

# (Through the Bible) Leviticus 21-24

by Chuck Smith

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of being a holy and separated people, as represented by the priest in the Old Testament, and the need to give to God with free will and the best.*

**Duration:** 46:27

**Scripture:** Leviticus 23:1-3, Leviticus 23:15-16, Leviticus 24:14-23, Acts 17:23

**Topics:** "Church Growth", "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing that each community has its own unique characteristics and that God has a specific plan to reach each community. The speaker encourages listeners to be open to God's plan and to align their hearts with His desires. The speaker also discusses the corrupting influence in the history of the church and how some parables have been misinterpreted. The sermon concludes with a plea for the church to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to strive to reach each community with God's love and message of salvation.

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## Transcript

Shall we turn now to Leviticus chapter 21. As we have often told you, a priest had a two-fold function. First, he was to stand before God, representing the people, bringing their offerings before the Lord, and there, standing before God for the people.

Then, he would come out and he would stand before the people for God. He was the people's representative to God. He was God's representative to the people.

He was a go-between. And thus, the priest was a special kind of an individual. Even as in the New Testament, there were special rules for the bishops.

Lifestyles that they had to adopt in order to be a bishop in the church. And certain rules that applied to the bishop that didn't apply to all the others within the church. Because his life was to be exemplary.

As Paul said to Timothy, Be thou an example unto the believer. It is never a very effective leader who said, Now do as I say. The truly effective leader will say, Now do as I do.

Setting the example. And thus, the priest, as God's representative, was to be a special kind of person. And so, in chapter 21, God gives some of the special aspects of the priest and of the priesthood.

Now, they were not to defile themselves for the dead among the people. Now, if a person died and you touched the dead body, you were considered unclean. Ceremonially, you could not enter into God until that day was over, until sundown.

And then you'd have to take a bath and then you could come into the tabernacle. But for ceremonial purposes, approaching God purposes, you couldn't do it. You were unclean.

Now, the priest was never to touch a dead body of anyone except those of his own immediate family. That is, a mother, a father, a son, a daughter, or those of his immediate family, lest he would defile himself with a ceremonial uncleanness. So, that's what this is pertaining to in the first part of the 21st chapter.

Of those that he could touch, his sister, who was a virgin, that is near to him, who has no husband. But he will not defile himself, being a chief man among his people, to profane himself. Neither should they make any baldness upon their head.

That is, in a taking of a vow, many times people would shave their heads in taking a vow. A priest was not to take that kind of a vow. He wasn't to get the Hare Krishna look.

And neither shall they shave off the corner of their beards or make any cuttings in their flesh. In other words, his body was to be a rather unblemished kind of body. He wasn't to defile his body or to mark up his body because really the priest was standing before God.

And standing before God, God wanted the fellow to be whole and sound and not weird looking. And so, these are the requirements. They shall be holy or separated.

The word holy is actually separated unto their God. And not profane the name of their God. For the offerings of the Lord are made by fire.

Now they shall not take a wife who was a whore or profane. Neither shall they take a woman who has been put away from her husband. He was not to marry a divorced woman.

And he is to be set apart for he offers bread to God. And because the Lord said, I, the Lord which sanctify you, am holy. Now the daughter of any priest, if she would defile herself, then she was to be burned with fire.

And when the high priest had the anointing oil poured on him, then he was not to defile himself for any dead body. He wasn't to touch any dead body as long as the anointing oil was upon him. Not even of his father or mother.

And again, dealing with the wife, he was to take a virgin of the children of Israel as a wife. Now, there were certain things physically that could disqualify a person from the priesthood. And God deals with the physical disqualifications.

If any man has any blemish, he shall not approach God. That is, a priest could not be blind or lame or have a flat nose or anything that is superfluous. You couldn't have any weird growth on your body.

Or a man that is broken-footed or broken-handed or crook-backed or dwarfed. He that has a blemish in his eye or has scurvy or scabbed cannot really approach unto God. No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron and the priest shall come nigh to offer offerings to the Lord.

