

Bible-Reading Coach Podcast Transcript

Week 06: Leviticus 1-20, *The Law, the Priests, and the Feasts*

Welcome to week six of the Bible reading coach podcast. My name is Karl Vaters and I'm here to help you read through the entire Bible in 52 weeks. This week, we'll be moving to the Bible's third book, Leviticus, we'll be looking at Chapters 1 through 20. It's been entitled *The Law, the priests and the feasts*.

So here's the first morning, this is where the great falling away gets very serious. Most people who start reading the Bible with great passion, they might make it this far, but the next week or two is where they start dropping like flies. So let me give you a couple of ways to help you get through this, not just get through it, but actually enjoy it and learn a lot from it. First of all, here's a reminder, you can listen to this as well as reading it by using the free apps at any of these audio options. Biblestudytools.com, the YouVersion app, biblica.com, and faithcomesbyhearing.com. There are several others but I've used those on a regular basis. And all of those will be in the show notes. At this point is a time where it might be helpful for a lot of folks to be able to switch back and forth from audio to reading because some of these passages can be challenging.

So the question becomes, why is this so hard for the next few weeks? And how can we not just get through it, but actually learn from it and enjoy a lot of it, because there is great stuff in here. So let's take a look at the context. First of all, we are starting this week with the Book of Leviticus, Leviticus is named for the Levites. The Levites were one of the tribes of Israel, they were the tribe that was designated to be the priests. And because of that they had a couple of things that were very distinct about them. First of all, they didn't get any land, all the other ones had land, the Levites had the tabernacle later on the permanent temple. So they didn't have land of their own, which means God had to take care of them in different ways than the others who simply had land on which they could farm and on which they could grow crops on which they could raise their herds and so on. So they took care of the tabernacle, they would offer the sacrifices, they were given the assignment of interpreting God's rules, writing them down, preaching, enforcing God's laws. So all of the spiritual life of the nation was in the hands of the Levites. And this book, Leviticus is named after that tribe. So in this book, we almost abandoned storytelling entirely, not quite, but almost. And it becomes a listing of law after law after law, because that was what the Levites needed to know about and what they needed to teach.

So we have two big weeks of this of laws, followed by two weeks of numbers, which is the title of the next book, which would be a big hint about what's in there. And then two more weeks in Deuteronomy, where the story starts to pick up a little bit. And then we'll hit Joshua, where, Wow, it really gets exciting again. So we've got two to four weeks that are challenging, another two weeks that have a little more narrative flow, and then we get back into the structure of it. So hang in there, but do more than hang in there, don't let this discourage you. This is why I'm here. This is why I am your Bible reading coach, I will not just guide you through this, but I will give you things to look for that will keep it interesting, exciting and motivating, and applicable to your life as well.

There's really exciting, really important stuff, even in these things that can be challenging. And I'll help you see that. Again, this is why we're doing this series. Because if you

just read it by yourself, and you can't contextualize it, it just gets dry really fast. But we're going to help it become something other than that, as you read through it this time.

So let's take a look at our passage for today. Starting with Leviticus chapters one through seven. The first seven chapters, start with God speaking directly to Moses. And he gives Moses some very detailed instructions about how to do about how to offer their their offerings, including burnt offerings, grain offerings, fellowship offerings, sin offerings, and guilt offerings, and he tells them how the priests needs will be cared for. Again, why does he need to tell Moses specifically how to take care of the priests? Can't they take care of themselves? No, because they don't have land. So it's really important to God that his priests, that the people who are working on his behalf and who are holding up the spiritual strength of the nation have their physical needs met as well.

Now, the first question that most people ask when they start getting into these, especially when they start reading about offerings that we don't offer anymore, and laws, some of which we don't follow anymore. The question becomes, why don't we do this anymore? If we're Christians, and we believe the entire Bible is inspired, which we do, why don't we do this stuff anymore?

We've talked about this, I hinted at it a little bit before and we'll talk about it a lot as we go forward. But here's some of the here's some of the reasons why. First of all, there are three Types of Old Testament laws, moral laws, civil laws, and ceremonial laws. So let me walk you through the three of those. First of all, ceremonial laws. That's what we're going to be reading about in the next couple of weeks. We don't do ceremonial laws anymore. Because ceremonial laws were given, like sacrifices and offerings and cleansing rituals, they were given as a hint about what would ultimately happen when Jesus gave Himself a sacrifice on the cross, they had to offer a goat or a lamb until Jesus came along and was the ultimate sacrificial lamb for all of us.

So because of Jesus, we don't need to do the ceremonial laws anymore. And in the New Testament, when we get there, we'll see some very clear ways that the early disciples were told directly by God, don't worry about what you eat anymore. You can have lobster now. Okay? That's, that actual phrasing isn't in the New Testament but the idea is there very, very clearly. So we don't have to worry about ceremonial laws anymore because of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Secondly, there are civil laws. These were laws that were designed for that nation at that time, God didn't even demand that the other nations around them obey those laws, because, like, I live in America, so I'm subject to American laws. I used to live in Canada, but I don't anymore, I'm no longer subject to Canadian laws. Now, there's a whole lot of overlap between those laws. But I'm not subject to Canadian laws. While I'm living in America, I'm only subjected to American laws. That's the civil laws, okay. So the civil laws that are designed for Israelites living in that time, and in that place, and in that nation only applied in that time in that place in that nation, it didn't apply in other nations, and it doesn't apply to us today. So we don't worry about the ceremonial laws or the civil laws, which takes care of a whole lot of the Old Testament laws.

