

Elementary

*For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy.
(Leviticus 11:44 ESV)*

*I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.
(Leviticus 26:12 ESV)*

What Does The Law Teach Us About Jesus?

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Leviticus

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Introduction:

Good morning everyone! If you have your Bible with you, I would love for you to open it now to the Book of Leviticus. This morning we are trying to answer the question: “What does the Law teach us about Jesus?”

Now, according to Jesus, we are always supposed to be asking that question when we read the Old Testament. He said to the people of his day:

“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me” (John 5:39 ESV)

So people who are interested in eternal life should be reading the Old Testament looking for Jesus – which is exactly what we’re going to be doing today. There may be no more important task in the contemporary church than helping people understand how the Old Testament relates to Jesus – and specifically how the LAW relates to Jesus. We get how the prophets relate to Jesus – when Isaiah says:

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. (Isaiah 53:4 ESV)

Well we immediately understand that a suffering servant will have to come and fulfil that prophecy. Someone will have to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows before God. Simple.

But what about the law? How does the law point to Jesus? Or to ask that another way, how does Jesus fulfil the law? We know that he does – because he says that he does. In the Sermon on the Mount he says:

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill **them**.” (Matthew 5:17 ESV)

So what does it mean for Jesus to “fulfil” the law? Fulfilling the prophets we get, but in what sense does Jesus fulfil the law? D.A. Carson is really helpful here, he says:

“Jesus does not conceive of his life and ministry in terms of opposition to the Old Testament, but in terms of **bringing to fruition that toward which it points**, the law and the prophets, far from being abolished, find their valid continuity in terms of their outworking in Jesus. The detailed prescriptions of the Old Testament may well be superseded, because whatever is prophetic must be in some sense provisional. But whatever is prophetic likewise discovers its legitimate continuity in the happy arrival of that toward which it has pointed.”¹

So the law was not contradicted by Jesus, rather the law POINTED to Jesus and finds its valid continuity in Jesus. And so today in this last message in the Elementary series we are asking the question: what aspects of Leviticus most obviously point to Jesus, and most obviously find their valid continuity in the person and work of Jesus, and our text for this conversation is the Book of Leviticus as a whole.

What Aspects Of Leviticus Most Obviously Point To Jesus?

We'll start with an easy one. Turn in your Bibles to Leviticus chapter 1 verses 3-4. The text says:

“If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, **that he may be accepted before the LORD**.⁴ He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt

¹ D.A. Carson, *The Sermon On The Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5-7* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), 37.

offering, and it shall be accepted for him **to make atonement for him**. (Leviticus 1:3–4 ESV)

In the first 7 chapters of Leviticus we have a variety of sacrifices all of which have to do with the problem of sin. The burnt offering was the principle offering, but then there was also the sin offering which was for sins of weakness or frailty and the guilt offering for breaches of faith and improper conduct. All of these sacrifices intended to address the contamination and catastrophe of sin. They communicated quite clearly that sin STUCK TO US and sin SEPARATED US from a holy God – and so some kind of very powerful cleansing and covering agent was required.

But the fact that you had to keep coming back – year after year and sin after sin – left the unmistakable impression that maybe the blood of bulls and goats wasn't getting it done. Something MORE POWERFUL and MORE EFFECTIVE was required.

Well, of course, very early on in the New Testament that awareness and that anticipation lands squarely on the person and work of Jesus. When Jesus came into the world, John the Baptist points at him and says:

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29 ESV)

So that's the first thing I want you to see: All those sacrifices for sin were ultimately pointing forward to the person and work of Christ.

1. The sacrifices for sin

The Apostle Paul in Romans 8 says:

“For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh **to be a sin offering**. And so he condemned sin in the flesh,⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (Romans 8:3–4 NIV11)

Did you hear that? Jesus did what the LAW was POWERLESS TO DO – not because the law was bad – but because we were bad. The law was powerless because it was weakened by the flesh.

