

THE PENTATEUCH III: LEVITICUS-NUMBERS

WEEK 3

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How must we live when God dwells among us?

Many of these depend on your position within society. The standards rise in increasing order from the alien/sojourner through to the High Priest; these correspond to how close you get to God.

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Why would God care about any of these?

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- 1 Symbolic of Life/Death—Much of what makes one unclean symbolizes (is movement towards) death.

- 2 Symbolic of Royalty—Would you appear before a king in this state?

The theological meaning of the tabernacle is as the “tent of meeting” where YHWH meets with Israel in his capacity as King (Ex. 25:22; 29:42; 30:6, 36), shown by the rich furnishings of the tent and by its ritual, which is exaggerated royal protocol (e.g., restricted access [cf. Est. 4:11; 5:1-2]).
(Köstenberger, Goswell, 125)

- 3 Symbolic of Separation/Holiness—Clear demarcation of separation from neighbors; aligning with God’s ordering of nature. [Lev 20:26]
- 4 Health: poorly cooked shellfish, blood, etc. can cause illness; Fully roasted, safe meats constitute the “kosher” foods

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Ritual states and Moral states are related but not identical. Why?

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- Aaron is not somehow more godly than any of the people. He was elected by God to serve in that role.
- Cf. Num 11:29—But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!”
- When someone becomes ritually impure, he/she does not become sinful. (E.g., sexual intercourse makes one unclean but God commands us to be fruitful and multiply!)
- These divisions imply that impurity is fine when so confined. It becomes a sin if you violate the law.

A violation of one’s place in the ritual system constitutes moral failure, but ritual impurity itself is not sin.

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Evaluate the following remark by Waltke (2007).

“The Old Testament is a masterpiece of indirection that demands theological reflection to derive its theology.” (436-7)

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In the *Sermon on the Mount*:

Matt 5:17-20– “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 18 For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. 19 Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 “For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

What may we infer from this?

What may we infer from this?

- ① Jesus is not anti-law; indeed, he's the fulfillment of it!
 - By following it perfectly (II Cor 5:21; Gal 4:4, Heb 4:15)
 - By typifying the ceremonial law (Hebrews 8-10)
 - By typifying episodes in Pentateuch (Matt 1-4)
 - By loving others (Romans 13:10)
- ② Somehow, living *in accordance with* the Law is valuable even in a NT economy (under New Covenant).
- ③ In order to enter the Kingdom of heaven, you must either follow the Law perfectly or get your righteousness somewhere else (Plan A vs. Plan B)

We also have the following statement from Christ on the dietary law:

Mark 7:18 “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? 19 For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

See also Acts 10:9-16.

“Could Jesus have violated the dietary law?”—I say no:

- Circumstantially, it would be very difficult. Indeed, not obvious in light of Peter’s stubbornness in Acts 10.
- Suppose the disciples were permitted (pre-cross) to set aside the dietary law. For Jesus to fulfill the law requires total obedience.

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Luther unfavorably calls James the “epistle of straw.” Here are some puzzling remarks:

JAMES 1:25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

JAMES 2:8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well.

JAMES 2:12,13 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

How might we make sense of these passages?

How might we make sense of these passages?

① Context!

- The audience of *James* comprises pious Jewish Christians.
- James 2:10—For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all
- James 1:17,18—Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

② Compare!

- John 13:17—If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. (Similar to James 1:25)
- Much of *James* reads like the *Sermon on the Mount*.
- Paul speaks of “law of the Spirit of life” (Rom 8:2) and “law of Christ” (Gal 6:2)

We could go all night with Paul. Here are some key passages:

ROM 3:21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

ROM 6:14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

ROM 8:3-4 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, 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.

GAL 2:21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.

GAL 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”

GAL 4:4-5 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Paul on the Law continued...?

HEB 8:6-7 But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.

HEB 9:8-10 The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings-external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

HEB 10:1,3-4 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming-not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

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Between the above statements and the extreme cultural distance between us and the tabernacle, it's easy to just toss the whole thing out. Here are some explicit lessons for us:

- ① God is holy and should be honored as such. *Do we praise him? Do we love his moral nature or resent it? Do we treat his grace as license?* [Cf. Forgiveness vs Acquittal.]
- ② With the proper priest, proper sacrifice, one may enter directly into God's presence. *This means shrinking back in fear because of our sin, or other forms of shame is out of line with the riches bestowed upon us.* (Cf. Heb 4:16)
- ③ God desires to dwell among his people. In the New Testament, the community of believers is the temple(1 Peter 2:5, Eph 2:19ff): the place where God dwells (cf. Matt 18:20), the place where the "nations" come to witness God (cf. John 13:34-5). *How we treat one another is comparable to Israel's treatment of the temple. Godly behavior draws the attention of outsiders (1 Kings 10), profane behavior gives outsiders the liberty to destroy us (2 Kings 21:1-18).*

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