

Section 1: Approaching God's House (Lev. 1-10)

I. *Making the People Holy to Approach God (1-9)*

- A. God gives instructions for how the people may be made holy. This is accomplished in the laws for offerings and the consecration of the priests.
- B. After Aaron was consecrated, he performed the first worship service in the tabernacle. The people receive God's blessing through the priest and God manifests Himself to all the people after Aaron has finished the service **(9:22-24)**.
- C. The high priest is the new "Adam" in the "Eden" that is the tabernacle and, as the representative of his people, bears their sins before God and communicates God's blessings to them. This is also a prototype for the ministry of Christ, who represents and brings us near to God through His work.
- D. The worship service of chapter 9 is the climax of this section. God now dwells with His people.

Outline:

- 1:1-6:7** – Laws for offerings with focus on the role of the people
- 6:8-7:38** – Laws for offerings with focus on the role of the priests
- 8-9** – Consecrating the priesthood to minister in the tabernacle
- 10** – The Sin of Nadab and Abihu

II. *The Sin of Nadab and Abihu*

- A. In the chapters concerning the consecration of the priests, we are told over and over how everything is done according to God's command **(8:4, 9, 13, 17, 21, 29, 36; 9:7, 10)**. The strange fire that Nadab and Abihu offer is something God did not command **(10:1)**. God Himself had lit the fire that was to burn for the offerings continually **(9:24)**, but they offer a fire of human origin.
- B. It also seems that they tried to enter the Holy of Holies with this fire. This is seen by the fact that the Lord references their sin and their "drawing near" when He gives the instructions to Aaron on the only time he may enter the Holy of Holies **(16:1-2)**.
- C. God will be regarded as holy by His people **(10:3)**, but Nadab and Abihu failed to do that.

III. *Crisis*

- A. God strikes down Nadab and Abihu for their sin. This creates a crisis. Death has been introduced into the tabernacle, polluting it with uncleanness.
- B. Just as the story of the fall immediately follows the establishment of God's good order with Adam in the garden, so sin and death immediately come after the establishment of the tabernacle. However, instead of the people being expelled, God provides a means of cleansing the pollution.

IV. *The Provisional Nature of Ceremonial Holiness*

- A. The sin of Nadab and Abihu and the means for cleansing the tabernacle demonstrate that the holiness that has been established is only provisional. The way has not been opened for the people to dwell with God like in the garden but only for the high priest to visit once a year. Sin also has not been done away with and never will be in this system.
- B. Day after day, the sacrifices must continually be offered, with no end in sight. As long as the tabernacle/temple remains, there is no possibility of true forgiveness or dwelling with God.
- C. This system cannot truly cleanse, only the work of Christ can do that. This system is intentionally deficient to spur the people to long for the reality to come in Christ.

Section 2: Cleansing God's House (Lev. 11-16)

I. *The Purity Laws (11-15)*

- A. Uncleanness is generally associated with death (e.g. touching carcasses, many unclean animals are predators or scavengers) or infirmity (e.g. leprosy, bodily discharges). God is the fountain of life and perfection. Life with Him is intended to reflect those realities, whereas the opposite is uncleanness.
- B. Although sin does not equal uncleanness, the two are closely connected, and uncleanness is meant to picture the effects of sin.
- C. Some forms of uncleanness require additional means of cleansing, but others just require the sin offering. Also, although uncleanness can be cleansed, it does not always happen immediately.
- D. It is not only people but also places and things which can become unclean. Uncleanness is also contagious. The people must not only be careful in their conduct but must take care to make sure that their environment is suitable for life with God.
- E. There will be situations in which people are unable to become clean. This means that they will be cut off from worship, even in situations where their uncleanness is not a fault of their own.

