

Why Christians don't...Introduction

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[0 : 00] If you would, open your Bibles to Exodus chapter 40. Yes, we're going to talk about Leviticus, but go to Exodus. Exodus chapter 40, we're going to look at verse 34 and 35, and then we're going to skip over to Leviticus chapter 1, verse 1.

I'm not sure that you've probably ever seen anybody preach from two books right there like that, right? It's okay. Here's the word of the Lord, beginning in verse 34.

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Leviticus chapter 1, verse 1. The Lord called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word.

And apart from you, apart from the power of your spirit, we will not understand, we will not grasp, we will not believe, we will not be changed. And so we pray, Father, that your spirit would work in the preaching and in the listening to the preaching.

[1 : 15] That you would give me not only the words to say, but you would give us the ability to fight against our sinful nature that does not like to hear the truth. And so we pray, Father, that you would help us hear the truth, to know the truth, to believe the truth, to love the truth.

And we pray, Father, that you would do us good in your word. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. So we're going to talk about the book of Leviticus, and this is what I would call an introductory sermon, which means I'm just going to kind of introduce the topic, talk about it a little bit.

And a couple of things that we need to kind of deal with from the beginning is just a few facts about the book of Leviticus. It's the third book of the books of Moses. Jesus believed, and you can see this in the Gospels, that Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament.

And so, therefore, I believe that Moses wrote the first five books. The first five books, that's Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Can you say that with me? Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

It's also called the Torah. It's also called the Pentateuch. So anytime anybody uses either of those words, they're talking about these first five books of the Old Testament.

[2 : 36] Now, Leviticus was written entirely at Mount Sinai. As a matter of fact, what you have in the book of Exodus is that the setting is Egypt, then Moses goes to Midian, then Moses goes back to Egypt, then they walk all the way to Sinai.

And in chapter 19, they hit Mount Sinai, and they stay at Mount Sinai for the rest of Exodus, all of Leviticus, and the first ten chapters of Numbers.

And they don't leave Sinai until they get to chapter 10 of the book of Numbers. So the whole setting of this book is there at the mountain as God is giving his law, right?

Part of the law has been given with the Ten Commandments in chapter 20 of Exodus. But then he gave them instructions concerning the tabernacle. They took the offerings for the tabernacle. They built the tabernacle.

And that's where the book of Exodus ends. And that's where we come to the book of Leviticus. Now, it's 27 chapters. It's only 27 chapters.

[3 : 40] It's shorter than the book of Matthew by chapter count. But it's a hard read. It's a really hard read. It's sometimes boring as all get out.

Because if you don't understand what you're reading, and it's so foreign to us, that it would be difficult. Now, you could read it all in one sitting, okay? And I would recommend that you try it.

I would recommend that you try reading it in one sitting. It'll take you about an hour to read all the way through it, okay? So you got an hour to burn this week, today, maybe. Just read through the whole thing. Be good for you, you know?

You won't understand most of it, but that's okay. You just get in that big picture is a good thing to do. You could read it chapter by chapter, right? So you could start tomorrow, and you could read one chapter a day for 27 days.

I do not recommend that you do that. The reason I don't recommend that you do that is because so much is so interconnected, it's so strange and weird, that I think that by day 27, you'll be going like, what is this about again?

[4 : 48] I just think you'll lose track of it. Now, you may be a lot smarter than me, and you could handle it, and you go for it, you know? Like, you go for it, okay? But I'm not going to do that.

So let me suggest a third way that you could read it, and that is to read it in chunks, okay? And this is how, actually, I would outline the book of Leviticus. It looks like this.

You got chapters one through seven. There we go. Can you see that? You can mostly see that, huh? Maybe I should have done a black screen. Anyway, chapters one through seven, these are God's sacrifices.

Chapters eight through 10, God's priests. Chapters 11 through 15, God's holiness. Chapter 16, God's atonement. You say, that's just one chapter.

That's right, because that's what that chapter's about, and everything else around it goes in different directions. Then chapters 17 through 27 is God's expectations for his people and his priests.

[5 : 46] As a part of those people. Those five chunks, those are kind of how I'm going to outline the sermons that I'll be preaching through this, but this will help you. If you could sit down and read all of the sacrifices in one sitting, then you could kind of think about that for a little bit.

And then you could read all about the priest in one sitting, and you could think about that. And as we go through this series, it's not going to take us about nine weeks or so to do this. We're not going to obviously hit everything, but this is a way that I would recommend.