You see, in the Bible, the law is often pictured as a sort of fence. It marks off the good place – the place of happiness, health and blessing. But it turns out that the fence isn't high enough to contain willful sinners like you and me. We jump over the fence, we dig under the fence – for crying out loud – we chew through the fence – so determined are we to rebel against the word and will of the Lord.

So Jesus comes to do what the law was powerless to do. He wants us to live in the place of blessing so he has to remove the stain and corruption and madness of sin. He has to pay for it and has to break its power entirely so that we can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and be taught by him how to live and thrive and flourish at the centre of God's perfect will.

So Jesus did that. He:

“put away sin **by the sacrifice of himself**.” (Hebrews 9:26 ESV)

Thanks be to God!

So Jesus is the sacrifice for sin and he is also the High Priest who offers the sacrifice for sin. That's the second thing I want you to see.

2. The High Priest

Flip forward in your Bibles now to Leviticus chapter 8. There are 7 chapters dealing with the various sacrifices and then in chapter 8 we have the process for consecrating and ordaining the High Priest. Let's read verses 5-12.

And Moses said to the congregation, “This is the thing that the LORD has commanded to be done.”⁶ And Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water.⁷ And he put the coat on him and tied the sash around his waist

and clothed him with the robe and put the ephod on him and tied the skillfully woven band of the ephod around him, binding it to him with the band.⁸ And he placed the breastpiece on him, and in the breastpiece he put the Urim and the Thummim.⁹ And he set the turban on his head, and on the turban, in front, he set the golden plate, the holy crown, as the LORD commanded Moses.

¹⁰ Then Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them.¹¹ And he sprinkled some of it on the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all its utensils and the basin and its stand, to consecrate them.¹² And he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him to consecrate him. (Leviticus 8:5–12 ESV)

So Aaron and his sons now constitute the High Priestly family – and they anticipate, in a special way the life and ministry of Jesus. They were to be especially consecrated – especially set apart. There were special rules about what they could eat, what they should wear – even who they could marry. The High Priest was supposed to ILLUSTRATE a life of holiness. He was supposed to pray – he was an intercessor. He talked to God on behalf of people and to people on behalf of God. He was to take the lead in making and maintaining peace between the Lord and his covenant people.

But of course, in the Old Testament the High Priest was often corrupt – he was a sinner and his sin, because of his position, affected the people as a whole. When the High Priest is out of line with God then everything falls apart. Prayers are not heard, blessings are not received. That was a very common problem in the Old Testament and it created a DEEP LONGING for the perfect High Priest who was to come.

You can hear that longing realized in the New Testament Book of Hebrews. Hebrews 4:14 says:

Since then we have **a great high priest** who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:14–16 ESV)

Are you hearing that?

Since we finally have what we've been waiting for - a GREAT HIGH PRIEST – a High Priest who doesn't sin – who never sinned – we can now enjoy uninterrupted fellowship with our Creator! We can PRAY in Jesus' Name and know that our prayers will be heard and received. We can go to Jesus and receive all the blessings and the promises of God – for all the promises of God are YES and AMEN in him! So we can confidence in our approach and we can find mercy and grace in time of need now – thanks be to God!

Jesus is our great high priest.

The third thing I want you to see in the Book of Leviticus that obviously points to Jesus is the tabernacle itself.

3. The Tabernacle

Turn in your Bibles to Leviticus 24 verses 1-9. The Book of Leviticus is really an appendix to the Book of Exodus. The Book of Exodus has as its climax the building and dedication of the tabernacle. Listen to the last paragraph in the Book of Exodus:

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.³⁵ 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.³⁶ Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out.³⁷ But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up.³⁸ For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys. (Exodus 40:34–38 ESV)

So the tabernacle was the CENTRE of Israelite life and experience. You SAW IT wherever you happened to be in the camp. At night it GLOWED with the fire of God. During the day it was covered in the cloud of God. It was a tangible, numinous, powerful, glorious presence. It was the centre – it was the focus of everything. And everything that is talked about in Leviticus happened in the tabernacle. That was where the sacrifices were made, that was where the priests ministered, that was where the Word of God was given.

Everything happened in the tabernacle!