Outline:

11 – Uncleanness from animal carcasses

12 – Uncleanness from childbirth

13-14 – Uncleanness from leprosy

15 – Uncleanness from bodily discharges

16 – Cleansing uncleanness on the Day of Atonement

II. *The Day of Atonement (16)*

- A. Appointed by God to cleanse the sin and uncleanness of the people for the whole year. It is a sabbath of sabbaths and a day in which the people are to humble themselves (**v. 29-31**).
- B. Throughout a year, there would be defilement in the tabernacle courts, but it would be too disruptive to worship for it to be stopped and cleansed every time or for what was defiled to be replaced. The Day of Atonement is the answer to the defilement brought by Nadab and Abihu's deaths and by every other corruption that may happen in the tabernacle.
- C. Even more importantly, the priest atones for the sins of the people with two goats.
 1. The blood of the goat from the sin offering would be taken by the high priest inside the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the mercy seat. The mercy seat pictures for us that the very throne of God is a throne of grace and mercy. Coming directly to God in the tabernacle means coming to the one who ultimately forgives and cleanses. The correct response to our sin is not to run from God but to seek forgiveness in His presence.
 2. The high priest would confess the sins of all the people over the scapegoat, imputing those sins to the goat. The goat would then be chased into the wilderness to picture the removal of the people's sin from the camp.

III. *Christ's Fulfillment of the Day of Atonement*

- A. Like the scapegoat, He has our sins placed upon Him and is killed outside the camp.
- B. Like the priest with the sin offering, He also enters into the true Holy of Holies in heaven with His own blood to cleanse our sins.
- C. He will return to cleanse this world of its defilements and make it purely holy to Him.

Section 3: Approaching God in His House (Lev. 17-27)

I. Summary of the Purpose of this Section

- A. Holiness is to be a concern for all God's people. The center of holiness is the tabernacle and many of these laws have their focus there but the people themselves are called to be holy.
- B. The goal of the holiness laws is a people who are fit for communion with God in the tabernacle and who live with holy conduct in the Promised Land into which He is bringing them. The life of the tabernacle and the priests in the tabernacle serve as a goal towards which the common people of Israel are to aspire.
- C. These laws both extend the holiness of God's presence in the tabernacle out into the camp and the Promised Land and also distinguish the unique holiness that belongs to the tabernacle and priesthood as opposed to these other areas.

II. Thematic Outlines of this Section

Section 1 (17-22): Laws Prescribing Holy Life Flowing Outward from the Tabernacle

A 17 – Laws for the people about holy things, specifically related to the tabernacle

B 18 – Laws forbidding deviant sexual practices tied to life in the Promised Land

C 19 – Laws for holy conduct in common life

B' 20 – Laws prescribing punishment for deviant sexual practices tied to life in the Promised Land

A' 21-22 – Laws for the priests about holy things as those who are to minister in the tabernacle

Section 2 (23-27): Laws Prescribing Holy Life in Relation to God's Presence and the Promised Land

A 23 – Laws for sabbath festivals, emphasizing God's presence with the people

B 24 – Blessing and cursing of the covenant pictured in relation to God's presence

A' 25 – Laws for sabbath years in the Promised Land

B' 26 – Blessing and cursing enumerated in relation to the Promised Land

C 27 – Devoting yourself to the Lord

III. Some Particular Emphases from this Section

- A. Holy conduct necessarily sets God's people apart from the pagan nations. God's people are not to commit the immoral acts of the pagans nor practice their religious customs. Turning from the worship of God to the practice of the nations is worse than becoming unclean. Their uncleanness does not threaten their place in God's holy land, their idolatry does. God will bless the people with His covenant promises if they keep the covenant, but He will curse them and ultimately cast them out if they turn to and refuse to repent from idolatry.
- B. The Sabbath is to set the rhythm for the life of God's people. The Sabbath is the basis for all the holy days of Israel, which is why they are called "sabbaths." **Lev. 23** shows us that the Sabbath is particularly for us to worship God together, both in great joy and reverence, and to do good to our neighbor. In **Lev. 25**, the Sabbath also becomes the pattern for the livelihood of God's people. They must cease farming, restore gained lands, and release those in bondage in trust that it is the Lord, not their own works, that will provide for their needs. This culmination of this trust is pictured in **Lev. 27** with regulations for the people, out of the abundance they have received from the Lord, freely devoting what they have and what they are to the Lord.