And if you don't have time to get this off the screen, if you ask me, I'll send this out to everybody so they can have it. So as we deal then with the book of Leviticus, we really need to answer two questions, right?

We need to answer two questions. We need to ask ourselves, why should we study this? And what's the big idea? So let me give you three reasons why we should study the book of Leviticus.

The first reason is a cultural reason. And one of the best examples of this cultural reason came in 2018 with the TV show called West Wing.

[6 : 54] How many of you ever watched West Wing? Bunch of sinners watching TV. My goodness. Anyway, so in this particular episode, you had the president being played by Martin Sheen, who comes into a room full of radio hosts and things.

And there was this one woman who was a Christian radio broadcaster who on her show had made the statement from Leviticus chapter 18, verse 22, I think it is, about homosexuality being an abomination before the Lord.

And so as the president comes into the room, he's trying to be kind from his vantage point and starts to just ignore her. But as he sees her, he just can't stand it.

He begins to barrage her with questions. Now, the reason for this is because he believes that she's being inconsistent. That if you're going to read Leviticus 18, 22, and say, thus says the Lord, and this is something you ought to believe, then what about other things in the law?

And so he goes on this tirade of question after question, barraging her, and says things to her like this, you know, based on Exodus 21, 7, I'm interested in selling my youngest daughter into slavery.

[8 : 07] What would be a good price for her? Or, my chief of staff insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35, 2, clearly, it clearly says that he should be put to death.

Am I morally obligated to stone him myself, or can I just call the police? Because the culture around us demands that we answer why we would hold to a Leviticus 18, 22, but not some other part of the law.

And really, that's a good question. It's a great question, as a matter of fact, because how we understand and use the law of God is a very important thing.

There's so many ways we could go that could be wrong, so we've really got to understand how is it that a Leviticus 18, 22 is applicable to us today, yet we're not sacrificing animals.

How is that the case? And I think that what we need to do is study the book of Leviticus so that we can understand why we don't sacrifice animals, but we also would say Leviticus 18, 22 is right.

[9 : 16] How can we withstand that? Now, here's what I'm not saying. I am not saying that we owe the culture any explanation.

Hear me. We do not owe the culture a single answer about this. Why is that? According to John chapter 16, Jesus tells us that the world hates him.

And it also hates anybody who follows him. And no explanation that we could give that we think is satisfying is ever going to change a single hatred and hateful heart out there.

The only thing that will change that heart is the power of the Holy Spirit by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we're not coming at this so that we can go around giving an answer to people who ask us because they're just trying to pin us in some sort of dilemma.

But we need to know the answer of this for ourselves so that we understand how we can use the law of God appropriately. A second reason is a biblical reason.

[10 : 29] And the biblical reason is basically this. Leviticus is quoted 70 times by the New Testament. The book of Leviticus, just get that in your head, it's quoted 70 times in the New Testament.

19 of those are in the book of Hebrews alone. Right? And we could go through all of those different passages and say, well look, this is quoted here and this is quoted there and some of those things will come out as we go through this series.

But I just want to give you one passage that's quoted in the New Testament that I think is a really fascinating passage. It's Leviticus 19, verse 18.

You shall not take vengeance or bear grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall, what? Love your neighbor as yourself.

I am the Lord. Well, I agree. We need consistency. And if you're going to say that we ought to love our neighbor as ourself, Leviticus 19, 18, then perhaps there's truth in Leviticus 18, 22 that we need to hold on to as well.

[11 : 41] And here's the fascinating thing. This passage, to love your neighbor as yourself, is quoted by Jesus telling us that it's the second greatest commandment in all of Scripture.

To love your neighbor as yourself. What Jesus doesn't do is say, listen, the second greatest commandment comes out of a book that you just need to throw away but keep this one thing.

He doesn't do that. The writers of the New Testament, Paul the Apostle quotes from it in Romans chapter 12, Romans chapter 13, Galatians 5.

James, the brother of Jesus, quotes it in his letter calling it the royal law. And none of these writers tell us, listen, everything else about this ignore.

This is from an obsolete book that you ought not to read. No, no. They just quote it as though it's applicable to you. I think that's very telling.

[12 : 37] If the New Testament authors believe that this is good for us, then we ought to study the book of Leviticus. And let me give you a third and final reason.

It's a theological reason. There's a lot of theology in the book of Leviticus related to the book of Leviticus, but the one thing I'm going to talk about for just a moment is the doctrine of salvation.

The book of Leviticus has a ton to say about being saved. I know you might find that surprising, but here's the thing.