And so, the physical disqualifications for those who would approach God. Now, in the 22nd chapter, he deals with the priests and the things that they could eat. You see, the things that were brought in sacrifice, a portion of them became meat for the priest.

And so, the qualifications now are the rules regarding the sacrifices that he ate. Only the priest and his family could eat them. They were not to give them out to strangers.

Or if he had company, he wasn't to offer to the company the food that had been offered as a sacrifice to God that was his portion as a priest. If he had a daughter who was divorced from her husband and had moved back home, then she could eat it. And yet, it was only to be eaten by him and his immediate family.

If he hired a servant, the hired servant couldn't eat that food. But if he had purchased a slave, the purchased slave being a part of the household could eat then that food. So, the various persons that could eat the food that belonged to the priest as his part from the sacrifices that were made.

And then in verse 17, God is talking now about when you make a sacrifice unto the Lord and when you give something unto God, that what you give is first of all again of your own free will, but you're not to offer unto God any kind of an animal that has a blemish. In other words, you weren't to take your animals that were of no value and give them to God. God didn't want the castoffs.

No, we don't know what to do with them. We might as well give it to God, you know. God didn't want it.

In years of ministry, we have received just a lot of interesting kind of things that people did not find any use for anymore, but they didn't want to throw it away. And so, we had one ugly old rocking chair in the parsonage in Tucson. And these people didn't want it in their home because it was so old and ugly, but they didn't want to throw it away because it was grandma's rocking chair, you know.

And she rocked all the kids in that chair before she died, and so it had a lot of sentimental value. And so, they give it to the church, but we can't give it away because it was grandma's. And, you know, it's got to be out there.

And it's a mess to try to deal with those kind of things. God didn't want to be bothered. He didn't want the priest's hassle with those kind of things.

He said, look, if it's broken, if it's blemished, don't give it to God. And I think that's a good rule. I think that it's sort of an affront to God to give Him something that has really no value to us.

In fact, you remember when David wanted to buy the threshing floor of Ornan in order to offer a sacrifice to God. And he wanted to buy the ox that was there. Ornan said, hey, I'll give it to you, David.

And David said, oh no, I won't sacrifice unto God that which cost me nothing. David had very strong feelings about that. I'm not going to give to God something that didn't cost me anything.

And so, God here declares that when you offer to God a burnt offering and all, it shall be without blemish. And whatever has a blemish, you're not to offer it, for it will not be accepted by God. And it shall be perfect, verse 21, to be accepted.

There shall be no blemish therein. Therefore, if you have an old blind lamb or a broken down ox or maimed, or if it has a disease or scurvy or scab, don't offer those to the Lord to make an offering by fire. Or any bullock or lamb that has anything superfluous or lacking in its parts.

That is, if it was born a freak kind of an animal with two heads or something like that, you weren't to offer it to God. Now, you may offer it for a free will offering if you want, but not for a vow, because God won't accept the vow. And so, you shall not offer to the Lord that which is bruised, crushed, broken, cut, neither shall you make any offering thereof in your land.

Neither from the stranger's hand. In other words, God just isn't interested in broken down, scurvy things to be offered to Him. I read a story one time of a farmer who came in to his wife all excited, and as he sat down, he said, Well, our cow calved this morning and they're twins.

And I'm just so excited, I decided to give one of them to the Lord. And so, we'll raise them together, and when they get old enough or big enough to sell, then one of them is the Lord's. And whatever comes from it, we'll just give to the Lord.

And so, she said, Oh, that's fine, honey. I think that's a wonderful idea. And so, she went out and looked at them, and she said, Oh, that's great.

Now, which one's the Lord's? He said, Oh, it really doesn't make any difference. And so, a few months went on, and he came in one morning and he wasn't looking so good, and she said, What's wrong? He said, Oh, the Lord's calf died. And I'm afraid that quite often we are that way with the Lord.

We want to give of our surplus. You remember how Jesus was standing with His disciples one day, watching the people as they dropped their money in the treasury, and the wealthy people were coming in and making their big ostentatious donations. And in the crowd, a little widow woman came with a mite.