Alright, now hopefully you've found Leviticus 24. Listen to these first 9 verses:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil from beaten olives for the lamp, **that a light may be kept burning regularly.** ³Outside the veil of the testimony, in the tent of meeting, Aaron shall arrange it from evening to morning before the LORD regularly. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. ⁴He shall arrange the lamps on the lampstand of pure gold before the LORD regularly.

⁵“You shall take fine flour and **bake twelve loaves from it;** two tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf. ⁶And you shall set them in two piles, six in a pile, on the table of pure gold before the LORD. ⁷And you shall put pure frankincense on each pile, that it may go with the bread as a memorial portion as a food offering to the LORD. ⁸Every Sabbath day Aaron shall arrange it before the LORD regularly; it is from the people of Israel as a covenant forever. ⁹And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, since it is for him a most holy portion out of the LORD'S food offerings, a perpetual due.” (Leviticus 24:1–9 ESV)

The two main symbols there are the LIGHT and the BREAD which stands for life.

So these two symbols – placed very near to the Holy of Holies are saying together: In a dark world – this is where you come for LIGHT! In a hard world – a fallen world – a world languishing under the curse – this is where you come for BREAD, for provision, for nourishment- for LIFE.

And of course, if you are a Bible reader you know that the New Testament lands both of these symbols – HARD – on the person and work of Jesus Christ. In John 6 Jesus says:

“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. (John 6:35 ESV)

Two chapters later John records Jesus saying:

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12 ESV)

Jesus knew what he was doing by claiming these Old Testament symbols – he was saying: “I am the tabernacle. I am the temple.”

He was not shy. He was not obscure. He was speaking as plainly and directly as possible. In fact, earlier in John’s Gospel Jesus stood in the temple complex and said:

¹⁹ “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” ²⁰ The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” ²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²² When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. (John 2:19–22 ESV)

Are you hearing that? They BELIEVED THE SCRIPTURE!!! What Scripture? This Scripture and every other Scripture that taught about the LIGHT and the LIFE OF GOD. They began to understand how everything written in the law, the prophet and the Psalms was ultimately about Jesus! It was ALL ABOUT HIM! He was the sacrifice for sin, he was the High Priest, he was the Tabernacle and the Temple – and he was the Sabbath rest of God!

That’s the fourth thing I want you to see.

4. The Sabbath

Flip forward in Leviticus to chapter 25. We’ll read verses 1-4.

The LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, ² “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you, the land shall keep a Sabbath to the LORD. ³ For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its fruits, ⁴ but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the LORD. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. (Leviticus 25:1–4 ESV)

There were a variety of Sabbath cycles in the law – there was the weekly Sabbath and here we are reading about the YEARLY Sabbath. Every 7 years there was supposed to be a special SOLEMN REST. The land would have rest and the people would have rest.

Why?

Because life is about more than work.

The Sabbath was about pursuing the things that make for LIFE. REAL LIFE. LIFE AS IT WAS MEANT TO BE.

The religious leaders in Jesus' day had completely forgotten that. They were acting as though the Sabbath was a burden to be born or a marathon to be completed. It was all about rules and limitations for them – and Jesus rebuked them sharply for that. In Mark 3:1-6 it says:

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. ² And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. ³ And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." ⁴ And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. ⁵ And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. ⁶ The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him. (Mark 3:1–6 ESV)

Isn't that amazing?

It was ultimately a disagreement over the SABBATH that got Jesus killed. The Pharisees thought of it as A WORK THAT HAD TO BE DONE – they saw it as a TRIAL! A labour! Jesus saw it as a rest! He saw it as a gift. He saw it as a time to pursue the things that make for LIFE!

Can you heal on the Sabbath?

Of course you can! That's literally what the Sabbath is for!!! Every Sabbath is about healing! It is about resting your body and healing your soul! When you come to church – when you cease from your labours – and you come and look to God – what are you looking for? You are looking for the things that make for life! You are looking for meaning! Value! Significance! Healing! Purpose! Peace!

In short, you are looking for Jesus.