When we begin to study the book of Leviticus, what it helps us to understand is the answer to the question, and this is a great question. Job asks this in the book by his name.

Martin Luther asked this question. It's a great question. How can sinful people ever relate to a holy God?

[13 : 40] How can sinful people ever relate to a holy God? Because as we study Leviticus, it's going to help us see the holiness of God.

It's going to put it front and center. It's going to be uncomfortable as we look at the holiness of God. But it's also going to help us see our own sinful inability to come to God.

It's going to help us see not only that he's holy, but that we are so unholy that it's ridiculous. It's going to help us see what kind of relationship can we have with such a holy God.

And one of the things that I just want to distance myself from, that there is a way to talk about having a relationship with God that's good and right. But there's a way about talking about having a relationship with God in the modern church that I want to distance myself from.

It's almost as though there are some pastors that want to portray God, want to portray Jesus, as needing a relationship with us in the sense that he's some sort of, you know, dating site reject that's begging for you to come to him and just give him another little look at your little profile.

[14 : 52] But the truth of the matter is is that our God is a holy God who is not to be trifled with and we will have a relationship with him one way or the other. It will either be a relationship in which he saves us or it will be a relationship in which he pours out his wrath upon us.

So we all have a relationship with him and what I don't want us to get into is this sort of idea that all that we need to understand about God is that he's just such a God of love and he's so gracious and he's so loving and all this love, love, love because here's the thing the scriptures never tell us anything like it does about God's holiness with his love.

You think about it. Where in scripture does it say love, love, love? Where in scripture does it say that God is gracious, gracious, gracious?

Where in scripture does it give this tri-part thing that is the it's like being good, better, and best. It's this most holy, right? Because that's the word that's used is holy, holy, holy.

You see, I am convinced that we cannot understand the doctrine of salvation if we do not understand the holiness of God. And so we need to study the book of Leviticus because it helps us to answer these questions.

[16 : 09] Now with that in mind then I want to turn to my second question today and just give kind of what's the big picture in the book of Leviticus. What's the big idea? What's this thing all about?

And I want to capture this in two truths and these two truths will make up pretty much everything that we're going to end up looking at in the book of Leviticus. And the first is this.

This first truth is this. Sinners cannot approach God. Now let's go back to Exodus chapter 40 verse 34 and 35.

And what we read there let's just read it again. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Now just pause there for a second. The tent of meeting the tabernacle it's been commanded by God to be built. He gave the list of supplies that were needed to build it.

[17 : 31] They built this thing it's done. And right here in chapter 40 God comes down and fills the tabernacle with his presence.

Now Moses is a pretty special guy but look what happens in verse 35. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting.

Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting. Why? Because the cloud of the splendor and the radiance and the glory of God settled on it.

God in his glory God in his radiance God in his righteous and justice and his holiness settled upon the tabernacle settled upon this tent and Moses was not able to enter into the tent.

Do you see the problem of this passage? Here's Moses the one who met God at the burning bush and took off his shoes because he was on holy ground.

[18 : 46] It's Moses whose staff was used by God to call the plagues and the judgments down upon Egypt. It's Moses who led God's people to the mount to receive the law of God.

It was Moses to whom God revealed his backside and spoke to him as one man speaks to another. It's Moses who entered the cloud of glory on the mountain receiving the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments written by the hand of God himself.

It's Moses who received the instructions of the tabernacle. It's Moses who received the instructions of the ark of the altar of the menorah of the table of the showbread of the bronze laver of the bronze altar.

Moses who had a commission from God, Moses who received power from God, Moses who received instructions from God, God was planning to be with his people and yet he could not enter into the tabernacle.

Once it's all done and you get to the end of the book of Exodus, if that's where the story stops, it's bleak, it's terrible, and we have no hope because even the one that God chose, even the mediator that God chose could not go into the tabernacle with God, let alone any of the people.

[20 : 03] Sinners cannot approach God because once God showed up, that was it. Now, why?

Why couldn't Moses go into the tabernacle because he's the offspring of Adam.

You see, it was Adam that rebelled against God and ate from the fruit that God commanded him not to eat, and so God expelled Adam.

And if you'll think about it, the Garden of Eden is much like a temple. Much like a tabernacle. It's the place where God would show up and meet with his people.

And there was this holy of holies there in the garden as the two trees in the midst of the garden. And it was there that Adam rebelled.

[21 : 10] And God removed him. As a matter of fact, what God did in removing Adam, you'll remember, is he placed cherubim and a flaming sword there at the entrance to the garden of Eden.