Now, there are ten mites to a penny. And she dropped a mite into the treasury. And Jesus turned to His disciples and said, She just put in the biggest gift of all.

And what do you mean, Lord? He said, The rest of them were giving out of their abundance. In other words, it didn't cost them anything to give. But this woman has given of her very sustenance.

So, God doesn't really measure your gift by the amount of what you have given. The measure that God puts upon your giving is what did it cost you to give to God. What did it cost you? That's what God is looking at.

Not the amount of the gift. That's never a consideration with God. Therefore, some of the poorest of you will have the greatest rewards in heaven.

Who have given to God out of your very sustenance. And some of those who have made these large, great contributions to God will hardly be noticed in heaven. Because it didn't hurt them.

It didn't cost them. They just gave out of their abundance. It wasn't costing them anything.

In fact, it was a good tax write-off. So, in giving to God, free will always. Of his own will, always.

But then, giving God the best. Not the cast-offs. Not that which you can't use anymore.

Not that which really has no value to you. Let's give it to God kind of a thing. But honoring God.

Showing our love to God. Giving God the best that we have. It's important indeed.

Chapter 23. God outlines the various holidays. The feast days for the children of Israel.

First of all, in the first three verses, God deals with the Sabbath day. Once more. The seventh day is the Sabbath day of rest, a holy convocation.

You shall not do any work. It is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings. Now, there are seven feasts that are listed here.

And the 14th day of the first month. The month of April in the Jewish calendar. The 14th day is the Lord's Passover.

And so then is when the Passover feast was celebrated. The 14th day of the first month. And on the 15th day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord.

So, the 14th day is Passover. Then the next day begins a seven-day feast period of unleavened bread in which they were to cleanse their house of all leavened bread and they were to have this week of vacation, resting, feasting unto the Lord. And they are not to do any work during that week's time.

So they were vacations, actually. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, verse 10, When you have come into the land, and I have given it unto you, and ye shall reap the harvest thereof, then shall ye bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest. And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord to be accepted for you.

And on the morrow after the Sabbath, the priest shall wave it. And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf of the he-lamb without blemish the first year of burnt offering unto the Lord. And the meal offering, and they tell how it should be given, and the drink offering.

So, this was the offering of firstfruits unto God which was separate from the feast of Pentecost. But this was just bringing to God, when they come into the land, the firstfruits of the harvest. The firstfruits belonging to God, and recognizing that the firstfruits is God.

Not the leftovers, but that which is first. And then God deals with the Passover feast. And then you shall count from the day after the Sabbath, that is the final Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering for seven Sabbaths, shall be complete.

And even on the morrow after the seventh Sabbath, shall ye number fifty days. And ye shall offer the new meal offering unto the Lord. And ye shall bring out of your habitations two whalos of two-tenths of deals, and they shall be of fine flour.

They shall be baked, notice, with leaven. Now, each of these feasts had its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, and in the church, and in the New Testament. Of course, the Feast of the Passover, we have no problem with that.

Christ becoming our Passover. Christ the Bread of Life, Unleavened. And so the Feast of the Unleavened Bread.

And then we have the Feast of Pentecost. The fifty days. Interestingly enough, the bread is to have leaven.

Offer the whole loaves, leaven. Now, the Feast of Pentecost was a foreshadowing of the church, actually. So it was significant that in Acts chapter 2, when the day of Pentecost was fully come, the disciples were gathered together in one accord, in one place.

And suddenly, there was a noise from heaven that sounded like a mighty rushing wind. And there were cloven tongues of fire that sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them the ability or prompted their speech.

So, the descent of the Holy Spirit, the birth of the church, was foreshadowed by the Feast of Pentecost, which was really the ingathering of the first fruits unto the Lord, which on the day of Pentecost, the first of the multitude who were to be saved through the preaching of the gospel and through the ministry of the church were brought in. Some three thousand souls were added to the church that day. That was the first fruits.