He is our Sabbath rest.

He is our Sabbath rest because he did all the work. He did for us what we could never do for ourselves – so faith is about CEASING from our efforts to make peace with God and RESTING in what Jesus HAS DONE.

The Apostle Paul in Romans 4 says:

And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness (Romans 4:5 ESV)

Are hearing that? That’s Old Testament SABBATH language! Paul is saying that if you CEASE from your work and SEEK your rest in the finished work of Christ – then you will be SAVED! Your faith – YOUR RESTING IN CHRIST – will be your righteousness – thanks be to God!

All the Apostles talked this way – because all the Apostles spent time with Jesus! The Apostle to the Hebrews said:

“For we who have believed enter that rest” (Hebrews 4:3 ESV)

Jesus is the REST of God!

Now that doesn’t mean that Christians are lazy or that the Christian life doesn’t involve effort – in fact later in Hebrews 4 the Apostle says:

Let us therefore **strive to enter that rest**, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:11 ESV)

You actually have to work pretty hard to find rest in Jesus. You have to prioritize it. You have to push through a variety of distractions. You have to let go of a bunch of other competing priorities. You have to STRIVE to find rest in Jesus.

But if you do then you will find there ALL THE THINGS that make for life. Real life. Human life. Life as it was created and intended to be. All of that is there waiting for you in the person and work of Christ.

Well, we could go on and on and on and on. Everything in the Book of Leviticus points to Jesus! But I think we have time for one more.

If you still have your Bibles open to Leviticus 25 just drop your eyes down now to verse 8 where we will see how the Year of Jubilee ultimately points to Jesus.

5. The Year Of Jubilee

We'll just very quickly read verses 8-10:

“You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you forty-nine years.⁹ Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land.¹⁰ And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan.” (Leviticus 25:8–10 ESV)

I mentioned last week that the Israelites were instructed by the law to think of themselves as RENTERS as opposed to OWNERS. God owned the land and he assigned it to various individuals, families and tribes. So the people couldn't SELL THEIR land, because they didn't own their land, rather if they found themselves in financial need they could LEASE OUT the land based on the number of harvests before the next Year of Jubilee because on the Year of Jubilee – the whole game RESET! Debts were cancelled, slaves were freed and the land reverted to its original tenured holders.

The Year of Jubilee was thus a year about FREEDOM, LIBERTY and RENEWAL.

Can you imagine what a blessing this must have been?

Imagine that you were a subsistence farmer. You took a risk and borrowed money from a neighbour to buy a small boat that you would use to ferry your produce across the Sea of Galilee so that you could double your sales district as it were and sell your wheat or your oil in markets all across the region. However, in a freak storm, your boat sank and now you have a debt that you can't pay. So you sell your field and for the next 15 years you work as an indentured labourer to that neighbour from whom you received the loan. But on your 40th birthday it just happened also to be the Year of Jubilee!! So on the Day of Atonement the Trumpet was blown and every debt across the land was immediately ZEROED! You were a free man! And better than that – you got your land back! You could plant crops again, you could move back into your house, you could build up your old business – you could start again!

It was literally a new lease on life!

That was the Year of Jubilee – and it points forward, obviously and gloriously to Jesus.

The ultimate hope of the Christian is a new start; a new lease on life. The Apostle Peter talked about that at the end of his Second Epistle, he said:

But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3:13 ESV)

That is the ultimate hope of the Christian! That on the last day, when the Trumpet sounds, if we are in Christ then we will participate in the eternal Year of Jubilee! Our debts will be forgiven, our lives will be restored and we will be returned to the glory and the dignity we knew at first.

Jesus purchased that for you through his life, death and resurrection – and according to 2 Peter 3:13 – Jesus PROMISES THAT to all who cling to him in faith. Are you hearing that? You can have that. You can participate in the Great Cosmic Renewal that is coming. You don't have to be a slave forever. You don't have to be crushed by your debts. You can be free. You can be restored. You can come home.

The Spirit and the Bride say, come! Come unto Jesus and be saved. Thanks be to God. Let me pray for us.