Now, the word cherubim, it's just one of the words that's used to describe angels. It's a particular kind of angel. And when it ends with the I am cherubim, it's plural.

Right? So there's a couple of two or three angels or so here at this entrance into the garden of Eden and a flaming sword. It was guarding the way into the garden to the tree of life because even though Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and they're still in the garden God says unless they reach out their hand and eat from the tree of life also.

So God didn't want him to eat from the tree of life now. He could have before but he didn't. He ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and so he rebelled against God and so God kicks him out sets a flaming sword there so if he ever ever ever tried to go back in he would be cut down in judgment.

And so the cherubim they are the! they cherubim all over it.

[22 : 44] I mean this is a problem if you're reading through the Bible and you stop at the end of the book of Exodus. God has gone through all of these troubles made all these promises all of these covenants about these people and yet Moses cannot come there because he's a sinner.

This is the lesson that Israel needed to learn. Much of what we see happening in these books are real things that happened but they were also object lessons like to little children to teach them who God was and in this moment God's not letting Moses come to him because he has a lesson to teach them and that lesson is the lesson that we still need to learn today and that is that you and I we cannot approach God either as sinners we cannot approach God either when Adam couldn't? Do you think you could get into the tabernacle when Moses couldn't?

None of us in ourselves have anything worthy to open the way to God. None of us have anything worthy to open the way to God. We can't approach him. We can't come to him. We're wicked sinners that have nothing but just wrath hanging over our heads. And let me tell you, this ought to color how you view the world. The application of this is this is a truth, and it's a truth that's uncomfortable, and it's a truth that we don't like to hear, but it's a truth that's right from God's Word, and we need everything. For example, we all know as Baptists, we have great Baptist bones here.

We know that the Baptist verse in the Baptist Bible is Ephesians 2, 8, and 9, that by grace you are saved through faith, and this not of yourself is not a work so that anyone would boast, but it's the gift of God. We know as Baptists nobody can earn their way in salvation. Nobody can merit their way in salvation, and as Baptists, great job, but do you understand why? It's because we're sinners and we cannot approach God. He is so holy that we cannot even come to him. That's why we can't work our way. That's why we can't earn our way. And so understanding that there's nothing about us that would open the way to God that sinners cannot approach God ought to color how we understand the doctrine of salvation, but it also ought to, you know, color something like politics.

None of them can be trusted. They're a bunch of sinners. And the moment that we believe that one of them can be trusted because he seems to say the things that we say is the moment that we have to remember this person's a sinner in need of a Savior.

[26 : 17] It ought to color the way you think about parenting. Votie Bauckham says that children are nothing but vipers and diapers.

But, you know, we get this romantic idea when we're holding that little bundle that can't do anything that, you know, they're going to grow up and they're going to love to do what dad and mom tell them. And you laugh because you've been there. You're going like, oh, yeah, yeah, that's a dream.

But here's the thing. If you don't see your children as sinners, that they're sinners who cannot approach a holy God, if you cannot see them that way, then what good is the gospel?

Parents who do not see their children as sinners are parents who will not bring the gospel to bear upon their children's lives. But it's not just your children who are sinners in the parenting relationship.

So are you. Think about marriage. It ought to color how you see your marriage.

[27 : 41] Newsflash. You married a sinner. And the moment that you forget that is the moment that you expect things from a sinner that a sinner can't give you.

There's this concept in our world. Concept in Texas. I hear it all the time. Well, you know, he's a good man.

He's got a good heart. She's a good woman. She's got a good heart. You know what I'm talking about?

I hear it all the time. I understand culturally most of the time what we mean is that we just like the person.

And that's okay. But just as you say this person's got a good heart, just remember, no they don't. There's none good.

[28 : 57] Listen to Romans chapter 3. Romans chapter 3 verse 10 and following it says, As it is written, none is righteous, no, not one. No one understands.

No one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good, not even one.

In the book of Leviticus, we have this image of the leper. Now, leprosy is a disease and you can go look it up in the books, but in the Old Testament, I think that's a part of leprosy, but I also think that they classified a lot of things as leprosy that would not be technically leprosy.

And the reason is because it's visible mar. And as a visible mar, if you have this visible mar, you're unclean and you cannot come before God.

And we'll talk about what it means to be unclean down the line. But anything you touch also becomes unclean.

[30 : 07] So if a person with leprosy and everybody knows it, walks up and they shake somebody's hand, you're now unclean because you just touched somebody with leprosy.

