabernacle which is the place where He meets with His people. Through the Tabernacle and the sacrificial system, a shadow is cast forward to the one who will be the perfect, full, and final presence of God and the final sacrifice.

**At the center of Leviticus and the Sacrificial System is the Day of Atonement – Yom Kippur Lev 16**

It is easy to see the connection of this central day of OT sacrifice and the final sacrifice of Christ in the NT. There are similarities and differences between the ancient Day of Atonement ceremony and the fulfillment of atonement accomplished by Jesus the sinless high priest through his once-for all sacrifice of himself.

**In the Pentateuch we see that the Tabernacle is a symbol of the Messiah.** This theme is developed in Hebrews 9. The Tabernacle and its rituals showed what the Messiah would do for our salvation – give His life.

(Poynthress)

**The Tabernacle was also a symbol of God's Dwelling with Israel.**

A few weeks ago, we saw the promise of God's presence which is often expressed in this formula, "I will be your God, you will be my people, and I will dwell in your midst." In your midst was formalized through the Tabernacle, the Temple, and then through Christ, The Word made flesh.

The original audience of Leviticus lived in tents and so God dwelt among them in tents. But the Tabernacle was beautiful because of the symmetry of its dimensions and the artistry of its construction. God is showing that He is majestic and beautiful, but He is also near to His people. Poynthress p.11-14

OTWTJ – John 1 The Word became flesh and dwelt among us ('tabernacled'). Tabernacle to Temple to the Living Word to the indwelling Holy Spirit – God is always moving toward His people.

**But the Tabernacle and its rituals also speak of the Holy and transcendent nature of God.** There are parts in the inner section that are separated by coverings and curtains. ONLY the High Priest can enter the Holy of Holies, and then only once a year.

OTWTJ – God's holiness is so great that sins against Him deserve death, but the Triune God designs a way of salvation that costs us nothing but costs Him the blood of His Son.

**The Tabernacle and its rituals are also a Symbol of Heaven**

When Moses went up and received the pattern for the Tabernacle, it came down from heaven. Moses was to make everything according to the pattern shown to him on the mountain" – Heb 8:5

The pattern, the colors, and the configuration of the Tabernacle and later the Temple pointed to Word of God and the holiness of God.

When Solomon built the temple he recognized that the true dwelling of God is in heaven. The earthly temple was a place where God put his Name (1 Kings 8:29, but heaven is the true dwelling place of God – 1 Kings 8:30, 43

Solomon also knew that in the broadest sense, "The heavens, even the highest heavens cannot contain you." 1 Kings 8:27

If you keep these things in mind as you read this part of the OT, it will make more sense. It will still be odd and foreign to us, but at least you'll have a theological and literary skeleton on which to hang the content.

A good way to view the Covenant Law is to see it as a whole as God's Laws of Love.

The first series I remember ever hearing on the 10 Commandments was on the theme of "Ten Laws of Love."

Remember the Eagles Wings speech of Ex 19...

'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. <sup>5</sup> Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; <sup>6</sup> and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'

**God IS NOT JUST SAVING ISRAEL FROM SOMETHING; HE IS SAVING THEM FOR SOMETHING – to be His treasured possession.**

Also, we should note that in addition to a sense of moral purity, 'holy' has a meaning of being 'set apart'. Israel was set apart from the other nations through the good instruction that God gave them.

Through Moses God gave the regulations pertaining to holiness, not only to remind Israel of Yahweh's holiness, but to sensitize Israel to become a holy community. The Laws and sacrificial rituals advanced the awareness of God's holiness and called for Israel's appropriate response. "I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy" (11:45) (Willem Van Gemeren)

The word "holy" or "holiness" occurs 87 times in Leviticus. It's the over-arching theme for the whole book. You cannot make sense of the Bible without this framework. You cannot make sense of Leviticus without this framework

While the ceremonial and civic laws are no longer in effect, the church is also given a similar call.

**1 Peter 1:13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."**

**1 Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;**

**Eph 1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.**

The OT SYSTEM was designed to offer sacrifices to be a fragrant aroma before God.

Jesus came as THE SACRIFICE that is a pleasing aroma before God.

Jesus came and lived the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died. And HE WAS RAISED BY THE POWER OF God.

**There is no spiritual benefit to seeing Jesus as a substitute in a general sense. We need to see OUR need for a substitute, our NEED for a Savior; yours and mine.**

When the fragrant aroma of Christ covers our lives we know the smile of God and the spiritual power to walk in love as beloved children of God.

**Ps 119:97-99**

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97 O how I love Your law!  
It is my meditation all the day.  
98 Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies,  
For they are ever mine.  
99 I have more insight than all my teachers,  
For Your testimonies are my meditation.