

Set Apart
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Leviticus 9:15-24; 10:1-3

Frontier House was a historical reality television series that aired on PBS in 2002. The series followed three family groups that agreed to live as homesteaders did in the state of Montana on the American frontier in 1883. Each family was expected to establish a homestead and complete the tasks necessary to prepare for the harsh Montana winter. At the end of the series, each family was judged by a panel of experts and historians on their likelihood of survival for each group. Frontier House was followed in 2004 by Colonial House, which recreated daily life in Plymouth Colony in 1628. In 2006, PBS aired Texas Ranch House, which recreated the life of a family and ranch hands on an 1867 Texas longhorn cattle ranch in Texas.

Learning about how people lived in the past is called social or cultural anthropology. **Question: Why do we go back and study how life was lived in the past? Given our modern conveniences, efficiencies, and technology, who cares about how they did it in the past? What good is learning that kind of information?**

One of the purposes of studying the book of Leviticus is to learn about the elaborate system God put in place so His people (the children of Israel) could have relationship with Him in all His holiness. He loved them so much and desired relationship with them, but He is so holy that His power would have destroyed them unless there was a way to cover (atone for) their sinful nature.

In 1 Peter 1:15–16 (NLT) the Apostle Peter wrote:

¹⁵ *But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy.* ¹⁶ *For the Scriptures say, “You must be holy because I am holy.”*

I can't be holy! Have you met me? There's nothing holy about my nature. God took care of that for you and me.

In cultural anthropology they not only study how people lived long ago, they compare it with how we live today. That's another reason to study Leviticus. To remind us that relationship with God and forgiveness of our sin has been made so much easier than in Old Testament times because of Jesus.

Big Idea: God's people are to live holy lives as a “set-apart” priesthood. We can only be holy in God's sight because of what Jesus did for us on the cross.

- Before we look at our text, let's get some context.
- In Leviticus chapter eight God told Moses to call all the people together to the entrance of the tent of meeting. He instructed Moses to conduct an

elaborate worship service to “consecrate” Moses’ brother Aaron and Aaron’s sons as the priests of God who would be in charge of the sacrifices and offerings at the tabernacle and temple.ⁱ

- To “consecrate” means set apart as holy for the service of God.ⁱⁱ
- This worship service included washing, dressing in priestly garments, and anointing with oil and with the blood of animals. It also included multiple burnt offerings.
- Aaron and his sons had to remain at the tent of meeting for seven days.
- On the eighth day Aaron and his sons were considered consecrated and they could now oversee the sacrifices for themselves and the people.

Leviticus 9:15–21 (NLT)

¹⁵ Next Aaron presented the offerings of the people. He slaughtered the people’s goat and presented it as an offering for their sin, just as he had first done with the offering for his own sin. ¹⁶ Then he presented the burnt offering and sacrificed it in the prescribed way. ¹⁷ He also presented the grain offering, burning a handful of the flour mixture on the altar, in addition to the regular burnt offering for the morning.

¹⁸ Then Aaron slaughtered the bull and the ram for the people’s peace offering. His sons brought him the blood, and he splattered it against all sides of the altar.

¹⁹ Then he took the fat of the bull and the ram—the fat of the broad tail and from around the internal organs—along with the kidneys and the long lobes of the livers. ²⁰ He placed these fat portions on top of the breasts of these animals and burned them on the altar. ²¹ Aaron then lifted up the breasts and right thighs as a special offering to the Lord, just as Moses had commanded.

- Aaron and his sons offered the four offerings we discussed last week:
 - A sin offering (V.15)
 - A burnt offering and grain offering (V.16-17)
 - A peace offering (V.19)
- Let’s look at each of these offerings. If you have a study Bible you might have notes about each. Or you might Google “offerings” and “Leviticus.”
- **What was the purpose of the sin offering?**
- **What was the purpose of the burnt offering? Grain offering?**
- **What about the fellowship or peace offering?**
- **How do these offerings paint a picture of Christ as our perfect offering?**
- Wiersbe: *“The order of the sacrifices is significant: We must first deal with our sins before we can dedicate ourselves totally to the Lord; then we can enjoy fellowship with Him.”ⁱⁱⁱ*
- **What keeps us from being honest about our need for confession?**

Leviticus 9:23–24 (NLT)

²³ Then Moses and Aaron went into the Tabernacle, and when they came back out, they blessed the people again, and the glory of the Lord appeared to the whole community. ²⁴ Fire blazed forth from the Lord’s presence and consumed

the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When the people saw this, they shouted with joy and fell face down on the ground.