Now, it's not because there's anything special about this, but God was using it as an object lesson. He was using it as an illustration to help God's people understand sin.

that we all have sin and we taint everything we touch.

Your marriage is tainted because of you. Your politics, your friends, your job, everything you touch is tainted because of you. We are impure and we make everything we touch impure.

Now, this is not the end of the story and I am going to have to wrap it up a little bit quickly so you're going to have to listen fast, but I think we can do it.

[31 : 11] Because that truth right there is enough to just make us sort of walk home and just say, okay, I'm just done, that's it. Nobody can approach God. Here's the second truth, okay? First truth, sinners cannot approach God.

Second truth, but God can approach sinners. That's a glorious truth. Leviticus 1.1 says this, And the Lord called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, Here's Moses not able to enter.

Here's Moses the sinner not able to come. Here's Moses who can't go because of the presence of God because he's a glorious holy God. And yet God calls Moses to come.

Because God speaks to sinners. He spoke to Moses. He spoke to him things that were true and good. He spoke to him about things about how sinners can now approach him.

That's what the sacrifices are all about. Right? How can you now approach me? And this is good news for us. And had he settled there on the tabernacle and then never said a word, we would be without hope.

[32 : 22] But he spoke. He spoke and he revealed. He spoke and he and what he spoke about was instructions about sacrifices, priests, and holiness. He told them that they needed to have these sacrifices offered by a priest that would then give them holiness.

That's what he spoke to them about. God called and spoke and gave them these instructions. And why does, why is it that we have to follow these instructions?

Why is it that we have to let God be the one to approach us? Because I just want you to think about it this way. It's like trying to approach the sun. If you get too close to the sun, it's going to destroy you, right?

Is it because the sun is mean? He says, oh, I don't like you, get away, boom, boom, boom. No, it's not because of that at all. It's because the sun is dangerous for humans.

And so too is God. We cannot just simply approach him willy-nilly on our own, but we can come when he calls us to come.

[33 : 33] And when he calls us to come, he tells us how we can approach him. And the way that we approach him is that we approach him by sacrifice, priests, and holiness. What the book of Leviticus is about is what we approach God with.

the only way that we can come into his presence is by the blood of the sacrifice offered by a priest who then gives us the holiness of those sacrifices. And God continues to call us in the same way.

You see, we study Leviticus because it tells us about these sacrifices, that the blood of these sacrifices opens up a way for us to come to God, and so too does the Son of God, who became the ultimate fulfillment as the Lamb of God, his blood opens the way to come to God.

Leviticus tells us about priests who are the go-between between us and God, and we can't just sacrifice our own animals at our own whim, but instead we must have a priest who gives us the sacrifice and goes between us and God, and so the Son of God is the great high priest who has already been the mediator between us and the Father.

Leviticus tells us about a holiness that God demands of his people, and so too, in the Son of God, who has come by his own blood, covers us with his own holiness.

[34 : 49] Do you see what I'm saying? This is such a glorious picture that even though we cannot come to him, he came to us, and what he did, he took on flesh, he lived a perfect life, and he died in our place, and so this is what this means.

there's two things. Number one, it ought to affect every relationship that we have. If you're a Christian, then every relationship you have, not only do you need to understand that relationship under the idea that I'm with a sinner here, whether it's your spouse, your children, your boss, your friends, whoever it is, they're sinners, but the truth that God can approach us and God calls us to come by blood, priests, and holiness ought to also impact how I view my wife in my marriage, knowing that not only is she a sinner, and I should expect her to do wrong things, she can be forgiven, she can be empowered, she can be right with God, and so can I.

But not only then does it affect all of those relationships, but quite frankly, it's about the most important relationship, and that is with the Lord Jesus Christ, with God the Father, with the triune God, and there's so many people that play church, so many people that play at the idea of being spiritual and religious, when the truth of the matter is, unless you repent and believe in the gospel, people, then you still suffer under the wrath of God.

And so today I call you to come, I call you to turn away from being the boss of your own life, to turn away from being the person who's calling the shots in your own life, to turn away from your own self-righteousness, your own law, recognizing that you're a sinner, that God shouldn't take you, but then at the same time knowing that he calls you and says, come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest, take my yoke upon you, for my burden is easy and my load is light.

He says, whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And so I say to you, if you have never trusted Christ, then today throw yourself upon his mercy because he's calling, he has called, he continues to call.

[37 : 30] Let's pray together. Thank you.