

Last week, as we were worshiping together in Deuteronomy 6, I shared with you that the Hebrew titles of these books are taken from the first words (Deuteronomy is titled “These Words”). The Hebrew title of Leviticus is “Then He Called.” The last section of Exodus sees the Tabernacle built, so that God may dwell in the midst of His covenant people (35:4-40:33). There was a problem: *“Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle”* (40:35). How could God’s people fellowship with Him if they couldn’t enter His presence? Leviticus answers that question. There is no break between Exodus and Leviticus – God’s glory prevents even Moses from entering His presence (the end of Exodus), so He called out to Moses with instructions on living in His presence (Leviticus).

God’s Will Is That We Would Be Holy (19:1-2)

19:1 *Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:*
19:2 *“Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.’”*

Imaging God

- The covenant people of God are to reflect God Himself.
- This was God’s original purpose for humanity in our creation: READ Genesis 1:26-27.
- In the fall of humanity into sin and rebellion against God, that image was marred.
- When the eternally divine God the Son took on a real human nature and became one of us in every way (except that He did not sin), once again the image of God was perfectly reflected in humanity.¹
- Believers in Jesus are indwelt with God the Holy Spirit, Who works through our life here to conform us to the image of the Son (Romans 8:29). The Holy Spirit makes us like the holy Son so that we may dwell in the presence of the holy Father. God is *“holy, holy,*

¹ 28 days until the first Sunday of Advent. Advent means “coming,” referring to the time of year we focus on the incarnation of Christ (His becoming one of us).

holy” (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8), and fellowship with Him occurs in His holiness.

- This call to holiness occurs here in Leviticus 19:2, but also in Leviticus 11:44-45; 20:7,26; 21:8; 1 Peter 1:15-16.

God’s Word Reveals His Character

- Conformity to God’s Word is conformity to His character.

Holiness and Worship (19:3-8)

The Fourth and Fifth Commandment (19:3)

19:3 *“Every one of you shall reverence his mother and his father, and you shall keep My sabbaths; I am the LORD your God.”*

- 19:3a echoes the 5th Commandment (Exodus 20:12).
- The word here translated “*reverence*,” רָגַע, is usually rendered “fear.” The same verb occurs in 19:14,32. In fact, 19:32 echoes 19:2-3a. For the young to learn to respect the older is a stepping stone to learning how to rightly fear the LORD. A child who does not learn to respect adults will struggle to relate to God as God deserves. 19:3b echoes the 4th Commandment (Exodus 20:8-12).
- Upon the foundation of the fear of the LORD is observance of the Lord’s Day - being in fellowship with God in the way He commands.
- *“I am the LORD”* occurs 49 times in Leviticus (only Ezekiel has the phrase more in the Bible). It occurs 15 times in this chapter alone. The commands of God in the Bible reflect His character, His image – even those commands that address how we are to treat each other.

The Second Commandment (19:4)

19:4 *“Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves molten gods; I am the LORD your God.”*

- 19:4 echoes the 2nd Commandment (Exodus 20:4-6).

Fellowship within the Bounds (19:5-8)

19:5 “Now when you offer a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD, you shall offer it so that you may be accepted. 19:6 It shall be eaten the same day you offer it, and the next day; but what remains until the third day shall be burned with fire. 19:7 So if it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an offense; it will not be accepted. 19:8 Everyone who eats it will bear his iniquity, for he has profaned the holy thing of the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from his people.”

- This references the Law given in 7:15-18 (see also 3:1-17; 7:11-14,20-21). The “peace offering” was one eaten in the presence of the LORD. The best of it was offered to God, some was shared with the priest, and the rest was eaten by the household in the presence of the LORD.
- This section follows naturally after 19:4, which described family order and Lord’s Day worship.

Holiness and Our Relationships (19:9-18)

Benevolence (19:9-10)

19:9 “Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. 19:10 Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God.”

- This reminds them of the grace God gave them bringing them out of Egypt (Deuteronomy 24:19-22).

Honesty in Holiness (19:11-12)

19:11 “You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. 19:12 You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the LORD.”

- 19:11a echoes the 8th Commandment (Exodus 20:15).
- 19:11b echoes the 9th Commandment (Exodus 20:16).
- 19:12 echoes the 3rd Commandment (Exodus 20:7).

- 19:12 is quoted in Matthew 5:33.

Do Not Be a Stumbling Block (19:13-14)

19:13 “You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning. 19:14 You shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere your God; I am the LORD.”

- 19:13 echoes the Eighth Commandment (Exodus 20:15).

Justice in the Fellowship (19:15-16)

19:15 “You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly. 19:16 You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the LORD.”

- Sin is sin, regardless of who commits it. Violations of the Law of God or man are not to be overlooked because of the circumstances of the violator.
- 19:16a echoes the 9th Commandment (Exodus 20:16).
- 19:16b echoes the 6th Commandment (Exodus 20:13).

The Second-Greatest Commandment (19:17-18)

19:17 “You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. 19:18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.”

- 19:18 is quoted in Matthew 5:43-48; 19:16-22; 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-29; Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:13-14; James 2:8-13.

This chapter ends with a reminder that God is a gracious Savior to His people, and that this salvation is the basis for His right to command: READ 19:36b-37. Those saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone are brought together into a local family of believers. God commands us to live in this relationship in a way that reflects His character (compare with Ephesians 4-6; Colossians 3).