Now, Jesus knew that His church would never be perfect or pure. And He gave parables that indicated this, and God knew it in the Old Testament. That's why the loaves were to have leaven in them.

Because leaven is always a symbol of sin, actually. So, in this offering, which was a foreshadowing of the church, there was leaven in it. And don't let anybody tell you that the church history is pure.

It isn't. It's horrible. And that's one reason why I'm glad I am not really related to any human organized effort called the church.

Because I don't have to answer for the corrupt history of the church. And believe me, its history is corrupt. I blush when I read of some of the things that the popes have done in the past.

If they made movies out of them, they would be worse than Hollywood has come out with yet. The history of the church is not pure. God knew that there would be a corrupting influence in the church.

Jesus gave parables of the kingdom of heaven, and people have misinterpreted these parables, completely twisting them around. For instance, Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is like a woman hiding a bit of leaven in the meal, in the loaf, you know, making her dough, putting a bit of leaven in it, until the whole loaf is leavened. The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that is very small, and yet it grew up into a great tree, and the birds of the air came and nested in it, and people found shelter in the shade underneath.

And so there were those theologians that interpreted those parables as being wonderful. The church was the leaven in the loaf which was the world, and the church is going to gradually bring its good influence until the whole world is going to be converted. The church was the mustard seed planted in the world, growing up into a great tree that everything can find shelter underneath.

It was going to just cover the earth and shelter all men, and they would all be benefited by the shade. But wherever you find birds in the Scripture, you find them in an evil sense. And where birds were lodging in its branches.

And unfortunately there have been a lot of birds lodging in the branches of the church. Now the Lord knew that the church's history wasn't going to be pure, wasn't going to be ideal, and thus even in the pre-shadowing of the church in the Old Testament, God had them make loaves. Now it isn't just the sheaves of wheat, but now it's baked in a loaf, which is a cohesive kind of a unit, but yet it has the leaven within it as it's offered to God.

And so the Feast of Pentecost, and then God gave a special little rule in verse 22, which I find very fascinating. When you reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of

thy field when you reap, neither shall you gather any gleanings of your harvest. Thou shalt leave them unto the poor and to the stranger, for I am Jehovah your God.

So the welfare program in the state of Israel was a very interesting welfare program. It wasn't a giveaway. If you were poor, what you could always do is go and gather from the corners of the fields, for the people in the harvesting of their fields weren't to harvest the corners.

Also, they weren't to go back through the second time for gleaning purposes. When they went through and picked the apricots or the peaches or whatever once through, that was it. Whatever was left, whatever wasn't ripe in the first picking had to be left on the tree for the poor people to come in and gather.

And so the gleaners who would go in and gather after the harvesters, and thus it was a welfare program for the poor people in the land and the strangers. And I feel a very excellent welfare program. I noticed that after they thresh the beans around here, that you'll see sometimes people going through and picking up the beans in the fields out here.

I used to do that every year. When I was a child, we had right behind our house a walnut orchard and they always planted beans between the trees. And we would go out and gather several quarts of beans when we were kids.

And then we'd have those neat baked lima beans in the wintertime. And then my hands were always black because I'd always go out after the harvesters. And of course they always went through the walnut crop twice, but after the second time through, then whatever was left was ours.

And we were kids, we used to get a gunny sack of walnuts every year and sort of gleaning after them. And it was a provision that God had put right in the law that they weren't to glean their fields, they were to leave that for the poor in the land. Now we continue with the feast in verse 24.

In the seventh month, the first day of the month, there shall be a memorial of the blowing of the trumpets of a holy convocation. You weren't to do any work in that day. Again, it was just a holiday, the first day of the seventh month because it marked actually the most holy month of the calendar.

The blowing of the trumpets. And then on the tenth day of the seventh month shall be the day of atonement, Yom Kippur, the day that the priest was to go in and make an offering before the Lord for the sins of the people. And then also in the seventh month, they were to have the feast of tabernacles.

Now, in verse 32, God is talking about this Yom Kippur. It shall be unto you a Sabbath of rest. Ye shall afflict your souls in the ninth day of the month at even.