- The glory of the Lord came down into the tabernacle. **Where does the glory of the Lord reside today? When does His Spirit arrive?**

The Life Application Study Bible:

“In 9:6 Moses said to the people, “This is the thing which the LORD commanded you to do, and the glory of the LORD will appear to you.” Moses, Aaron, and the people then got to work and followed God’s instructions. Soon after, the glory of the Lord appeared. Often we look for God’s glorious acts without concern for following his instructions. Do [we] serve God in the daily routines of life, or do [we] wait for him to do a mighty act? If [we] depend on his glorious acts, you may find yourself sidestepping your everyday duty to obey.”^{1v}

- Because of Jesus’ dying for all people as the perfect sacrifice for sin, we can enjoy His presence, peace, and grace in this life and eternal life forever. We can’t “earn” our way to salvation, but if we’re His follower, we will want to obey what He has commanded us in His word.
- In the next chapter we have a story of two of Aaron’s sons NOT following directions.

Leviticus 10:1–3 (NLT)

The Sin of Nadab and Abihu

Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu put coals of fire in their incense burners and sprinkled incense over them. In this way, they disobeyed the Lord by burning before him the wrong kind of fire, different than he had commanded. ² So fire blazed forth from the Lord’s presence and burned them up, and they died there before the Lord.

³ Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the Lord meant when he said, ‘I will display my holiness through those who come near me.

I will display my glory before all the people.’ ”

And Aaron was silent.

- On their very first day of service as priests, Aaron’s eldest sons deviated from God’s instructions and instead of God’s fire consuming the sacrifice He consumed them. He even commanded Aaron not to mourn their death.
- Talk about a high penalty for not following directions! There is much debate about this “unauthorized” or “strange” fire they offered.
- Was it offered in the wrong way? Wasn’t their dad the High Priest supposed to burn the incense? Was the problem their motives?
- Some theorize that these two young men were seeking to impress the people, that their motive was pride. We don’t know their hearts.

- What we do know is God had just given them specific instructions but they decided to do things their own way and paid a high price.
- Aren't you glad that because of Jesus we don't have to fear severe punishment if we make a mistake?
- If we're His follower, we're covered by His grace.
- At the same time, we need to remember that we cannot presume upon God's holiness. If we approach God with a self sufficient, arrogant attitude He will not accept our worship.
- **When people stray away from God's demands of holiness, what effect does it have on their lives and relationships – both with God and others? What are the blessings of living a holy life?**

So, What's the Takeaway?

- As much as I don't want to go back to living like they did on the frontier in the 1880s, I sure am glad we don't have to approach God the same way the Israelites did in Old Testament times.
- God's people are to live holy lives as a "set-apart" priesthood. He commanded: *"You must be holy because I am holy."*
- That's a problem for us flawed, sinful people! We're wired to be UN-holy.
- In Psalm 51, the classic passage on repentance for sin, David said:
Psalm 51:16–17 (NLT) ¹⁶ You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering. ¹⁷ The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.
- I don't have to wonder if I'm clean enough for God's presence. I don't have to follow an elaborate system of rules and regulations and offerings to be holy and clean in God's sight; Jesus took care of that. I simply need to come with a heart that is broken and repentant because of my sin.
- The fact that we can access God the Father directly without going through any other human being is called the "priesthood of the believer." You and I have that access because Jesus is our great "High Priest."
- Hebrews 8:1 (NLT) says, *"...We have a High Priest who sat down in the place of honor beside the throne of the majestic God in heaven."*
- There were no seats in the tabernacle because the Old Testament priests never sat down. They were in constant motion because their work was never finished in obtaining forgiveness of the sins of the people.
- Jesus "sat down" by the Father in Heaven because His work was FINISHED on the cross. He's seated there right now as our Mediator.
- All we have to do is trust Him as Savior and Lord and we unholy people can be reconciled with a Holy God.
- Then we can live up to the words of 1 Peter 2:9 (NLT) ⁹ *...you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.*

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- ⁱ Harris, R. L. (2003). Priests. In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R.
- ⁱⁱ Lee, H. P. (2003). Consecration. In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (p. 334). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Holy* (p. 37). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
- ^{iv} Tyndale. Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size) (Kindle Locations 135329-135333). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.