There was a third type of law though, that was the moral law. And the moral law is given to everyone at all times, all of the 10 commandments fall under the moral law, read them through, none of them are about ceremony. And none of them are about civil laws. They are

moral laws. There are laws about our sexuality, laws about not keeping slaves, as you go through, you can see them. Now there are a handful of places where we're not entirely clear is that moral, is that civil, is that ceremonial. But that's just a small number of the most of them are really, really obvious.

So don't get hung up on the one or two gray areas that we're not sure about. Take a look at and realize you can put them all pretty quickly in one of those three baskets, you'll have a few leftover that we can have conversation over. But most of those laws, like 90% of them or more, easily and quickly go into one of those three baskets. We don't have to worry about the ceremonial or civil, but we do follow the moral laws.

Now, one of the challenges and one of the reasons why it's hard for us as we're reading through first of all, is we don't know that. Secondly, since all the Old Testament laws were supposed to be obeyed by everybody who first read them by, right the original Hebrews at this time, they didn't see the need to divide them into three baskets. They're all mixed in together. So we'll see more about this as we go along. But for now, as you read the laws in the Old Testament, ask yourself, Which category do they fit in? Do they obviously fit in one category? The other? Is this, obviously a ceremonial law sacrifices and cleaning rituals and so on. Is it obviously a civil law, about the punishment for theft, and so on? Or is this obviously a moral law, about how to treat your neighbor kindly about how to worship God in a way that makes sense today as well, that doesn't require a tabernacle or sacrifice, for instance. And if it fits, obviously, in one of those baskets, then you'll understand why.

Now, the reason I'm telling you this isn't because this is not a way that is instant and perfect. But the one thing it does tell us is, especially for those who are cynics and skeptics of the Bible, "Well, you Christians, you just pick the laws you like and you toss the ones you don't". No, there is a reason behind this, there is a sorting mechanism. And even if you don't agree with it, which some people won't, that's fine, you at least now can see that there's a logic behind it. It's not random. We're not just picking the stuff we like and dropping the stuff we don't like. There is a reason behind it. There is a sorting mechanism that Christians use for this. And it's enforced in the New Testament, which we will see when we get there.

So that's chapters one through seven. And we will see those principles applying as we go through laws for the next several months together, okay, then we go in chapters eight through 10 of Leviticus and we see some information about Aaron, the first priest and his sons who are also going to be anointed to be priests. So they are anointed to serve in at the beginning of chapter nine. And then immediately after they're anointed to serve in chapters 10 verses 1 and 2, his sons immediately disobeyed God, and God kills them.

Now, when you read that, you're going to go whoa, that's pretty severe punishment for that. But here's the principle of Scripture. God is extremely harsh with his punishments immediately when he passes the law. It's, it's kind of like a teacher tells us that. Any teacher in any public school teachers who were listening to me know this, the rule of public school or private school, if you're teaching at all is this, you'll be mean at the beginning of the semester, so you can be nice at the end of the semester. That is you lay the laws down, you lay out strict punishments for them. And then you can ease off as the year goes on. God does the same thing with us. You'll see it later on in the book of Acts in the New Testament, when the church is first established, and Ananias and Sapphira lie about the gift that they gave, and they're struck and

killed. Why? Because immediately, God says, I'm taking this really seriously. And now you know, I'm taking it seriously.

So we see this extreme punishment, chapters 8 through 10, Aaron and his sons are anointed, his sons disobey God, and they are immediately killed by God. With that, we'll go to chapters 11 through 17, in which we're going to see a bunch of laws about purification and separation. These are the ceremonial laws that we talked about, for the most part, in these as we go through them, you may look at it and go, Well, why do I need to read six chapters, seven chapters about laws that I don't have to follow anymore.

As you read them look for how smart these laws are among an ancient people who didn't know anything about germs yet. And real quick before we look back at them, and go "They were so stupid, they didn't know about germs." No one knew about germs until the 1860s. We're barely 150 years into an understanding of germs folks, so they weren't stupid. The science simply hadn't advanced that far yet. But God knew about germs, because God created everything. And so he's got his people, he wants to keep them safe. And he gives them these rules and take a look at these rules for preparing food for this or cleaning your hands before you eat things like that and look at it and go, if you had a group of people who knew nothing about germs, but they followed those laws, you would stop the spread of disease in its tracks. It's really extraordinary how God gave them rules, before they understood the principles behind the rules. God knew this and protected his people. So note that even when you look at ceremonial laws.

Then we'll take a look, we'll finish up this week with chapters 18 to 20, where we'll look at some laws and some punishments. These three chapters mostly move from a ceremonial which we've been looking at before and end up in moral. So by the end of this week, you'll move from ceremonial laws to moralize the more universal of the laws. So when we get to the moral laws and 18 to 20. Note how universal these laws are. Also note, the universal sexual ethic that God lays out one of the questions again, that sometimes cynics and skeptics of the Bible and sometimes sincere people and sincere Christians ask is, why does God seem to be so concerned about sex? Let me give you a couple of reasons. First of all, because we are we are consumed by it. And secondly, because sexuality is a powerful, powerful thing is part of our identity. It's part of what drives us as part of what we are passionate about. And so God is passionate about us, and because it's so dangerous if we use it wrongly.

So not only did God know about germs before we did, he knew about STDs before we did. And he gave us a sexual ethic to protect us against them, and to prevent them as well. So as we close this little session together, even before you read the passage is coming up this week, you can already hear that there's a lot more of interest in this passage coming up than a list of obscure rules. So as you're really see what God is doing, see how he's protecting his people. See how he's making sure that they stand apart from their neighbors who sacrifice women and children to pagan gods and who got sick and had disease running through their camps constantly. How God even before we understand the full reasons behind it gives us rules for our own good to protect us. He did it then he still does it today. Enjoy your reading this week. We'll see you next week.

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