And from even unto even ye shall celebrate your Sabbath. And that is why the Jews celebrate and count days not from midnight. They count days from sundown to sundown.

And so they celebrate their Sabbaths from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. And then Saturday night's a big sort of a celebration. They all take to the streets.

They have street dances and just, you know, everybody's cruising on their feet. All walking up and down the streets. In fact, it's so crowded that you just have a hard time.

It takes you almost an hour to walk a block. You're just moving with the people. But it's just everybody's out on Saturday night because the Sabbath is now over.

But this is where they get it. They were to celebrate from even to even. They were to start on the evening of the ninth day and they were to celebrate through the evening of the tenth day.

And so their day began at sundown. And begins at sundown. Now the Feast of Tabernacles was to take place on the fifteenth day of the seventh month.

The tenth day was to be Yom Kippur. The first day, the blowing of trumpets, you're announcing this is the holy month being the seventh month. And on the first day of the Feast of the Tabernacles, there was to be a holy convocation not to do any work.

And on the eighth day, a holy convocation. So the Feast of Tabernacles went for eight days. Whatever day the Sabbath fell in was in that period.

But also there were two extra Sabbaths. The first day of the Feast and the last day of the Feast were always Sabbath days. And considered as a Sabbath where there was no work to be done and to be observed just as any Sabbath day is observed.

Now at this Feast of Tabernacles, this was a feast which was a memorial to remind them of how God preserved their fathers through the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. So during this feast, in the latter portion of the chapter, they were to build little booths. And they were to move out of the house and live in these booths for the eight days of this feast.

After you've come in the land, you've built houses and so forth, then you're to build these little booths beside your house. And you're to move into these booths and live in them for the eight days just to remind yourself of the hardships your ancestors went through when they were coming out of Egypt and coming into this land that God had promised unto them. And so it was going back to rugged living for one week out of the year.

I imagine the kids really had a great time with that. I don't suppose the parents appreciated it too much. But it was probably quite an exciting adventure, just like kids like to sleep out in tents and all.

And so they would make these booths and move out during this particular feast. Now, the beginning of chapter 24, God commands them to bring in olive oil that they might keep the lamps burning continually in the tabernacle. And then God explains the show bread.

He gives the formula by which it should be made and how it should be laid out in two rows of six upon the golden table there in the tabernacle and how it was to be changed once a week. And the bread that was then being removed was to be eaten only by the priests. It was a holy bread because it had stood there before the Lord, each loaf representing one of the tribes of Israel.

And then after the week of sitting there on the table, it was to be eaten by the priests. Now, a situation arose in verse 10 where there was an Israelitish woman who had an Egyptian husband and her son was in a fight. And while he was in this fight, he blasphemed the holy name of Jehovah incurring this fellow.

Several people heard him and they reported it to Moses and so he was arrested and he was put in jail until they could get the mind of the Lord on what should be done concerning him. Now, this to me is interesting. Here's a situation that has arisen.

What shall we do? And so they put him in the jail until they could determine what God wanted to be done. And so they waited upon God that God would direct what should be done concerning this man who had blasphemed the name of Jehovah. They put him in the ward, which is the jail, that the mind of the Lord might be showed unto them.

I like that. Waiting upon God. You know, I think one of the facets of the early church that made it so successful is that they were actually so yielded to the direction of the Holy Spirit.

They looked to the Holy Spirit for guidance in all things. I think that one of the great weaknesses of the church today is that we think that we know everything. After all, we've been to seminary, we've been educated, and we have, you know, developed, we've taken our best minds to develop all of these church programs and surely we can work it out now in committees.

And after all, if you've got efficient committees, why do you need the Holy Spirit? And we really don't look to the Holy Spirit anymore for real guidance and direction. So often we move impulsively. But the early church was governed and guided by the Holy Spirit.

So Paul said, it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us. And we read that the Holy Spirit said, separate unto me Paul and Barnabas for the ministry wherein I've called them. And we see how the Holy Spirit was directing the activities of the early church.

