

LEVITICUS & NUMBERS | Week 3

God is faithful, even when His people are faithless.

Leviticus and Numbers introduce God's holy demands, the failure of God's people, and our hope for a Great High Priest and King.

In this unit, we'll consider the relationship between the law and the gospel.

In Leviticus and Numbers, we meet the God who expects holiness and faithfulness.

These expectations are met in Jesus Christ:

- Jesus is the Great High Priest (Heb 2:17; 9:11-12).
- Jesus brings lasting forgiveness (Acts 10:43; Rom 11:27; Heb 8:12; 10:17).
- Jesus reaffirms the call to love our neighbor (Mark 12:31).
- Jesus passes through His own waters of baptism and overcomes the Devil's temptation in the wilderness. Israel's 40 years correspond to Jesus' 40 days, but where Israel failed, Jesus succeeds. Jesus' strength comes from quoting Scripture about Israel's wilderness wanderings (Matt 3:16-4:2).

These things, the events of Israel in the wilderness, were written for Christians to know Christ and follow Him (1 Cor 10:8-11).

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. What are we supposed to learn from Israel's wilderness wanderings?

How can we summarize Leviticus and Numbers?

Dr. DeRouchie summarizes Leviticus like this:

God gives the Mosaic legislation to the priests and the people of Israel, explaining sacrificial protocol, the differences between clean and unclean, the Day of Atonement, how to live a holy life, and how to commemorate God's faithfulness through different holy festivals, all so that Israel will be able to safely dwell in God's Sabbath presence.

He summarizes Numbers like this:

In response to Israel's lack of faith, God does not allow the Exodus generation to enter the Promised Land. Rather, He gives them more legislation, but He also promises the future Messiah and raises up a new generation to enter the land.

What questions do you have about these summaries? What do you hope you will hear more about in the lesson?

Leviticus teaches that Holy Yahweh requires holiness.

God's people should pursue God through His sanctifying presence and promise. Their pursuit of God will be fueled by His sanctifying presence through substitutionary sacrifice—past grace—and motivated by promises of blessing and curse—future grace.

Here's an overview of the whole book: Fuel for living in the light of Yahweh's holy presence (Chs. 1-10) and the nature of living in the light of Yahweh's holy presence (Chs. 11-26), and a brief epilogue.

How do you think promises of blessing can be considered "future grace"?

Sacrifices enable fellowship with the Great King.

Sacrifices bring atonement, the process by which God purifies and reconstitutes His contaminated and decimated Tabernacle (TAB-er-nack-ul) and people. He does this by pouring out His wrath on either the sinner or the substitute, thus restoring right order.

There are five key sacrifices in Leviticus chapters 1-7: 1. the burnt offering, 2. the grain offering (an expression of gratitude), 3. the peace and fellowship offering (a potluck meal), 4. the sin/purification offering (which atones for the contamination of holy objects), and 5. The guilt/reparation offerings (which atone for the desecration of holy objects).

In Leviticus 8-10, the priests are set apart and the first sacrifice is made. Praise erupted when people came to God through His substitutionary (subs-ti-TOO-shun-air-ee) provision.

Read Leviticus 9:22-24. Why is it significant that the fire consumed the offering and not the people?

God's people are called to be holy.

God's holiness is the essence of all that He is. We aren't God, but we can in some ways reflect the essence of who God is, representing Him, reflecting His character and actions.

But, in our sin, we fail to represent God rightly.

In the Mosaic Covenant, the call was "if you do this, you will live" (Lev 18:1-5).

Life was not the ground of holiness but the goal of holiness. The history of ancient Israel teaches us that no sinner could do, so none could live. They had to put their faith not in their own obedience but in the substitute, the sacrifice.

Read Ezekiel 20:11-13. What does this passage say about the conditions of the law? What does this passage say about the people's success in keeping the law?

God's people couldn't keep God's law.

They were "dry bones," but they would receive new life (Ezek 37).

The New Testament teaches that the new covenant with Christ is the age of faith, but the old covenant of the law was the age of faithlessness (Gal 3:11-12; Rom 9:30-32).

The call to be holy could not be accomplished unless they fell back on the provision of those substitutionary sacrifices. If they didn't rely on God's substitute but just sought to do the law on their own, they would die. And that's exactly what happened.

God used the blessings (for keeping the law) and the curses (for breaking the law) to motivate holiness (Lev 26:3, 11-12).

Though ancient Israel failed, Christians receive those blessings. Why? Because we are perfectly obedient and holy? No. Because Jesus perfectly obeyed and secures the life and status that allows us to dwell in God's presence.

Read Leviticus 26:11-12 and then read 2 Corinthians 6:16. How have Christians become the "temple of the living God"?

Numbers presents a faithful God who leads and confronts an unfaithful people.

Ancient Israel needed to learn to wait and follow in seasons of discipline.

Here's an overview of the whole book: Preparations for journeying to the promised land (1-10), the journey itself (10-25), and preparations for entering the land (26-36).

Though they were told to take the Promised Land, the people did not trust the Lord. Their lack of faith had deadly consequences: they wouldn't leave the wilderness until the entire generation was dead.

In addition to the curse of wandering the wilderness, God sent serpents to attack the people. But God made a provision for anyone who believed: God calls Moses to put up on a pole a picture of a defeated serpent. If Israel will simply look on the pole with faith, they'll be healed (Num 21:4-9).

Read John 3:14-15 and 2 Cor 5:21. How does Jesus compare Himself to the bronze serpent-pole? What does this teach us about Jesus' sacrifice?

Though the people were faithless, God was faithful.

God promised that there will be a king in a new Garden of Eden, a lion (like Genesis 49 promised about a lion of the tribe of Judah), leading a New Exodus. Those who bless this King will be blessed, and those who curse Him will be cursed (Num 24:3-9, 15-19).

Now that King Jesus has come, what are some of the Bible's promises for those who "bless Him"?