And I believe that that is one of the keys to the success of the early church. And I think when we come to the place where we confess, God, I don't know how, I don't have the answers. Lord, we need your help.

And we start seeking again the guidance of the Holy Spirit to direct the functions and the activities of the church. We're going to see again the power of God working in His church. I love it that they would wait to get the mind of the Lord.

Oh, what is the mind of the Lord in this situation? I'm convinced that God is desiring to reach each community with His love, with the message of salvation. And not only is He desiring to reach each community, I'm convinced that God has a plan to reach each community. And I think in going into a community, the most important thing is to get the mind of the Lord.

What is God's plan to reach this community? And I think that we make a mistake when we try to develop a plan that would be a national plan. Because each community has its own individual little characteristics. But yet, I believe that God has a plan to reach each community and what we need is to be open to the plan of God.

To get into harmony with what God is wanting to do. Because that's all God is looking for. People who are in harmony with what He is desiring to do.

For the eyes of the Lord go to and fro throughout the entire earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are perfect towards Him. Looking for people whose hearts are in tune with what He is wanting. In order that He might invest in them His power to reach out into that community.

And so I am really not behind the national programs of evangelism as such or worldwide programs. Thinking that we have one program that's going to be adaptable for the whole world. I think that we need to seek the mind of the Lord in each community, in each area.

We notice that Paul didn't follow a patterning going into new communities. He went in and sort of felt the thing out. He got the feel of it before he began his ministries.

Some of them he went into the synagogue. Some of them he just started talking to people on the street. Getting the mind of Christ.

So vital. So, they got the mind of the Lord. The Lord said, those that heard the guy swear, take him out of the camp, let them put their hands upon his head, and then let people stone him to death.

He's blaspheming the name of Jehovah. And then God went on to say, if any man kills any man, verse 17, he shall surely be put to death. If you kill another man's beast, you're to make it good.

Beast for beast. If you cause a blemish in your neighbor, as he hath done, so shall it be done to him. Breach for breach.

Eye for eye. Tooth for tooth. As he has caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him.

He that kills a beast, he shall restore it. He that kills a man, he shall be put to death. And you shall have one law that is operating, whether the person be a stranger or one of your own countrymen.

In other words, there was not to be any kind of favoritism showed in the justice system. One law for all. I think that that's the greatest weakness of our present judicial system today, is that there isn't one law for all.

It all depends on which judge you're standing before, and it all depends on what kind of a mood he's in. Whether you get a six-month suspended sentence or five years at hard labor. If the judge has just had a big fight with his wife and is angry and upset, man, he's liable to really lay it on you.

And if it's getting close to Christmas time, he might be in a jovial mood and say, oh well, alright, you know, suspended. That isn't real justice, and that's the problem with our whole judicial system. If you're very wealthy and can afford the great attorneys and all, then you can, you know, get off.

It's not fair, it's not right. I do not believe in our system of justice today. I think that there's much lacking in our whole judicial processes.

They need much improvement. And it would be well if we had a governor who was wise enough to make decent appointments. Well, I mean, when his appointees are calling up and making obscene telephone calls to people, and when they're growing marijuana in their own yards, and when they're avowed homosexuals, what can you hope for? How can you expect there to be a true system of justice? I'm going to move on because I could get in trouble real quick.

Now, it is interesting when the law says, breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, etc., that Jesus said, now you have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, and so forth. But I say unto you, the law of Christ, of love, forgiveness, the better part is that of love and forgiving. God help us.

But because we are not all able to come up to the standard of Jesus Christ, there are limitations that have been placed. And it should never be more than a breach for a breach, never more than an eye for an eye, never more than a tooth for a tooth. You knocked out my tooth? Let me give you a tooth sandwich, brother.

You know, you don't want to just hit one. You want to get it, you know, the mouthful if you can. We want to take revenge over and beyond.

And so the limitations were put, but even better than that is the forgiving love. Oh well, what difference does it make? God help us to come to the standard of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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